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The Class of 2024 Distinguished Graduates were honored on 22 March during a ceremony in Alumni Hall. USNA AA&F President and CEO Jeff Webb '95 (from left to right), with Distinguished Graduates John Young '78, ADM Samuel Locklear III '77, USN (Ret.), Jerrold L. Miller '77, and ADM Dennis C. Blair '68, USN (Ret.), with Naval Academy Superintendent VADM Yvette Davids '89, USN, Alumni Association Board of Trustees Chairman ADM Mark Ferguson III '78, USN (Ret.), and Class of 2024 President MIDN Mack Daniels '24.

DEDICATED TO SERVICE



A lifelong commitment to serve others is a common value among the Class of 2024 Naval Academy Distinguished Graduates.

Whether it's helping shape the future of the armed forces and their warfighting capabilities, supporting veterans or providing opportunities to current or future midshipmen, these four alumni are dedicated to uplifting others.

ADMIRAL DENNIS C. BLAIR '68, USN (RET.), served 34 years as a naval officer, helped shape America's Cold War strategies, and played an integral role in crafting the Naval Academy's cyber security curriculum while serving as chairman of the Academy's advisory panel on cyber education.

ADMIRAL SAMUEL J. LOCKLEAR III '77, USN (RET.), was on active duty for 43 years and capped his Navy career as commander U.S. Pacific Command. He served as chairman of the Naval

Academy Alumni Association's Board of Trustees (2018-21) and was instrumental in helping expand resources for the Academy and support services for alumni.

JERROLD L. MILLER '77 sponsors spring break trips to Israel for midshipmen and supports JT's Camp Grom, an outdoor recreation facility for people with disabilities and Gold Star families.

JOHN YOUNG '78 helps introduce the opportunities a Naval Academy education can provide to prospective Academy applicants from underserved communities.

Their legacy of service will continue to inspire and impact future generations of alumni. These Distinguished Graduates were honored during a 22 March ceremony in Alumni Hall. For more on the 2024 Distinguished Graduate Award medal ceremony, including video coverage and complete honoree biographies, visit www.usna.com/dga or scan this QR code.



ADMIRAL DENNIS C. BLAIR '68, USN (RET.)



HEADSHOTS BY MIKE MORGAN

Tension was mounting. The clock was ticking. China was posturing.

The United States needed a rapid, strong resolution to diffuse a potentially explosive international incident. America sought the return of its EP-3 signals intelligence aircraft following a mid-air collision with a Chinese interceptor jet on 1 April 2001.

Thankfully, Admiral Dennis C. Blair '68, USN (Ret.), was part of the team charged with crafting a solution through delicate diplomacy. This

incident, about 70 miles off the People's Republic of China island province of Hainan, led to the presumed loss of the interceptor's pilot. The damaged EP-3 made an unauthorized emergency landing at Lingshui air base airport.

America's priority was bringing home the 24 crewmembers of the EP-3 and regaining possession of the aircraft. Blair led the regional military aspects of the EP-3 crisis. The crew was released after 10 days following the U.S. issuing a letter stating it was sorry for the death of the Chinese pilot and the aircraft entering China's airspace. China would not get the formal apology and acceptance of blame from the United States it sought.

Blair's calm presence and focus was commended by the 71st Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig.

"When things were difficult, as for example after the EP-3 collision with a Chinese aircraft, Denny was among the coolest and most capable of decision-makers," said Danzig, in his Distinguished Graduate nomination letter for Blair. "He always mastered details and at the same time saw the larger picture."

Blair said his primary concerns were the crew and ensuring America's reconnaissance pilots avoided similar situations in the future. He said the military part of the equation was pretty straight forward, but combating Chinese misinformation took more finesse.

"I don't recall those being difficult decisions," Blair said. "They were hard things to carry out. Once it became clear what happened, the objective clearly was to get our people back and get the plane back."

"We wanted to keep the Chinese narrative, lies about our plane running into their plane, from gaining any currency. Then, it was about getting ready to fly again. We weren't going to give up those missions."

Gordon R. England, the 72nd Secretary of the Navy, said in his nomination letter, that Blair is "a person of high integrity, always thoughtful, unassuming, open to change and committed to the Navy, our nation and all that it represents." England said Blair was highly regarded and respected by subordinates under his command, his peers and superiors.

England said those traits were illuminated during the EP-3 crisis.

"His calm and deliberate leadership style was clearly on display during the Hainan Island incident when he calmed international tensions and helped to negotiate the safe release of the Navy aircrew," England said.

