



'77 linksters at Sea n Air

...and a wonderful evening of fine food, finer spirits and even more spirited conversation at the home of Carol and **Tug McGraw (22nd Co.)**. Friday's round at North Island's Sea n Air...

...was followed by a "delightful" (Gar's word, not ours!) get-together at the home of Ann and **Dan Smith (17th Co.)**, the host and hostess with the mostest.

Saturday saw the USNA tailgate at Qualcomm Stadium, followed by the Mids game effort against the Fighting Irish. Finally, on Sunday, '77 was honored to attend a memorial service for Owen Thorp, followed by brunch and many a tall sea story at the Lazy Dog restaurant.

As Gar put it, all in all, a GREAT week of camaraderie, with promises to stay in touch and look for future opportunities to get together (such as Oct 2020 when Navy plays Notre Dame in Ireland!).

Kudos and a hearty BZ to Carol and Tug McGraw, Ann and Dan Smith, Melinda and Joe Christoffer-son, Mary and Gar Wright, Kathy Thorp and everyone else who managed to ride herd on the '77 cats for the week.

In a related item, this past September 6th, Kathy Thorp accepted the Admiral Charles R. Larson Ethical Leadership Excellence Award on behalf of her husband, **Owen Thorp (22nd Co.)**, who passed away October 31st of 2017. Classmate **Scott Harding (30th Co.)** was in attendance in the Bo Coppedge Room at Alumni Hall when Superintendent VADM Ted Carter, Jr., VCNO ADM William F. Moran presented the award

posthumously to the Big "O". Owen's name will be listed on a permanent plaque in the VADM James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, signifying his significant contribution to the Academy's mission of graduating ethical leaders for the Navy and Marine Corps. Pictured below at the award presentation are, (l) to (r), our old friend Art Athens (USNA '78), Director of the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, VADM Carter, Kathy, Sarah Larson, ADM Moran and a member of the Class of '58, which sponsors the award.



Rarely in the history of the United States Naval Academy was so much owed by so many to a single individual. We still find ourself picking up the phone to call Owen just to jaw about events of the day. Gone, but **never** forgotten.

Finally, we mourn the death of **Keith Tibbits (33rd Co.)**, who passed away in his sleep September 14th. Tibs was not only a classmate, but a friend. And while searching for a photo worthy of his memory, we came upon two, the first featuring Keith with his daughter, Ashley Marie and a jocular young Marine Cobra pilot whose smile could light up a room, **Gene McCarthy (18th Co.)**, who was KIA flying

Medevac support in the First Gulf War...



Keith, Ashley Marie and Gene

...while the second shows Keith and Ashley later in life:



Keith and Ashley Marie

In her Veterans Day Facebook entry honoring her late father, Ashley wrote, "I know you guard the streets of gold in heaven with Uncle Gene McCarthy", and included this verse from 2 Corinthians 5:8: "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." To which we can only add, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Semper Fi, Tibs; Semper Fly, Hoss.

Magoo

## '78

**Life Membership: 80%**  
**Donor Participation: 30.50%**

Pres: **Glen Woods**

Sec'y: **Vince Balderrama**  
1320 Homewood Ln., Annapolis, MD 21401  
e: canoeu78@aol.com

Website: [usna1978.org](http://usna1978.org)

Moments like these make it hard to be your class scribe, I again have to write losing another '78 brother, **Ty Glasgow (9th Co.)**. On Wednesday night, October 24th, Ty lost his twelve-year fight to blood cancer. I am sure many of us weren't even

