



Seither Family

At 6'5"/228 lbs., and still a freshman mind you, Brett has a bright future as a Bulldog, and we know you join us in wishing him great success. The only question we have is where Bert's loyalties will lie if Georgia ends up taking on Navy prior to Brett's graduation? In the meantime, how 'BOUT them Dawgs!?!

Magoo

'78

Life Membership: 80%
Donor Participation: 27.03%

Pres: **Glen Woods**

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

Website: usna1978.org

Lots of "stray rounds" that I'll try to fire off in this end-of-the-year column. Most will be in "short bursts".

While we had long sad goodbye to our deceased classmates, **Bill Kihn** (2nd Co), who passed away in 1999 and **John Martin** (23rd Co), who passed away in 2018. This year they both were placed to their final resting places. In July, Bill was interred in the Columbarium in the Yard. Regrettably, I was unable to make the ceremony. But I'll be sure to visit Bill and other classmates who rest there. John was interred on a warm August day. He was surrounded by family, friends, former

CLASS OF 1977

MEMORIAL FUND

Captain Owen G. Thorp

By *Thom McKee '77*

On October 29th, 2017, barely a week after its 40th Reunion, the Class of 1977 lost a stellar shipmate, and both the Naval Academy and Navy Lacrosse lost an invaluable friend and advocate. Few, if any, alumni were as dedicated to serving the needs of the Brigade and the mission of the Naval Academy as Owen Thorp. In addition to his 20 years of service as the Academic Officer Rep for the Lacrosse team, Owen was an Associate Professor in the Department of Engineering and Weapons, where he taught some 23 different courses in both the Mechanical and Weapons & Systems Engineering Departments, educating and mentoring literally thousands of Midshipmen.

In recognition of Owen's decades of tireless service and to keep his memory alive, his wife Kathy is establishing the Captain Owen G. Thorp Memorial Fund. The funds would be disbursed to directly support midshipmen in completing specific Capstone projects to be selected annually by the Weapons, Robotics and Control Systems Engineering Department. The Capstone project, as the name suggests, is the culminating event in an engineering undergraduate's educational experience. Midshipmen define the scope of an open-ended problem, use the tools they've learned in previous courses to analyze it, evaluate alternatives, learn to manage a long-term project and work as a team with their fellow students.

This funding will provide increased resources and support to a growing area of systems engineering study, highlight the Academy's efforts in



this regard, as well as provide recognition of a superb officer, systems engineer and midshipman mentor.

Contributions can be made via check to U.S. Naval Academy Foundation, 274 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402. Please include "Captain Owen G. Thorp Memorial Fund" in the note section of the check.

Those preferring to contribute online can visit <https://www.usna.com/giv>, select where you would like your gift to go to: *OTHER*, then in the section which asks "How would you like this gift(s) to be used?", type in: "Captain Owen G. Thorp Memorial Fund".

To learn more about the Engineering and Weapons Capstone program, visit www.usna.edu/engineeringandweapons and click on the Research & Capstone link near the bottom of the page. □



78/78 CLASS NEWS

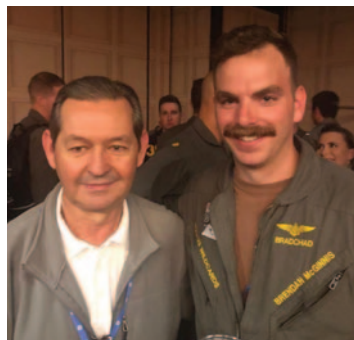
squadron mates and classmates. Among the Class of '78 who bade him farewell were: **Joe Martin** (10th Co), **Bill Hession** (32nd Co), **Doug Grau** (1st Co), **Tom Martinez** (19th Co), **Sean Coffey** (13 Co), and John's 23rd Companymates **John Rogers**, **Chris Powers**, **Charlie Dawson**, **Matt Leavitt**, **Jim Butler** and **Howie Seeger**. (I apologize to those whom I may have missed. I didn't see you among the crowd. Coincidentally, the Chaplain presiding over the service was the same who performed my father's ceremony almost the year before. Eternal Father, strong to save....)

Belated congratulations to my flight school housemate, **Ken Bowersox** (19th Co) on his appointment as the acting director of head of human exploration at NASA (associate administrator for the Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate). Sox retired from the space programs several years ago and for a while had worked for SpaceX as their vice president of Astronaut Safety and Mission Assurance. Now he is back at NASA and one wonders if it will be a longer-term job or just "acting" for a while. Best to you Sox!