For 34 years, Blair served the nation as a naval officer. He concluded his career in uniform as commander in chief, U.S. Pacific Command. He served as the third director of National Intelligence, was on the staff of the National Security Council during the Cold War, was a Rhodes Scholar and directed several major studies that helped shape the future of the nation's armed forces.

His legacy stretches to future generations of midshipmen who will benefit from the unparalleled cyber security curriculum he helped craft and is now taught in Hopper Hall. Blair was chairman of the Academy's advisory panel on cyber education (2015-19). He is helping mold the next members of the intelligence community as a professor at the University of North Carolina and Duke University.

RELENTLESS HONESTY

Blair is a sixth-generation Navy officer. He is a third-generation Naval Academy alumnus. While he embraced the notion of a Navy career at an early age, he admitted to a moment of doubt regarding the Academy.

During his senior year in high school, he said he flashed a bit of teenage rebellion. He didn't want to go into the "family business." However, a visit and interview at the University of Virginia proved a bit fortuitous when his interviewer turned out to be a former Navy pilot.

"He said, you ought to go to the Naval Academy," Blair said. "At that point, I gave up."

Blair said the lessons of persistence and teamwork of plebe year and the leadership opportunities as a firstie laid the groundwork for the responsibilities as a junior officer. After his time as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, Blair joined the fleet aboard BARNEY. His Navy tenure included shore duties such as a military White House Fellowship with the secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the chief of Naval Operations' Strategic Study Group at the War College. During the latter assignment, he was lead author of a report on the potential role of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps in future conflicts between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

His sea deployments included serving as executive officer of BERKELEY, as commanding officer of COCHRANE and commander of the KITTY HAWK Battlegroup. Blair said his leadership style was influenced by the enlisted shipmates he served with along with his superiors.

"I was incredibly fortunate to have a long series of good bosses," Blair said. "You gradually build your own style, building it a piece at a time."



ADM Dennis C. Blair '68, USN (Ret.), is helping shape future generations of national security professionals as a professor at the University of North Carolina and Duke University.

Danzig said the Naval Academy's mission shines through in Blair's leadership. While ability certainly matters, moral leadership is nonnegotiable.

Blair could always be counted on to deliver honest assessments, Danzig said.

"It is in this respect that I most especially admire Denny," Danzig said. "It's not just that his mind is first-rate, it is that he always speaks it, without trimming his sails to account for what his listener wants to hear or in his self-interest. ... Denny is the equal of our very best in brainpower and achievement. It is his relentless honesty, though, that makes him so singularly special."

"MARCH OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY"

As one of two National Security Council staffers for Western Europe, Blair was at the forefront of the Cold War history during President Ronald Reagan's first term. He did the presidential staff work to coordinate American policy for deploying Pershing II and GLCM missiles to offset Soviet SS-20 deployments, leading eventually to the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

He wrote parts of President Reagan's speeches on the rivalry with the Soviet Union. This includes the passage of the 1982 speech to the British Parliament in which the President proclaimed, "the march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people."

Blair also helped plan and staff Vice President George W.H. Bush's European trip in 1981 to build support for NATO and momentum for Reagan's visit. Blair said he's proud to have participated in those historic events.

That those words and principled stance still resonate more than 40 years later is a testament to timeless ideals.

"It takes out some of the cynicism we often fall prey to," Blair said "It gets back to basic things: democracy and freedom. Principled-based optimism brings out the best in this country. That's what I tried to do for the rest of my career."

In recent years, Blair has instructed students eyeing careers with the State Department, in the intelligence community and nongovernment organizations. He said his time as a professor gives him a chance "to continue to think," while sharing the knowledge gained through the course of his professional career.

Blair said ROTC cadets and midshipmen take his courses. This opportunity provides a chance to aid those needing the skills to solve complex problems through a variety of military and diplomatic measures.

"It's very enjoyable to try to educate the next generation of national security people," Blair said. "I help steer them to the right place, inspire them and tell them how it can be."

He also aims to inspire future generations of Naval Academy midshipmen. Blair hopes the Academy remains a beacon for young people who want to dedicate their lives to the Navy and to make a difference in the fleet and the nation.

The Naval Academy is a special place, Blair said, because of the tradition of developing leaders of character and those who put service over self. He said from Memorial Hall to the names of the alumni on the buildings, midshipmen are surrounded by models of integrity and honor.

"It's sort of in the atmosphere," Blair said. "It's not that you're just going to go be a great ensign. You go out and try to find some way to contribute to the Navy and protect the country."

"I'd like to inspire midshipmen to have a career of service to the Navy and make the Navy better for them having been there."

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ADMIRAL SAMUEL J. LOCKLEAR III '77, USN (RET.)



For Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III '77, USN (Ret.), attending a service academy was an idea that did not seem like a possibility until he was already enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Growing up in the southeast United States, Locklear was motivated by family and the prospect of serving others. Drawing inspiration from his father and a desire to succeed, Locklear made the decision after high school to join the Navy.

"I think it was really to do three things. One was I'd like to serve my country. The second was I'd like to better myself, open my eyes up a little bit ... and I'd like to see the world."

After bootcamp in Orlando, FL, Locklear was set to become an airman's apprentice and photographer. During that time, Locklear met a chief petty officer who would ultimately encourage him to pursue an officer program. Shortly after, Locklear was nominated to go to the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) in Port Deposit, MD. His objective had now shifted to become an officer in the Navy.

"To be honest, I never looked back from there," Locklear said. "For someone who had never been pushed in that direction or contemplated a naval career, I never looked back, and it never entered my mind that I would do anything other than be a naval officer. And that was true my entire career."

From NAPS, Locklear began his four-year journey at the Naval Academy, where he would begin to expand his leadership capabilities. Serving as regimental commander and brigade commander, Locklear set the foundation for what would become a career in leadership.

"In those days as brigade commander, successes and failures in those short few months molded me into the future four-star admiral I would eventually be and all of the steps to get there," Locklear said.

Although leadership lessons, challenges and a demanding academic curriculum were key moments during Locklear's four years at the Academy, conversations and camaraderie behind Bancroft Hall in the Annapolis evening air were some of his fondest memories.

"After dinner, we would trade sea stories. I valued that close camaraderie, I felt comfortable there," Locklear said. "I felt like how I would feel in later years in wardrooms on ships where we were close together."

"WRAPPED ITS ARMS AROUND ME"

The command that Locklear would come to build at sea as a surface warfare officer would reflect the experience, knowledge and same comradery he shared with shipmates at the Academy.

As a result, Locklear earned respect and success during each of his service assignments.

Through trials and accomplishments aboard WILLIAM V. PRATT, CARL VINSON, CALLAGHAN, TRUXTUN and command of LEFTWICH, Locklear's love for command at sea flourished and would eventually lead to serving as a U.S. Navy flag officer.

For 15 years, Locklear's high performing level of leadership would push the Navy forward through roles as commander Cruiser-Destroyer Group Five/Nimitz Strike Group during Operation Iraqi Freedom and commander U.S. Pacific Command, where he would lead military forces that covered more than half the globe.

"People ask, 'What do you think your greatest accomplishment is?' It's command at sea, and that never would have happened if it hadn't been for my father, for that master chief, for the Naval Academy Prep School, for the Naval Academy and for a Navy that has wrapped its arms around me in the good times and the bad times and pushed me forward," Locklear said.

As part of his 43-year naval career, Locklear was selected to return to where much of his journey began. As the 78th Commandant of Midshipmen at the Naval Academy, Locklear brought elements from his time at the Academy through leadership lessons and the Brigade mindset that he experienced as brigade commander to his staff and to the place he gained perspective on the idea of service.

However, Locklear gained even more perspective as Commandant on 11 September 2001. He understood the road ahead for the midshipmen would present unknown challenges,



ADM Samuel J. Locklear III '77, USN (Ret.), was serving as the 78th Commandant of Midshipmen during the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. During his 43-year naval career, he served as commander, U.S. Pacific Command, commander U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa, and commander of NATO's Allied Joint Force Command.

but he reinforced pride in service and duty to country while in his role.

With each perspective came further inspiration to give his time and talent back to the Academy. As chairman of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association and Foundation Board of Trustees for four years, Locklear boosted the framework for funding the Fluegel Alumni Center.

As a 2024 Distinguished Graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Locklear understands what it means to represent his classmates, fellow alumni and leaders who have contributed to his career of service. His classmates and peers also understand that Locklear fits the bill for this year's selectee class.

"Our Class of 1977 has many members who have achieved tremendous success in their respective roles as military officers,

business leaders, governments officials and in the fields of educators," said Locklear's NAPS roommate and Naval Academy classmate Captain Richard Thayer '77, USN (Ret.). "First amongst us is Samuel J. Locklear III."

Locklear may have not known a four-decade long career in the Navy was possible back in Lincoln, GA, but now he knows the full meaning of what it means to be an Academy alum and to represent the Class of 1977 as a Distinguished Graduate Award recipient.

"Now that they have nominated me and selected me, I will do my very best to represent them as long as I can until I end up on the other side of College Creek," Locklear said.



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JERROLD L. MILLER '77



When Jerry Miller '77 was in the 8th grade in working-class upstate New York, a teacher who had just returned from Vietnam suggested that he consider the Naval Academy for college. Until that time, Miller was thinking more about a career in used auto parts.