aware that he had been sick for so long. We grieve with Melissa, their daughters Heather and Bridget, son Ryan and sister Shelly. Some of the men of 9th Co were present at this funeral and acted as pallbearers (**Lance Tucker, Dan McCready, Marcus Fisk and Lee Yarberry**). The rest of his companymates, and all of us, were there in spirit. Born in Lima, Peru, Ty grew up in Oakland and San Leandro, CA. When he graduated from Skyline Senior High School he had been on the soccer team, crew team and earned his private pilot's license. At Navy, he was an Ocean Engineering Major, on Lightweight Crew, and drove his British sports cars - two MGs and a Triumph TR6. Ty was a submariner. His first boat was the SAM RAY-BURN (SSBN-635- Gold) where he was Assistant Weps, 1st LT and COMMO and earned his "dolphins". He then reported to the commissioning crew of LA JOLLA (SSN 701) as WEPS. After a distinguished tour on LA JOLLA he became the Developmental Tactics Officer at Submarine Development Squadron Twelve in New London, CT. He left active duty in 1984 but remained in the reserves for four years and was a founding member of Battle Group Support Staff - Commander Submarine Forces Atlantic (NR BGS COMSUBLANT). Ty spent the next 30 years in high tech, holding technical, project management, sales and executive positions with large Fortune 500 companies including Raytheon and Lockheed Martin and later in smaller more entrepreneurial companies like TCC, Objective Communications, Transparent Language/SDL, Bridgeline Digital and most recently Alliance Data Systems/Epsilon. Ty loved his family deeply. The Academy was also very important to him and he worked with prospective applicants to learn more about the Academy. He mentored them in their application process and then on their journey through the Academy. He also enjoyed mentoring recent college graduates in starting their professional careers. Ty's sister, Shelly, noted that one of Ty's last wishes was to have donations go towards a charity for kids dealing with opioid

addiction as it has touched their family's lives as well as their family friend's lives. In lieu of flowers, the family asked everyone to please make donations to Leukemia & Lymphoma Society online at: [www.lls.org](http://www.lls.org) or to Partnership for Drug-Free Kids online. You must believe he was cheering his beloved Red Sox to that World Series victory from a great seat in heaven; and that it was for him that they won it all. We will always remember that beaming smile and hardy laugh.



Congratulations to **Brent Obenour** (33rd Co) who finished his Appalachian Trail thru-hike on October 27th in Harper's Ferry, WV. To my knowledge, he joins **Don Aiken** (3rd Co) and **Tom Dudley** (12h Co) as the third member of the class to complete the entire trek. Brent said several friends braved the rainy weather to camp with him Friday night and several others joined for the final couple of miles in the rain. It was great him seeing so many friendly faces at the end of a long journey. (His own "Lucky Girl" was at the finish for him - his wife Ellen Suarez.) He finished up in pretty good shape. Along the way he lost 40 pounds and about 5 inches of waist size. At the end he weighed less than when he showed up at USNA on I-Day in 1974. (Someone please tell us there must be *easier* ways to lose the weight!) His right foot started hurting in Maine and hurts pretty much all the time but he's hopeful with some rest it will subside. Here are couple of interesting facts about the journey and his experience that Brent provided:

- Most hikers take on a trail name, an alias of sorts. His was "Lucky Boy". (As he said he was a Lucky Boy in so many ways.)

- The whole trail covers 2,190.9 miles in 14 states. (Maryland and West Virginia are the easiest states to hike; New Hampshire and Maine are the hardest.)

- He started his trek on March 17th and finished October 27th with approx. 21 days of break. (That's an average timeframe for travelers.)

- The total elevation gain of hiking the entire Appalachian Trail is equivalent to climbing Mt. Everest 16 times!

Approximately 3,000 hikers attempt a thru-hike, 1 in 4 complete it (He knows of four who had to leave for medical reasons)

- He finished wearing his 5th pair of shoes

- His step count was over 6 million steps or about 29,600 steps per hiking day

- He fell over 20 times but miraculously was never injured.



**Sam Sowell** (10th Co) and two buddies he went through flight school with (Mike Dulinawka - Navy F-14; and Joe Testa - Marine F-4) walked the Appalachian Trail for five days in October. I wonder if they crossed paths with Brent. Sam said he and those buddies "Still got it! Each year we are planning an 'adventure': 2019 Tahoe; 2020 Continental Divide on dirt bikes. Each year prove you got it; because if you can't, you don't!"



