

returned from deployment in San Diego on 4 June from his Tsunami Relief and Iraqi National Elections polling security force deployment to CENTCOM.

On a final note, it is with deep regret that I pass on the news about the loss of another Classmate, **Guy Langley**, who died on 1 July. Guy's remains will be inurned at the Naval Academy Columbarium. Donations in his memory may be mailed to: USNA Foundation, 291 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402. Please reference "Gift in memory of Guy R. Langley, Athletic & Scholarship Fund" in the check memo.

77 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: 5%
LIFE MEMBERSHIP: 67%

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78 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: 1%
LIFE MEMBERSHIP: 75%

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Fittingly, let's mark what for most is the start of another school year, with some belated graduation news (I ran out of space allocation in last month's column.)

Guido "Ginzo" Manzo and **Jim Degree** join many of you who've already experienced two unique sets of emotion on Graduation/Commissioning Day. The first are those we felt as mids turned freshly minted "butter-bars" over 30 years ago. The second are those proud parental feelings of watching that same transformation in your own child (much like our folks must have felt back in '78). For Jim, it was his son Matt. Matt did very well. Jim said that besides helping the rugby team hit #2 in the country, Matt finished real high in his class and earned a full ride to Stanford, and an additional scholarship he can apply elsewhere later in his career. Jim's not sure where he got those smarts. (Jim, it's from where all our wives tell us—from them.). Lora and Guido saw Melanie become Ensign Melanie. They were also joined by 15th Company classmates **Aaron Watts, Kevin Olsen, Chris Nichols**. The next day Aaron held his annual 15th Company Crabfest. Ginzo, **Mark Hubel, Case 'Face' Runolfson, Kevin Olsen, Chris "Dwarf" Nichols, Moe Ray, Larry Semanyk, and Larry Galvin** helped Aaron devour all those crabs at his house.



Lora, Ensign Melanie and Guido



15th Company Crabfest

As for other graduations, I got a quick note from **Dave Babcock** (D3840bab@aol.com) in Gulf Breeze, Florida. He reported that he and Patty are now "officially ?empty ?nesters.?" He bracketed the term with question marks because as many a parent has come to know, our kids never *really* leave. His cause for the remark was the graduation of *both* sons, Joe (22) and Tom (20) from Rollins College in Winter Park, FL this past May. Both earned BAs in Biology. Tom completed his BA in 3 years and as Dave said, "further demonstrated his superior wisdom over his Dad by opting out of a USNA appointment with the Class of '06. Instead he chose the Rollins scholarship to pursue medicine." Joe will enter Cardozo Law School in NYC this Fall, and Tom will enter medical school in the Fall of '06.



Dave, Tom, Joe and Patty Babcock

John Hueseman john.hueseman@agedwards.com passed along a picture of himself with Chet Gladchuk. Chuck visited the St. Louis Chapter of the Alumni Association to talk of Navy Athletics. As Chapter President, John presented Chet a St. Louis Arch trophy in thanks and to commemorate the visit. John caught up with **Joe Leidig** and

Bruce Latta, Lee Price and **Mike McCrabb** while visiting Annapolis in May for the Chapter Officers Forum and Board of Trustees meeting. He and his wife, Nancy, also had dinner with Molly and **Joe Schmitz**. He was hoping to sometime help Dan Holloway celebrate his promotion to RADM and his new position as head of Pers4 at NMPC in Memphis. He doubted he would make **Drew Nienhaus'** retirement ceremony back on July 15th. It was in Memorial Hall. Joe, Dan and Drew were all John's groomsmen 26+ years ago (Drew was also his Best Man.)



John Hueseman with Chet Gladchuk

Vinny DiGirolamo [VinnyDee78@adelphia.net] thought it was time to update you on life with the DiGirolamos. Three years ago he married the former Dana Lynn Nielsen of Bountiful, Utah. Their union created a family that puts the Brady Bunch to shame. Dana brought 4 boys to the equation and Vinny brought 3 boys and a girl. They recently expanded even more with the adoption of three lovely girls from Russia, Aliana (10), Nikki (10) and Cami (7). Let's see, that's a total of 11 kids. Four are married and one has even delivered Vinny his first grand child, Hailey Marie DiGirolamo. With the finalization of the adoption in Virginia the girls got real birth certificates. They also got some local press coverage because Dana is becoming an advocate for Russian adoptions. There are many stories about Americans adopting Russian children, some sad, most happy, but all very touching. Here's the link that Vinny sent that tells their own heartwarming story <http://www.fredericksburg.com/News/Web/2005/062005/062305adopt>. This July they left Stafford, VA to move to Sandy, Utah where Vinny has hired on with L-3 Communications West. He'll be supporting USAF Transformational Communications programs. We wish you all continued happiness and success, Vinny.



Adoption Day in Court



Grandpa Vinny & Hailey

In closing **Bob Novak** relinquished command of PMA-280, the Tomahawk All-Round Program Office on July 29th. I hope to have more info in the next column. With that, I'm launchin' Spot Four.

