



'76; CUS Change of Command Ceremony 8DEC17 with current and previous Commodores

**Greg Vaughn** recently participated in the Change of Command ceremony for the Commodore of Commander, Undersea Surveillance (CUS) where **Scott Luers '95** relieved **Kevin Mooney '91**. Greg was a previous Commodore of CUS from 2001-2003.

It never ceases to amaze me that, whenever I hear from **Gary Greenfield**, he has travelled to another exotic and fascinating place on this planet.

✉ As I write this Donna, Brittany and I are within a few days of finishing a holiday trip to southern Africa. For those of you who have followed over the years, we visited this region several years ago and did Safari. It was an amazing experience, but we heard many great things about other areas, particularly coastal communities and wanted to return. That trip came together this year and we are in the area for just over two and one-half weeks. The journey began in Cape Town and will end there, but we have also visited Mozambique and Namibia, along with many other communities in South Africa. We were in two Oceans - Atlantic and Indian.

Cape Town is a beautiful city and in contrast to some other cities in South Africa, safe. You can feel comfortable walking around and there is a beautiful harbor area which is quite welcoming. While we enjoyed the splendor of the city, we also were reminded of apartheid. We visited the District Six museum, which is a testament to 60,000 inhabitants, which were forced to

relocate in the 1970's and the entire area razed. The museum was founded in 1994 in a church that survived the destruction. Why we learned much of the history of the impact of apartheid on Cape Town, it was also a reminder that prejudices such as these are still fresh in our memories and present in parts of the world.

This was further reinforced during our visit to Franschhoek, which is the center of South Africa's wine region - think of it as their Napa. We are lovers of wine so it was a must stop and I must admit quite gorgeous. I would certainly recommend it to anyone who visits the region. We had a guide one of our days there - Brady. I was wearing my Navy hat and he inquired about the background and as it turns out, he had served in the South African Navy for 10 years. He volunteered that he was a young kid who did not understand politics at the time and assumed that he was fighting a legitimate war. It was only later that he came to realize that they were fighting Mozambique "just because of the color of their skin". He describes himself as ashamed and says there remains a lot to be made up for.

What we did observe across all of our locations were very friendly residents - regardless of race - who wanted to share history and gems about their local communities. For me the most surprising was Namibia, which had been known as South West Africa which was a UN protectorate, but administered by South Africa. It gained its

independence in 1990. It is largely desert and has interesting communities of animals, both at sea, as well as on land. We were in Walvis Bay, a natural deep-water port, which is official 1 meter below sea level. We did some kayaking amongst seal colonies there. Interestingly South Africa kept it in 1990, but allowed it to be reunited in 1994. One of the results is it is a natural area of the harvesting of sea salt and much Atlantic sea salt comes from there.

It has been a wonderful holiday here. However, on a tragic note, one of my firm's companies acquired a company on December 20th, which had major operations in the Philippines. On December 23rd 100 employees (out of 500) were at work. A lower number than usual due to the holidays. A fire broke out in a furniture store in a mall beneath the offices the employees were in and it quickly raged. Its third floor was under construction and the contractor had turned off the sprinkler system. We lost 37 employees that day. Though they had only been part of our company for a few days, they were members of our family and remains difficult to comprehend.



Brittany, Donna and Gary in Franschhoek



Donna, Gary & Brittany at Walvis Bay with seal colony in background

On that sobering note, I am reminded of a quote by J. R. R. Tolkien from *The Hobbit* - "May the wind under

your wings bear you where the sun sails and the moon walks."

On a final note: I just received news of the passing of **Guy Wynn** (33rd Co.). Details to follow in the April-May Shipmate.

# '77

**Life Membership: 73%**

**Donor Participation: 20.94%**

Pres: **John F. Vuolo**

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# '78

**Life Membership: 79%**

**Donor Participation: 30.98%**

Pres: **Glen Woods**

Sec'y: **Vince Balderrama**

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Well we have entered the Dark Ages!

Congratulations to **Joe Alvite** (17th Co) on his new job with L3T ESSCO as their Director, International Business Development. ESSCO manufactures radomes for air traffic control radars, shipboard SATCOM antennas, and aircraft RF sensors. The company is headquartered in Ayer, MA but because of his extensive international travel, Joe has some flexibility to work from his Marlton, NJ home. Joe's son, Ryan, graduated in June 2017 from the University of Delaware.