After watching an exciting Army-Navy football game on TV, Miller was all-in. For the rest of high school, he focused on activities that led to an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy as a

member of the Class of 1977.

Now 50-plus years removed from that fateful decision, Jerrold L. Miller is a Distinguished Graduate and one of the most impactful philanthropists at his alma mater, contributing to the establishment of The Uriah P. Levy Center and Jewish Chapel.

"To have a Jewish Chapel at the Naval Academy was not because we had a lot of Jewish midshipmen," Miller said. "We wanted to show that this is a Navy and a country that is enriched with many different faiths and opinions and attitudes ... and in order to be the United States, we need to work together."

Working together with people and forming effective teams has been at the core of Miller's success from his days on the Yard, where he excelled at ocean engineering and intramurals to the fleet as a successful surface warfare officer and to the civilian industry, where his ownership and operation of shipyards has played a critical role in building the future of the Navy fleet.

"Put your faith in people who have the capabilities and show them you trust them. I learned to trust people, and a lot of the success I had over the years revolved around trust ... and the trust that existed between other Naval Academy colleagues who were central to my success," Miller said during an interview in his Virginia Beach home.

After graduation from the Naval Academy, Miller reported as a surface warfare officer to MILWAUKEE for a Mediterranean cruise. Following that tour, he attended Surface Warfare School and reported for his next SWO assignment aboard BLANDY, homeported at Norfolk, VA. The ship was undergoing a major overhaul, and as repair officer and damage control assistant, Miller supervised critical elements of the overhaul work, expanding his knowledge of shipyard operations and the needs of the waterfront.

It was an experience that was to have a profound influence on the rest of Miller's professional career. He also served as BLANDY's navigator during the ship's Middle East deployment in the early 1980s.

SHIPBUILDING SUCCESS

Back in Norfolk from deployment, Miller served as an NROTC instructor at Old Dominion University, but knew his career was meant for greatness out of uniform rather than in it.

"I enjoyed my time on active duty, but I didn't view it as something I wanted to do for a career," Miller said. "I realized the people who worked in the shipyard were very similar to the people I worked with in the used auto parts world."

Miller and his Academy classmate Frank Wagner '77 founded Earl Industries in 1984, an on-board ship repair and maintenance firm specializing in naval vessels. The company secured multi-year contracts with the Navy for work on LPD-17 class amphibious ships and later mission modules for Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) class ships.

Miller became the company's president and CEO in 1989, after buying Earl Industries. The company grew rapidly and in 2002, purchased a shipyard. In 2012, General Dynamics purchased most of the firm, which by then was employing more than 1,200 people.

With the remaining assets, Miller founded Fairlead, continuing to provide support to the U.S. Navy. He established The Miller Group, Fairwinds and made investments in energy storage, artificial intelligence and nano materials.

Through these business ventures and contributions to the Navy through his shipyard operations, Miller developed the reputation as an innovator and leader in fleet maintenance and Navy operational readiness and a community leader in economic development and creating jobs for people in low-income areas.

Known as a job creator, Miller's companies have employed hundreds of workers for more than 30 years, and his businesses have been instrumental in developing skilled tradespeople to support the repair and building of Navy ships in Hampton Roads.

These are jobs that support national security and strengthen the defense industrial base. Through his company, Fairlead, he employs 400 people and has become a leading producer of shipboard equipment and builder of ship structures to support aircraft carrier construction. Fairlead has waterfront assets in Newport News, Portsmouth and Norfolk, where it supports activities at Newport News Shipbuilding for CVN construction and Newport News Shipbuilding and General Dynamics for submarine construction.

Now recognizing the need for additional waterfront industrial space, Miller is in the process of revitalizing Lambert Point Docks (LPD) in Norfolk. This venture will spur economic growth, innovation and manufacturing in the Hampton Roads area. He signed an agreement with Norfolk Southern to develop the 130-acre waterfront site. This site will also support construction and operations for a proposed offshore wind farm, accelerating the use of renewable energy. The 130-acre area includes two 10-acre piers and deep-water pier frontage on the Elizabeth River.

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When completed, Fairwinds Landing will be a world-class marine logistics center.

GIVING BACK

At the same time, Miller generously supports his alma mater. He was a driving force in establishing the Friends of the Jewish Chapel, raising \$13 million to build The Uriah P. Levy Center and Jewish Chapel. In the Levy Center is the Esther and William Miller Chapel, named after Miller's parents.

