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Closing Remarks

The football season is in full swing and Navy fans are once again excited about watching their team in action. If you're in the Annapolis area and haven't had a chance to see the newly renovated Navy-Marine Corps Stadium, be sure to stop by one of the home games and enjoy the changes (and don't forget to look for the USNA '77 helium balloon flying high overhead). Keep those cards and letters coming in and I'll see you again in November. Go Navy!

—**Bob Sanderson**



'78 sees Iceman retire



'78: The Eisenmann family

78

Annual Membership: 3%
Life Membership: 73%

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Okay, I'm projecting myself into the future because as I sit and type this column it is one of the dog day's of summer! So I'm picturing myself on a cool October day. The leaves are just starting to turn and on some nights it's just cool enough for a sweater or comfy sweatshirt. The football season is in the full bloom of all its forms—from sandlot to professional (no more of that sloppy pre-season crud either)—Tailgaters are the norm for the weekend and lastly, I think we've all *finally* recovered from the mother of all tailgaters—our 25th Reunion tailgater. Since I'm not really good at this projecting stuff (one of the failing of advancing years and a little sobriety) I can't picture all the happenings of our Reunion—but give me until next month. I won't need to project *then*. So on to some reality...

I'm aware of two more recent retirements. In keeping with the Navy-Marine Corps team theme, as well as Companymates sticking together, 31st's **Gary Eisenmann** (garyeisenmann@hotmail.com) and his Plebe Summer roommate, **George Wadzita** (GWadzita@aol.com) closed out their naval careers. On 1 August in a touching ceremony in Memorial Hall, Gary said goodbye to the Marine Corps. Gary's entire family, his mom, wife, Betty, and their four sons, in-laws, friends, as well as his extended family of Companymates, Classmates, and fellow Marines. The ceremony was officiated by the Commandant of Midshipmen, Col (Brigadier General select) **John Allen '76**. Representing '78 were **Mark James**, **Dick Finley**, Meg and **Joe Leidig**,

Bruce Latta, and myself. As reported by Mark James—John Allen acknowledged the great career that was *both* Gary's and Betty's. He thanked and credited the sacrifice and contribution of Betty and all their four boys—MIDN **Karl Brian '06** (who begins AFROTC scholarship this fall), Alex (14), and Joe (11) to Gary's 25 years in the Corps and to our nation. Gary also acknowledged his family and thanked his mom who actually started the whole thing. She told him to apply for the Naval Academy and filled out the application herself (or practically did). Heck, I bet she figured a way to help him make it through the Plebe Summer! As for civilian life, Gary will be working with another fellow Marine, **Steve Rittacco**, in the beltway bandit company, Whitney, Bradley & Brown, in Vienna, VA. The family is now living in their new home in Leesburg, VA.



A sense of Deja Vu; at attention Col Allen '76 and LtCol Eisenmann



Mom, Gary, and Betty



Ron and his young-uns

George Wadzita's retirement was this month, 3 October, at Dam Neck, VA. George was piped "ashore" to CivDiv at Tactical Training Group Atlantic, Dam Neck, VA (Virginia Beach). He, Janeen, and the rest of the family live in Virginia Beach, but make a drive to Harrisburg, PA, a couple of times a year, so Annapolis is just a skip away. George planned on being a grad student for a couple of years and to collect on the Montgomery GI Bill benefits. He was looking forward to spending more time off with his family in the summers when school is for all of them. Good luck, George. Hope the college is easier the second time around.

Their other 31st Companymate **Ron McNeal** jotted a quick note to Gary and Mark apologizing for not being able to make Gary's retirement. He got the word late. Besides, as you can tell from the picture he sent, he's been "tied up a bit. As they say in the south, he's been takin' care of the 'young uns'." Ron admitted it's been a bit tiring and time consuming, but it has been fun. Get some sleep now, Ron.

Terry O'Brien (etobrien@erols.com) sent an update on his change of command that I briefly mentioned a few columns ago. As he wrote:

The event was held on 1 July on NASSAU where I gave up command of Amphibious Squadron Two after 28 months in command, was pleasantly surprised to be awarded a Bronze Star for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The



'78: The Martins, the O'Briens, and the Yeagers

command tour which spanned two deployments, was twice the length of the normal major command tour—guess they figured it took me twice as long to get it right. The obvious highlight was our participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom at the tail end of a nine month deployment. The Navy-Marine team did great things and it was an honor to command these young men and women. The scariest part of the whole deployment was the fact that there were so many '78 folks running things! Some of the Classmates I worked with: **Harry Harris** was the operations officer on the Fifth Fleet Staff, **Larry Olsen** was his night deputy, **Jay Bowling**—CO of TARAWA, **Mark Fox**—CAG, and **Faris Farwell** on his Aegis Cruiser. Terry was headed back to the Pentagon, where I will work Amphibious Programs on the OpNav staff." Joining Wendy and Terry at the change of command were fellow Good Times Tenth Companymates (and wives), Susan and **Joe Martin** and Karen and **Bill Yeager**. Good luck with the new assignment, O.B.