Sox (courtesy of Houston Chronicle)

Deke Philman (24th Co.), like many of you carrier pilots still attends the Tailhook Conventions. At this year's event he ran into a young pilot, Brendan McGinnis, whom Deke referred to as a "great young man". To tie in a '78 connection even further, Deke reported that Brendan's dad was the best man in **Ken Waldie's** wedding (Or maybe it was vice versa- Deke couldn't quite recollect. Of course, he did say he had a few beers with Brandon.) Turns out that his dad was the best man in Ken Waldie's wedding (or vice versa....can't remember!). When Brendan visits his hometown, he routinely visits the memorial.



Deke and Brendan McGinnis

Keith Davies (24th Co) now works for Sandhills Community College (SCC) in Pinehurst, FL as their Aviation Program Coordinator. After retirement from the Marine Corps, Keith worked in public education as a teacher and administrator. Keith said his original intention was to retire from public education after 22 years, but I guess he wasn't content with relaxation. He saw that SCC was starting an aviation program. Being a rotorhead and aero major at Navy, he contacted the college to see if there might an adjunct teaching opportunity. Needless to say, the conversation he had led to an offer to be the full-time Aviation Program Coordinator. He started at the beginning of July. I guess those golf courses just weren't enough to occupy his interest. Hmmm, aviation over putting a little white ball in a hole- I know what I would choose. Good luck, Keith and have fun!



Keith Davies (courtesy of SCC)

Pam [Wacek '80] and **Scott Rodgers** (11th Co) are satisfying their wanderlust with a trip around the U.S. in their 45-foot mobile home. At the beginning of August, they sold their house (furnished) and put all their worldly possessions in a 7' x7' POD. They have a RV lot with 400 square feet Casita near Orlando and plan to winter there each year. For now, they say the "U.S. will be our backyard!"

Along their travels they see classmates and friends, so be on the lookout! When in San Diego one '78 classmate - and companymate to Pam - they visited with was **Mark Peterson** (28th Co) and Wendel.



Wendel, Mark, Scott and Pam

Larry Easton (30th Co) sent a little update on his Companymate, **Bruce Gearey** [I spelled it correctly this time, Bruce!] He reported that he had visited Bruce in late July and that Bruce was already making good progress and his attitude was very good. Bruce was "sprung" from rehab in time for him and Robin to attend the 30th Co. gang "mini-reunion 12-14 September In Annapolis. (Sorry I couldn't join you guys for the Severn Inn dinner.) Bruce came on the net to give me a more detailed rundown. In a couple of separate notes that I compile together, he wrote more detail about what he calls his "Lost Summer":

"On June 23, I woke up normal, went to church, and even worked out. As the day went on, my feet were tingling, and my legs felt weak. By the end of the day I could not walk. Robin took me to the ER on that Sunday evening. By the end of the day Monday, after extensive tests, I was diagnosed with Guillain Barre' Syndrome. It is a neuro muscular disease that is quite rare. The treatment is an IV of immunoglobulin for 5 days. All this does is slow the progression of the onset of symptoms and eventually allows the body to start healing. However, the symptoms get worse for 2-3 weeks. Bottom line is that I was pretty much paralyzed from the shoulders down for 3 weeks. Eventually I bottomed out and started to slowly get better. I transferred to an in-patient rehab facility on July 3rd and was there until I walked out on August 24th. My upper body function

slowly came back first, but lower body was particularly slow, and I had to learn how to walk again. Early days were 2-3 steps on a parallel bar. Eventually a few steps with a walker and a couple weeks ago, I could finally walk with a cane and then unassisted. Still a way to go, but most fully recover from this. It could have been worse as some die and a third of the cases affect the lungs and you have to be incubated for an extended time. Others can't swallow and it can even affect eyesight."

[He later added that he] "got the Shingles vaccine around 5 days before getting hit with this. The Docs are pretty sure that is what brought this on as it can trigger the autoimmune system to turn on one's own neuro-muscular system. Just getting a virus can trigger it as well as flu or any other vaccines. It is a rare side effect and I just won the bad lottery this time around. I always got the flu shot every year. While a recurrence of this is rare, the Docs have advised me not to get any vaccines going forward. I will say I have a lot of friends and family that are reconsidering these vaccines after hearing my story. I am not an anti Vaxer by any means, but I think I would rather have had the Shingles at this point."

Bruce ended a note by adding that he "...can't call out enough the wonderful support that I got from '78 classmates. It made a difference. Many folks have had worse to deal with in life and I consider myself blessed to have such great family and friends. It definitely gives one a new outlook on things." I certainly agree, Bruce.



Larry, Robin and Bruce

Carl Abelein (19th Co) wrote in August that he and his wife had the pleasure of taking a "family and

friends cruise" with their son aboard USS Stethem (DDG-63) out of San Diego. Carl's son is currently in his Department Head tour as Weapons Officer and has just recently been selected for LCDR.