'78: 35th Company

Some of you guys do little excursions together, sometimes even as companies (or as many as can gather and go). A few from 35th company did a tour of the Danube region. They did the Rhine two years ago and are looking forward to their next trip together. See if you can spot **Mark Lindstrom, Richard Jesmonth, Bob Vogt, Rob Blandford, Jeff Knauer** and their better halves among them.

Congratulations and many thanks to **John Semcken** (4th Co) and fellow board members, Ed Roski and Kent Valley (both Marines), and their Land of the Free Foundation on the success of this year's Land of the Free Foundation Veterans Day Golf Classic. This tournament is the main fundraising event for the Land of the Free Foundation. The Foundation was started to recognize the men and woman of our armed services past, present and future and their families who work and sacrifice every day to ensure that we will always live in the "Land of the Free." The tournament is held each year at John's Pacific Palms Hotel and Conference Center in the City of Industry California. Once more, they raised over million dollars with all proceeds going towards supporting charities that support America's military and their families. Thirty organizations were the beneficiaries of this year's largesse. One gift, was especially meaningful and touched me deeply. John made this year's Land of the Free Foundation's donation to the Semper Fi Fund in honor of my late father, SgtMaj Bruno Balderrama, USMC (Ret.). Thanks, John, I am moved

every time I think of the gesture. It is an honor, a kindness, and proof once more of the brotherhood we all share. Semper Fidelis.



On Nov 26th, **Kurt Tidd**, passed the flag as Commander SOUTHCOM to his relief and then retired. Not only did that mark the end of Kurt's over 40-year highly successful naval career, but also the end of the Class of '78's service on active duty as our "Last Man Standing" was "piped ashore". Kurt had an outstanding career with commands that included not only SOUTHCOM, but at sea and deployed as commands such as the 4th Fleet, Carrier Strike Group (8) aboard USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69), Middle East Forces and commander, Task Force 5, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 50 and USS ARTHUR W. RADFORD (DD 968). Along with Mark Ferguson, Cecil Haney and Harry Harris, he helped make history for the Class '78 as one of only five classes in Naval Academy history with four or more active duty four-star Admirals serving at the same time. We know he'll continue to be a success at



'78: Kurt Tidd, "Last Man Standing" was piped ashore

whatever endeavor he next chooses - after a much-deserved rest. We wish him and Eileen *Fair Winds and Following Seas* and expect to now see them on occasion at a '78 tailgate.

Well that's it for now- Launchin' Spot Four

## '79

**Life Membership: 91%**  
**Donor Participation: 26.45%**

Pres: **LCDR Sean Cate, USN (Ret.)**  
e: Sean.Cate@1979.usna.com

Sec'y: **LCDR John "Wiz" Withers, USN (Ret.)**  
42498 Regal Wood Dr., Ashburn, VA 20148  
p: 240-556-0637; e: JDWithers@1979.usna.com

Social Network Links:  
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/wizwithers>

Facebook Group: **USNA Class of 1979**

Website: [www.usna79.com](http://www.usna79.com)

## '80

**Life Membership: 96%**  
**Donor Participation: 19.90%**

Pres: **Tim Kobosko**

Sec'y: **CAPT Joseph A. Grace Jr., USNR**  
15 Allard Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70119  
p: 504-915-6711; e: joe.grace@1980.usna.com

Website: [www.USNA1980.org](http://www.USNA1980.org)

Greetings Classmates,

The Army Navy game is fast approaching (It will be history by the time this hits the newsstands). The Christmas Holidays are upon us and we're heading into the Dark Ages. Hard to compete with Facebook and instant Social Media - but how can you beat *Shipmate!*

A longstanding tradition. On to the mail bag:

I received a note from one of our long-lost Classmates, **BT Smith, MD**, who wrote in a great note about his roommate, **Dennis O'Donoghue** in a very fun dialogue and as he put it - rambling format:

✉ Dear Classmates,

In the years and years since 1980, I have not had much to add to this forum. Now, there is as good an occasion as is ever likely to arrive. It is on behalf of an old friend that I break my self-imposed silence.