Thanks to **Jill Votaw '81** for forwarding a press release that told of **Don Boland's** change of command. On Friday, 8 August 2003, at RONCADOR Submarine Memorial on the Submarine Base, San Diego, Don, was relieved as commanding officer of Naval Base Point Loma by CAPT Anthony Gonzales. As CO Naval Base Point Loma Don's "empire" encompassed six different bases and facilities located on Point Loma, including the submarine base, Fleet ASW Training Center, Fleet Intelligence Training Center, Fleet Combat Training Center, Space, and Naval Warfare Command (SpaWar) Headquarters and SpaWar Systems Center. He oversaw a total base population of over 10,000 military and civilian employees that put over \$500 million into San Diego's gross regional economy. While that certainly is impressive, Don's next job is arguably equally and perhaps even more challenging. He'll be helping to mold the future of the Navy as the commanding officer of the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps unit at Pennsylvania State University. I know he'll do great and can think of no finer example for those young men and women to follow than Don. And his one shining example of the character of the man that shows it all...Some of you may not get the Discovery Science Channel so you might have missed a "Super Surgery" program that storied the following:

A little over two years ago, Don's brother-in-law, CAPT John Pasko (who was serving on the USNA staff) developed pulmonary fibrosis. It's a disease that causes dense scar tissue to build up in a person's lungs, eventually making it impossible to breathe. John's condition progressed so rapidly that within just a few

months his lung capacity was down over 90%. When the disease progresses that far, usually a lung transplant is done, with the lungs coming from cadavers. His condition worsened so quickly that he ended up in a coma on a ventilator, and the doctors at Bethesda said his only hope was a live-donor transplant. This treatment is cutting edge, and is only done at one hospital—USC University Hospital in Los Angeles. The procedure is called a living-donor double lobar transplant. In the operation, two live donors donate parts of their lungs for transplant. When Don heard about John's need for lung donors, he immediately volunteered and turned up a match, along with LCDR **Scott Fever**. With two donors, an Air Force MedEvac aircraft transported John cross-country from the Annapolis area to Los Angeles for the long operation. The trip took almost 24 hours because the flight crew had to keep landing so as to bring the plane back to an atmospheric pressure that would allow the ventilator to work and get oxygen into John. Don donated the lower lobe of his right lung, and LCDR **Fever** donated a lobe from his left lung, to give John two good lungs. The operation took place in June 2001 and was a complete success! Today, John's back on full duty now, still at USNA. As for Don, earlier this year, after a year of recovery from his end of the surgery—and another few months of getting back into shape—he ran and finished the San Diego rock and roll marathon! What more can be said? We're proud of you, Classmate!

Well, I'll close on that heroic note. I'm looking forward to putting up pics and stories of the 25th Reunion over the next couple of months. Until then, Launchin' Spot Four.

79

Annual Membership: 1%
Life Membership: 89%

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Greetings, 79!

Yep, no doubt about it, fall is here. The leaves are turning. There's a slight nip in the air. And floating along with the breeze are the distant sounds of whistles, pads hitting pads, and bodies hitting the ground. Yep, we're smack dab in the middle of Navy football season, where the efforts of our second-year coach are beginning to bear fruit. Ah, the sweet sounds of...victory!

(Okay, you got me. Right now, as I type this, it's the middle of August, and it's 95 degrees outside. Obviously, fall isn't here yet, the season hasn't started, and I have absolutely no idea what our record will be when this issue is published. So what you have here is an exercise in positive thinking. Besides, I need this paragraph to lead into my awesome and spectacular opening, which is...)

And speaking of Navy football, we're just 11 months away from the Class of 1979 Gala 25th Reunion Extravaganza! The Reunion Committee is in the process of finalizing the plans for the single largest reunion of '79ers since 7 July 1975, when we stood for the first time as a Class in T-Court, taking the oath as a Midshipman. I've said it before, and it's a bit of a cliché, but this is definitely one gathering you *don't* want to miss. Classmates and former members will be congregating under one roof for a weekend of food, fun, frivolity, and football (and not necessarily in that order). By now you should have marked out the weekend of 23-27 September 2004 on your calendars. Soon (if not already) you'll be receiving your packets of info covering events, hotel info, schedules, etc. So please take the time now to make your reservations for the Return to Crabtown!

In my last couple of columns I celebrated the appearance of the three '79ers on this year's flag lists. Now we have an actual sighting: **Jon Bayless** (BaylessJW@aol.com) took some time out of his very busy day to drop me a quick note. Jon and the family live up in Commerce, MI (near Detroit), where he flies for Northwest Airlines. Jon writes:

Wiz: Enclosing a photo of **Ray Spicer**, **Artie Johnson**, and myself taken on 28 July during a reception at ADM Clark's residence for new flag officers. Honored and proud to represent '79—we haven't quit smiling. Omnes Viri!



The Navy's newest flags: Ray Spicer, Artie Johnson, and Jon Bayless

Thanks, Jon, for the note and great photo. Webmaster **Colin O'Neill** has placed the color version on the web site. What I can't figure out is how you guys got selected for flag so young! Congratulations again to all three of you.

Every once in a while, something comes along to confirm that clean living leads to a lot of good things. Not that I know about that personally, mind you. In this case, I just plain got lucky. I was looking at an extremely short column this month. With two days to go until deadline, I had Jon's email and little else. Then, on cue, the destroyers appeared from over the grey horizon to save the day. In this case, they took the form of **Scott Pursley** (SPursley@aol.com), our Ninth Company correspondent. "All units in Tango Kilo, this is Tango Kilo. Stand by for