Abelein "Tiger Cruise"

Rusty Cone (11th Co) Connected with Aloha Phil Winters on a recent visit to the Bay area! Great to see Phil. Also had breakfast with Prentiss Hall! He also was there when Prentiss had open heart surgery. Prentiss came through with flying colors. Rusty was amazed at how quickly the docs had Prentiss up and about to kick start the recuperation process. By the time this magazine arrives at your house, I hope he is back at 100%. I had the pleasure of briefly seeing Phil and **Matt Elias** (11th Co) in Annapolis for ceremonies marking the retirement of the VCNO and our 11th Company Plebe, Class of '81's own, **Bill Moran**.



Rusty and "Aloha Phil"

Randy Masters (34th) participated in the 2019 Brompton World Championship Bicycle Race in London. Those are the bicycles that fold-up. It seems Randy has been quite the biking enthusiast as some may have noted from his Facebook postings and the occasional *Shipmate* entry. Randy didn't win the race but didn't embarrass himself either.

With that jacket of his, he *definitely* stood out from the crowd- but I think it more likely was because of the "USNA 78" baseball cap he wore (courtesy of **Joe Leidig** (14th Co)). Next year- the winner's podium, right Randy?



Randy looking dapper

Well, that's all for now. As this is another "two-month" edition of *Shipmate*, belated "Happy Birthday" to my fellow Marines; I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving; and have a Merry Christmas (Mele Kalikimaka for "Aloha" Phil Winters and all the folks living way out there in Hawaii!).

Until the next edition- Launchin' Spot Four.

'79

Life Membership: 91%
Donor Participation: 31.37%

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

Greetings, 79ers!

What a great reunion!!!

I know you're reading this in December, but I'm writing this just a few days after the Class of 1979 40th Reunion weekend. This was our largest gathering since we threw our caps in the air, with nearly 500 classmates and just over 1000 people total attending. Personally, I had a fantastic time. I talked with a

number of you that I haven't seen since graduation, which was amazing. And there were a lot of you that I saw but never got close enough to say hi. Reunions are a lot like a big wedding: sometimes you don't know who was there until you see the pictures. And I hope to start seeing those soon (*that's a hint, by the way*).

One item of class business that took place that weekend was the official announcement of our new class leadership. As you know, elections for class officers and class council were held this summer. The following classmates will begin 10-year terms commencing in January 2020:

- Class Officers
 - President - Dave Jackson (17th Co)
 - Vice President - Chuck Dixon (19th Co)
 - Secretary - John "Wiz" Withers (19th Co)
 - Treasurer - Jeff Johnson (29th Co)
- Class Council
 - 1st Batt Rep - Rich Phares (5th Co)
 - 2nd Batt Rep - John "Fozzie" Miller (8th Co)
 - 3rd Batt Rep - Ralph Quarles (14th Co)
 - 4th Batt Rep - Kirk Michealson (22nd Co)
 - 5th Batt Rep - Stan Clark (29th Co)
 - 6th Batt Rep - Jeff McFadden (36th Co)



Dave Jackson, Class President-elect and wife Chris

I thought this would be a good time to allow the incoming and outgoing class officers the chance to share a

few comments. First up, President-elect **Dave Jackson**:

✉ Greetings Class of 1979! I was honored and humbled to have received Sean's nomination for Class president and to have your support (at least those that voted!). Sean is still President until the first of the year, so what he says goes. I do want to thank him on behalf of you for his 25 years of dedicated service to the Class as VP for five years and President for the past 20 years. I'd also like to thank Fred Gerheiser for his service as VP for the past 20 years. Together they and the rest of your Board established a strong legacy for the Class of 1979.

On Sean's watch we took on many projects, including the Navy-Marine Corps Stadium Class of 1979 Battle Arch that commemorates the Civil War; and a project begun by the Class of 1879 that is a plaque in Bancroft Hall which commemorates the Brigade Commanders. Additionally, we supported academic excellence by sponsoring the Trident Scholar Program. And finally, Sean led the charge by encouraging you to contribute a remarkable \$1.4M to our 40th reunion legacy campaign, overachieving by 281% with 46% participation rate. Bravo Zulu!

I look forward to serving you over the next decade as we provide another link in the chain and forge a strong bond with the Class of 2029. For those I may not have met, I am a firm believer of learn, earn and return. I learned at USNA and Naval War College. I earned during a 26-year Naval Career as a Surface Warrior and then in corporate America for ten years. For the past five years I have returned to USNA and am giving back as a member of the faculty teaching Ethics and Moral Reasoning to Youngsters, as Maintenance Director to Naval Academy Sailing and as a skipper that takes non-sailing Midshipman offshore each Summer in an out-ward bound-like experience. Please stop by the Cutter Shed on Santee basin if you are on the Yard. OV, —Dave