79 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: 0% LIFE MEMBERSHIP: 90%

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Greetings, 79! This month, I'm going to do a little something different. Normally I set this column so that it sounds "in the present" when it gets published. Given the pre-publication deadlines for *Shipmate*, I sometimes have to project myself almost two months into the future. For example, this is the September issue, so normally I'd be writing about the return of the brigade, the beginning of football season, and driving down two-lane roads behind those pesky school buses. But this month, I'm going to write in "my" present, because I've been thinking about a big anniversary that has just passed.

Today is Sunday, 10 July. Hurricane Dennis has not yet come ashore, but is bearing down on the Florida panhandle (I've said a number of prayers for my Gulf Coast classmates and friends, and I hope by the time you read this that Dennis is just a distant memory). Three days ago, 7 July 2005, was the 30th anniversary of I-Day. Thirty years! Classmate emails have prompted me to reminisce about that Tuesday in July, 1975.

My father dropped me off in front of Halsey Field house that morning. As I got out of the rental car, he wanted to hug me goodbye as he usually did. Being extremely self-conscious, I pushed him away, mumbled something about seeing him later, and headed inside. I was immediately given this number called an "Alpha Code", with the demand that I commit it to memory (I never dreamed I would still remember it 30 years later!). I next was told to remember "Kilo Company, 19th Platoon, 1st Squad." At that point my brain overloaded, and most of the day from then on is a blur.

While still in the Field House I started acquiring laundry bags of uniforms, a blue-ringed Dixie Cup, and this little book called "Reef Points". I met my first upperclassman who "patiently" introduced me to terms like "attention" (*"curl your hands like you're holding a roll of pennies"*) and "parade rest". I struggled with the various facing movements (wearing tennis shoes on the indoor track did not help). Somewhere in there was sub sandwiches in "The Wardroom", a big, hot noisy dining room with big fans everywhere. I vividly remember the firstie at the table telling us to relax. I started to do just that until I heard his next words: "it will be your last chance!"

Later I'm walking through this massive building with long hallways and metal plates in the floor, going up several flights of stairs to somewhere called "5-3" (whatever that meant). I was getting dressed into these "white works" things when I heard someone say, "My roommate!" It was there I met **Kevin Trail** from Ft. Belvoir, VA. I would soon meet other members of my platoon and begin to memorize their home towns: **Rick Malone** (Ashville, NC), **Ted Griffith** (Glen Burnie, MD – I first memorized it as "Burning Tree, MD"), **Orlando Anzalotta** (San Juan, PR), **Cristobal Corrales** (San Pedro Sula, Honduras), **Chuck Dixon** (Alliance, OH), **Gary Rossi** (Napa, CA), **Mel Ferguson** (Klamath Falls, OR), **Ted Wasylkiw** and **Larry Maguire** (both from Philadelphia, PA), **Jeff Niner** (Cockeysville, MD – "is that a real name?") and the rest.

We formed up in this place called "T-Court" right after a rain shower. In those few minutes before the start of the ceremony, I found myself wondering, "What am I doing here? What am I getting myself into?" But before I could dwell on that too much, I was raising my right hand saying the words that officially launched me into my first career.

Afterward, knowing my dad was already at the airport (I never did see him that day), I walked back into Bancroft Hall. You all know what happened then – I think it was the last time I walked anywhere for the next two months.

Thirty years later – 7 July 2005 – I once again found myself in Annapolis, sitting down to a much more relaxing dinner with my very first roommate, Kevin Trail. Our paths had diverged since graduation, and this was the first time we had seen each other in over 20 years. Kevin and Patty are living in the Virginia Beach, VA area. Kevin retired from the Navy two years ago, and is currently working for one of the DOD contractor firms there. All in all, it was a great way to celebrate the anniversary of I-Day.

Since I'm in a reflective mood, it seems only natural to begin this month's reporting with an email from **Pete Husta** (hustap@bogota.mg.southcom.mil), who is still on active duty down in Bogota, Colombia. Pete forwarded a note from one of his temporary duty staff officers who was stationed on the frigate Simpson when Gerry Deconto was the CO. The author of the following is LCDR **Anthony Gonzalez '95**:

■ Working as the Navigator for CAPT Gerry Deconto was always a pleasure and I had a lot of respect for his abilities as a leader and an experienced mariner. But, the events that stick in my mind the most are little things that happened unexpectedly to me, but it was an expression of his character.

When we had very difficult Sea Details through heavy fog or sudden downpours, I always found a note on my desk thanking my Navigation team and I for a successful Sea and Anchor Detail in bad conditions. My Quartermaster said one time that in 12 years, he had never been thanked by his Captain for any detail. In my opinion, my Navigation division worked harder for him after the first time and never stopped doing a great job.

Another time, the Officers were at lunch in the wardroom and CAPT Deconto was curious about our weekend plans, and I mentioned to him that I had been taking a class and had an exhibition that Friday. On Friday evening, when I was about to start the exhibition, I saw the studio door open and CAPT Deconto walked in and watched like a proud father and I really appreciated his attendance since I had no family there to see it.

Lastly, in the Wardroom, each Officer had a napkin ring with their billet on it. The previous Navigator took the napkin ring with him, so I always had a blank ring