"My parents were very humble people like so many others of their generation, whose actions inspired me and those of my generation to serve the country. I realized at the time that being involved in the establishment of the Levy Center was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that we could not pass up," Miller said at the center's dedication. "Regardless of anything else we will do at the Naval Academy, I will remain most proud of being a part of making that project happen. I like to believe the Levy Center is a strong symbol for religious freedom and tolerance for midshipmen as well as the Academy and the Navy."

Going further, Miller and his wife, Laura, have established and support the Miller Scholars for STEM majors to study in Israel, and they fund a spring break trip to Israel for midshipmen. Miller Scholars experience a six-week program in the summer designed for STEM majors. These midshipmen stay in Annapolis and study first-semester Arabic all day for two weeks.

Then, they travel to the University of Haifa and spend four weeks living on campus with students from all over the world studying Middle East culture and touring Israel. This has become one of the most sought-after trips for midshipmen. The Millers have committed to fund and carry on this program for at least 10 years.

Since the Millers' involvement, 400 midshipmen from all backgrounds have traveled to Israel. They experienced at least 10 days of intensive Israeli and Middle East culture immersion during spring break.

Miller has been directly involved with the Naval Academy Alumni Association and Foundation for nearly 20 years. He has contributed more than \$10 million to the Foundation and serves as vice chairman, where he has been instrumental in ensuring the physical mission, academic facilities and spiritual infrastructure at the Academy are the best in the nation. He was also a significant contributor to the Ron Terwilliger '63 Center for Student-Athletes, Brigade Sports Complex and Hopper Hall.

Last year, Portsmouth's city council appointed Miller a member of the Port and Industrial Commission. He is currently on the board of the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation and serves as commissioner of the Virginia Beach Development Authority. He was also inducted into the Junior Achievement's Hampton Roads Business Hall of Fame and received a lifetime achievement award from Starbase Atlantic, a STEM program for elementary education in Portsmouth, VA. In addition, he was listed in the 2023 "Power 500" by *Virginia Business* magazine.

Despite the accolades, the hundreds of midshipmen he has helped and the millions of dollars he has contributed to the Naval Academy, Miller remains grounded in what he learned in his first days at his alma mater.

"The time I spent in Bancroft Hall with my classmates—to be interacting with people from everywhere and all walks of life—that is what I think the most important part of the experience in Annapolis is."

And now Jerrold Miller is a Distinguished Graduate in the Class of 2024.

"It's a very humbling feeling," he said. "To be selected is a great honor."



Jerrold L. Miller '77 was a driving force in creating the Friends of the Jewish Chapel and the construction of The Uriah P. Levy Center and Jewish Chapel.

JOHN F. YOUNG '78



A lifetime of service began with two formidable role models at home for John F. Young '78.

His father was a Marine aviator. His mother was tirelessly committed to ensuring her seven children were college educated. The family, inspired by matriarch Jane Ann Fitzgerald Young, founded, built and operated a school for children with Down syndrome in Milton, FL, in the 1960s.

This seminal moment had a lasting impact on Young. He would follow his father into military service. While his dream of being a naval aviator was dashed by a medical ailment, Young found satisfaction and fulfillment as a surface warfare officer.

Throughout his corporate career, Young prioritized service particularly to aid underserved communities. His efforts included supporting a Naval Academy STEM Education Outreach Program and helping fund an airline flight for inner city students and their parents to the Naval Academy.

While his commitment to serve was ingrained in him by his parents, his wife of more than 20 years, Julie, was his philanthropic partner over the past quarter century. Julie died from cancer in 2021. Her dedication to helping others is honored by the Park Cities Learning Difference Association. Through the Julie Young Teacher Appreciation awards, outstanding educators who teach children with learning differences in the Highland Park (Texas) Independent School District are recognized.

Young is grateful to have lived a life surrounded by transformative and inspirational models of empathy.

"I've had two great advocates around me my whole life," he said.

"IT'S IN MY BONES"

The Young family of Santa Rosa County, FL, was on the lower spectrum of the economic scale. The family of nine qualified for the school district's free lunch program, although they wouldn't participate as Jane Young always found a way to scrape together enough money for her seven children to purchase lunch.

Her resilience and resourcefulness extended beyond her family. While delivering Meals on Wheels to families in the rural part of the county, the Young family came upon a horrifying sight. A child with Down syndrome was dog collared to a junk car's steering wheel in the front yard.

Jane Young took action. The child received assistance and that act set in motion a chain of events that would leave a lasting impact. She enlisted her family to be part of a solution. Young's father, James Arthur Young, had a home construction business and the family spent six months renovating a house originally scheduled to be razed. Instead, it was moved to a donated lot behind a pharmacy.