Here's an update from Katie and **Jeff Fowler** (12th Co) on the family. Like for most of us, 2017 was another good year but mixed with a few sad but many happy stories. Jeff lost his father, Clem. (I can empathize with you, Jeff, I lost my dad in 2017.) With Clem's passing, their daughter, Britt, and son-in-law, Joe, completed the circle of life by bringing into the world Katie and Jeff's first grandchild, baby Ella. Son, Connor, joined his sisters as a college graduate! He graduated James Madison University as a Computer Science major and



'78: Admiral Fowler and family

Computer Information Systems minor. Now he's in job search. Jeff is President of American Operations Corporation and its 14 subsidiaries. Katie has become Ella's full-time nanny while Britt has gone back to work. She remains active as the Scholarship Chairman with the Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy and keeps connected with her submarine USS NORTH DAKOTA (SSN 784). Britt and Joe have new jobs in Northern Virginia, sold their house, moved into their parents' basement during the transition. Lynsee entered her fifth year as the communications manager at the National Fisheries Institute, and took on a new position as "Fairy Godmother" for niece Ella.

On January 12th, in Newport Rhode Island, **Michael Shumaker** (13th Co) administered the oath of office to his son, Greg, as a new Navy Ensign. Greg was commissioned through the OCS program. Accompanying Michael was his wife, Donna Lynn and Greg's wife Kim, and Kim's parents. Michael said he enjoyed hearing some of his old favorite tunes from "USNA P-rades that were played by the Navy Band Northeast. By now Greg is about halfway through the five months Navy Supply Corps School, also in Newport.

Some stray rounds:

**James Pointer** (36th Co) and **Lee Yarberry** (9th Co) ran into each other at the Army-Navy game

viewing party in Huntsville, Alabama. In late December, **John Hueseman** (27th Co) reported that **Mark Strasser** (36th Co) came through St. Louis on a layover. While Mark was there, the two of them met up with **Rick Roustio** (19th Co) for dinner or as John put it, the "43rd anniversary of our first formal Christmas Smoker, on the night before we went home for Christmas leave."



Jim Pointer and Lee Yarberry



Hueseman, Roustio and Strasser- St. Louis get-together

It is with deep sadness and regret that I report the loss of our Classmate and friend to many, **Robert K. "Ken" Aiken** (31st Company). Remembered as "Obi-Wan" to many of his friends, Ken passed away in his sleep Saturday night, January 6th at his home in Plano, Texas. His funeral service was held on Jan 19th at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Plano. Ken is survived by his loving wife, Karen, and their twenty-year old son, Alexander ("Alex"). Burial services had yet to be determined. Karen and Alex are holding up as best as can be expected and we ask that you keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

As I launch Spot Four, I can hear the final stanza from our Navy Hymn echoing solemnly for Ken and all those other classmates whom we know- or may not know- we have lost:

*"And when at length her course is run,  
Her work for home and country done,  
Of all the souls that in her sailed  
Let not one life in thee have failed;  
But hear from heaven our sailor's cry,  
And grant eternal life on high!"*

## '79

**Life Membership: 91%**  
**Donor Participation: 22.28%**

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Sec'y: **LCDR John "Wiz" Withers, USN (Ret.)**  
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<http://www.linkedin.com/in/wizwithers>  
Facebook Group: **USNA Class of 1979**  
Website: [www.usna79.com](http://www.usna79.com)

Greetings, 79ers!

It is always with a heavy heart when I must report the loss of a classmate. In December 2017, **Neil "Monty" Larimer** (8th Co.) died suddenly during his daily workout. A Pittsburgh native and avid Steelers fan, Monty went into submarines after graduation. Leaving active duty in 1985, he entered a career in business, ultimately

relocating to San Antonio, TX and becoming the VP of Global Sales for Mallinkrodt Pharmaceuticals. He is survived by his wife Kathleen; sons **Ryan Larimer USMMA '09** and Gregory; daughter Mary Kate; as well as parents, brother and sister. His 8th Co. classmates describe him as truly one of the nicest guys you could ever meet - he was always smiling. If anyone would like to send a note of condolence to Kathleen and the family, shoot me an email and I'll put you in touch.

I am glad to report that **Mac Williams** (21st Co) is now doing well. Last November Mac suffered a heart attack while on a family vacation. He suffered some serious complications and wasn't expected to survive, but Mac defied the odds and regained consciousness. He's currently recuperating and rehabbing at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, and his wife Julie reports that he's really doing well. Again, if you'd like to drop Mac a line, email me and I'll put you in touch.

In other news, **Joe Padula** had to evacuate his Ojai, CA home in December due to the wildfires, but fortunately his house was spared from the flames. Joe did say that the call to evacuate came via an old-school landline telephone call, as electricity was out and cell service spotty. Glad you're doing well, Joe!

Wrapping up, right before the holidays I received a Christmas letter from Cindy and **Pat Dennis**. Cindy decided to turn 2017 into a year of celebration of her 60th birthday, so the year was filled with family trips, international travel, church work, and generally enjoying their 5 grandchildren. Pat continues to work for TSA and also teaches as an adjunct professor. Cindy works for a national legal foundation, the American Inns of Court. Thanks, Cindy, for your letter.

That's it for March. Take good care of yourselves, and I'll see you next month!

Omnes Viri,  
—Wiz...

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