Aside: Not only have I somehow avoided a public update for more than 38 years, I have managed to procrastinate to the wire for the next *Shipmate* deadline. Therefore, I will have to abandon my usual OCD rumination and editing in favor of a more expedient but disorganized rambling.

There is something called the Pathfinder Award, created almost 40 years ago to "honor individuals ... from the Pacific Northwest for significant contributions to Aerospace development." Essentially, a Lifetime Achievement Award. The program runs through the Museum of Flight in Seattle, with only two awardees per year, their face to hang on the museum wall in perpetuity.

Not only was I honored to attend the Pathfinder Awards Banquet, I am now doubly honored to be able to brag on my old USNA Roomie, **Dennis O'Donoghue**, who received the 2018 Pathfinder Award in early October.



Dennis has made the grave mistake of renouncing his editorial privilege, so this is all on me (may be off on a point or two, here and there, with a tendency towards rounding off).

Why not Brice, you might ask? Easy. I am not an aviator, nor really even an Engineer, not anymore. Why then Dennis? Even easier, as I will merely outline and occasionally flesh out below.

In the 38 years after graduation, Dennis has been a busy boy, qualifying in almost 90 aircraft. There was that ten years as a Harrier pilot, those thirty years as a test pilot for the military, then NASA, ten years in the Air Force Reserve, with overlap, of course. All that to be dovetailed with a total of about 15 years at Boeing, first as a test pilot and then as VP of Engineering. (All in one breath, my best Chow Call EVER, only because I couldn't quite include everything).

By my rough count, Dennis the Cheshire Cat has about three of his nine lives remaining. Let me just recount his most recent brush with the Reaper (forgive me, Dennis):

As many of you already know, most new US military aircraft are only possible because of massive computing power. The X32b is (was) no exception, so essential that it had three channels of stability control, one primary, two backup (Hey, just like a reactor! Damn Nukes, spreading their spores). Without stability control, according to Dennis, the X32b turns into a stone, as in a stone tumbling out of the sky.

About two years ago, I got to watch the video of the X32b taken from a chase plane, while Dennis sat beside me as my personal narrator: One bright sunny day, out on a test flight over the dry lake that is Edwards AFB, Dennis sees that two channels of stability have failed. He promptly turns toward the emergency landing zone. Running on the backup to his backup, he radios the Test Engineer who answers, "That's not possible!"

"Yes. It is," as he sets the X32b down on the dirt airstrip. Another life crossed off his mortal ledger in the sky!

The team is pissed because they now have to mobilize all sorts of stuff, go out, put the X32 on a trailer, tow it miles and miles back to the hangar at the high speed of one mile per hour. Then they have to clean all the dirt off. Hey, at least they didn't lose a half-billion-dollar prototype airframe!

There are some who would ascribe all of the above to luck. But this is not about luck, even though Dennis is certainly a lucky guy. The following story submitted as Exhibit A:

Way back when most of us were wee Ensigns, back when Nuclear Power School was still in Orlando, there was this weekend in April, 1981.

2LT Dennis, USMC, drives from Naval Flight School in Pensacola down to Orlando to see a few of his Heavier Than Air classmates from Second Company (Brian, Lew, and me, future Bubble Heads). And to get closer to the first launch of the shuttle COLUMBIA.

Of course, there is an hour or two to catch a few rays. Oh, and study some topographic anatomy, only partially obscured by those pesky bikinis. While we are thus reclined and aligned in our chaise lounges, Dennis reaches into his bag, pulls out a bunch of 3 x 5 index cards, proceeds to slowly flip through the stack.

Curious, I inquire; he hands me half the stack. "Whoa, is this the Aero you have to know to get thru Flight School?"