This structure was converted into a school for more than 20 special needs students. A doctor and a lawyer from town who had children with Down syndrome helped raise money for the project. Eventually, the school would grow to include 70 students and ultimately become the model for Florida's students with special needs program.

"That's the kind of mother I had," John Young said. "She was a go getter."

That effort, when he was about 10, made a lasting impact on Young. It inspired him to pursue endeavors to uplift others. These include community service relationships with Habitat for Humanity, the Children's Medical Center of Dallas, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and serving as a United Way campaign chair.

Young is a U.S. Naval Academy Foundation Trustee who has made the Academy STEM Education Outreach program a priority. The program, conducted by midshipmen, targets inner city high school students in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Roger Staubach '65, an NFL Hall of Fame quarterback and a 2000 U.S. Naval Academy Distinguished Graduate Award recipient, credited Young with engineering a campaign that raised \$400,000 to assist underserved populations.

"It is a direct result of John Young's relentless pursuit of excellent candidates, that the Dallas area has enhanced the diversity of the Brigade of Midshipmen," Staubach wrote in Young's Distinguished Graduate nomination application.

Young said his commitment to aiding others reflects his parents' values.

"It's in my bones," he said. "That's what the expectation is. That comes from my upbringing."

"WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?"

Service is a common thread spanning Young's life. He grew up in awe of the aviators in his community and watching T-28 Trojans above his home—and occasionally landing in nearby corn fields when engines failed—from Naval Air Station Whiting Field.

James Young was a flight instructor following his service during the Korean War. About 25 percent of his classmates were Navy dependents and his Little League baseball field was in a Navy housing neighborhood.

A basketball court was across the street from his friend's home. Young and Tyrone Dixon would play ball during the summer then retreat from the heat into Dixon's air-conditioned home, an amenity the Youngs did not have. Sometimes, Young would spend the night at his Little League teammate's home.

Some neighbors objected to the friendship. Dixon is Black. Young is white. Unbeknownst to Young until much later in life, his mother received letters from neighbors filled with racist comments.

Intolerance in the 1960s didn't faze the Young family. They experienced anti-Catholic sentiments in their Deep South hometown. They answered by embracing all.

Young stood with his Black classmates as their schools were among the first in Florida to integrate when he was in second grade. Black and white athletes coexisted on athletic fields. Young advocated for racial equality, a theme that would extend throughout his life.

He said his contributions of time and treasure illustrate his values. The Dallas STEM program is a prime example of highlighting opportunities that can uplift others. Spotlighting the Naval Academy produced tangible results.

“What are you going to do about it?” Young said. “The purpose of most of my contributions either of my time or financially is making people aware of the opportunities they might have.

“The goal (of the STEM program) was to get counselors at the schools and (students’) ministers to understand that option existed. Most of the people didn’t believe the option existed. Success was measured by the number of applications that occurred as a result of that. You have to participate to win. If you’re not applying, you’ll never know what you missed.”

ANNAPOLIS BOUND

John Young dreamed of following his father’s footsteps as a pilot. He chose the Naval Academy over Air Force and Army. He turned down an academic scholarship to Stanford and an athletic scholarship to Georgia Tech.

Proximity to Annapolis and friends who were already at the Naval Academy or were headed there played a part in Young’s decision. His Marine father didn’t influence his collegiate selection. But, once Young chose Navy, James Young needled him.

“Remember this one thing: you’re just transportation (for Marines),” Young remembers his father saying.

After participating in twice-daily summer football workouts in Florida, Young wasn’t affected by the physicality of Plebe Summer. He said learning to control his emotions and handling the mental stresses associated with being a plebe were harder challenges. His biggest obstacle to remaining a midshipman plebe year was “cracking the code” of calculus.

The leadership lessons absorbed on the Yard from senior chiefs paid dividends once Young commissioned. Combined with his role as captain of most of his high school athletic teams, Young said he entered the fleet understanding that relationship building was an integral part of leading others.

“If you can’t do that as a leader you’re really messing up,” he said. “These are people you’re depending on.”

Young was a mechanical engineering major with his sights set on joining the naval aviator community. However, he suffers from eustachian tube dysfunction, which makes flying painful as pressure builds in the passageway connecting the throat and middle ear. It’s a condition that can be relatively easy to fix as a child but requires major surgery for adults.

This ailment would derail Young’s aviation dreams. He admits to experiencing a brief period of disappointment, but he quickly adapted to reality and discovered fulfillment as a junior officer



John F. Young '78 is a lifelong advocate for extending opportunities to people from all backgrounds. His support of the Naval Academy STEM Educational Outreach Program in the Dallas area has produced more Academy applicants from underserved populations.

in IMPERVIOUS. He was the damage control assistant on the minesweeper and found working with a team of 60-plus shipmates suited him well.

“Working with that volume of people was much more satisfying than just the loneliness of me and a copilot or me and an instructor,” Young said. “The roles on a ship taught me how to be a leader. I was more engaged every minute of the day with units—from firemen to master chiefs to commanders and captains.”

His senior chief made him qualify as a fireman, then a third-class petty officer, including changing O-rings on a fire pump and working on the diesel engines. He said he earned the respect of the enlisted crew by doing whatever his team was asked to do.

In short order, not being able to fly didn’t matter.

“I got over my disappointment pretty quickly,” he said.

SLOW DOWN

Young earned Atlantic Fleet Ship Handler of the Year awards in 1980 and 1982, serving aboard two different hull types. Following his service in TICONDEROGA, he left the Navy to begin a successful and unpredictable private sector career.

His first job was with Southern Company in Pensacola, FL, as a sales engineer for the marketing department. In less than 15 years, he became the firm’s executive vice president for Southern Generation/Southern Power.

His career track included stints as a chief financial officer, vice president for investor relations, chief operating officer and ultimately CEO of Energy Future Holdings, which at the time was the result of the largest privatization deal in U.S. history at \$45 billion.

Young said his inquisitive nature was essential to learning new skills for positions in which he didn't previously have any direct experience. Asking the right questions, pushing aside ego and being receptive to advice was critical.

"My inquisitiveness got me put in meetings I probably didn't deserve to be in," Young said. "It helped me learn quickly."

Another crucial component to Young's success was the ability to remain composed and clear-headed during moments of stress. That helped during a fire aboard TICONDEROGA and in the corporate boardroom.

"When things get really serious, in my head, things start to slow down," he said. "That's a gift from mom and dad. My blood pressure slows down. I say, 'let's think about this for a second.' That helps me make decisions because I feel I have plenty of time to make them. I'm hardly ever rushed."

"You can set the room calmer by behaving that way, too. If you get scared, believe me, they'll all get scared and they won't be able to do their jobs. You have to set that tone and people have to trust you."

Success in the corporate world also meant advocating for his companies to mirror their communities. Former Naval Academy Superintendent Vice Admiral Walter "Ted" Carter '81, USN (Ret.),

said Young led by example, promoting diversity in the workplace and establishing a model for corporate governance.

This effort was highlighted by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council awarding Young's company the "Top Corps" designation for 22 consecutive years.

"John's extraordinary success as a business leader is based on his core belief that "doing the right thing" is also the right way to run a successful business," Carter said in his DGA endorsement letter.

OPPORTUNITY

Reflecting on his career, Young appreciates the opportunities afforded him by a Naval Academy education. That's how he pitches the Academy to prospective midshipmen and their parents.

Along with a world-class education, commissioned junior officers have the opportunity to grow as people and leaders. They have the opportunity to learn from enlisted personnel "who made us who we were."

"We had five years to learn how to be an adult, a leader and a shipmate," Young said. "That sounds like the greatest opportunity to me." ⚓



The advertisement shows a person from the waist down, wearing a red shirt and khaki pants, pulling a green rolling suitcase. In the background, a white private jet is parked on an airfield. Above the person, there are five award logos: "Best of Virginia", "Best of Loudoun", "Best of Fairfax", "Best of Northern Virginia", and "Best of Washington". At the bottom, the text "TAKE LEAVE" is written in large, bold, white letters, followed by "and leave the worries behind (with us)" in a smaller, italicized font. To the right of the text is a small illustration of a blue bucket with a spray bottle and a cloth.



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77/78 CLASS NEWS

Since we're on the subject of an ineffective Navy offense, **Pete Sisa** (14th Co.) reported he espied **Bill Milward** (17th Co.) and **Mark Dinuzio** (17th Co.) in Foxborough back in December.



Pete offered two insightful thoughts:

- (1) Gillette Stadium was a great venue; and,
- (2) Beat Army...NEXT time!

Speaking of recent Army-Navy gatherings, **Rob Creamer** (18th Co.) forwarded the following photo from the Row Bar in Honolulu, where he was joined by **Shawn Morrissey** (18th Co.) and **Al Lohman** (29th Co.)...



...along with one Mark Brown, USMA '77, aka Brand X. The festivities...enjoyable; the outcome...not so much, though we must take some satisfaction Major General Brown's gracious attempts at consolation terminated when reminded USNA '77 never experienced defeat at the hands of the Black Knights.

Rumors that, in response to Brown remarking, "If I'd been in the Navy, I'd have been a Vice Admiral", Rob replied, "No, General, if you'd been in the Navy, you'd have been an Ensign!", remain unconfirmed at press time.

Moving on, **John Vuolo** (12th Co.) reminded us this past 18 March marked the 10th anniversary of his trek from Springer Mountain, GA to Mt. Katahdin, ME, an enervating excursion encompassing some 2200 miles in just over 5 months time.



Johnny V noted at the time Katahdin was a tough climb, with nearly two miles of boulders and knife edges which he didn't recommend for those possessed by a fear of heights, a warning we remain only too happy to heed!

He also marked the occasion by thanking his wife Beth for her invaluable assistance, as well as honoring those classmates who've gone before us.

Which brings us to our final two entries. 29 January 2024 saw a number of classmates gathered in Falls Church, Virginia to bid **Terry Wilton** (28th Co.) fair winds and following seas one final time. Shown below left to right are: **Chris Perry** (28th Co.), **Pete Filkins** (28th Co.), **Mark Worriow** (27th Co.), **Brad McDonald** (28th Co.) and **Brendan Gray** (28th Co.)...



...along with Terry's coveted flight jacket. Terry was remembered by all present as an individual who never uttered an unkind word about anyone, which is praiseworthy indeed.

Likewise, this past 17 February, a contingent from 9th Company bid **Dan Jerabek** (9th Co.) an equally all-too-early farewell. Pictured left to right below are: **George Sprung** (9th Co.), **Wally Tart** (9th Co.), **Bob Sinibaldi** (9th Co.), **Paul McMahan** (9th Co.), **Skip McKenzie** (9th Co.), **Mike Guthauser** (9th Co. non-graduate) and **Bob Rotz** (9th Co.).



Jerb's service was held in the Norfolk/VA Beach area at Good Shepard Catholic Church in Smithfield, close to where his mother, father (retired LTCOL, USMC) and brother Dave (USNA '79) currently reside.

Both will be sorely missed.

In closing, the words of John Donne, "Each man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind", never ring truer than when the man in question is a Naval Academy classmate. And while we don't for a minute doubt Terry never spoke ill of anyone, we must, at least in part, attribute such saintly behavior to the fact he must never have had a personal interaction with LT Finegold.

Magoo

'78

Life Membership: 81%

Donor Participation: 4.36%

Pres: **Glen Woods**

e: glenwoods@verizon.net

Sec'y: **Vince Balderrama**

1320 Homewood Ln., Annapolis, MD 21401

e: canoeu78@aol.com

Website: usna1978.org

A lot of companies have regular gatherings, mini-reunions and regular zoom calls. I think that's great! Here are few more recent gatherings.

15th Company had a get-together at the Severn Inn with a couple of non-company classmates. Here's a photo of the gang that included: **Case Runolfson**, **Tony Cato** (30th Co), **Ben Harris**, **Miguel Becerril**, **Larry Galvin**, **Bob Schmermund**, and **Tim McGee**. Thanks to **Eddie Reid** (21st Co) for documenting the gathering as the picture taker.



In February, Leslie and Scott Provow (21st Co) hosted this year's annual gathering of 21st Company at their lovely home in Grayton Beach, FL. Attending the gathering of "Fun, food, fun, food, and great friends." Joining Leslie and Scott were: **Chris Burgin**, **Matt Rausch**, **Elliot Powell**, Carol and **Steve Sutton**, Sue and **John Wissler**, Dana and **Charlie Nickell**, and Maria and **Jerry Swartz**. Also present, but not pictured, were Albert and **Rick McClelland**, Caroline and **Jeff Carpenter**, and Karen and **John Simmons**.

Continuing the theme, in early February 2nd Company had a "green light" event at their Company Officer, VADM Gordon Holder's,



'78: 21st Company and their brides



'78: 2nd Company Green Alert

house in Jacksonville Beach FL. In attendance from 2nd Company were Jan and **Jim Fiorelli**, Pat and Gordon Holder, Judy and **Mike McLeod**, **Will Kramer**, **Mike Malinick** and **Mark Miller**. They were joined on Zoom by **Vinnie Bellezza**, **Doug Ray**, **John Semcken** and **Rick Yasky**. John wrote that, "It was great hearing how much Admiral Holder liked and remembered the 2nd Company guys and how appreciative he was that we keep him on the Company Email List. Pat, who was a trooper, is ill and we all wanted to show our support. Of course, many stories were told, and a good time was had by all. 'Whenever two or more shall meet....'"

As for "whenever two or three shall meet," **Racy Bracy** (25th Co) and **Roy Bookmiller's** (32nd Co) wife, Mur, simultaneously reported their families' unexpected rendezvous in early February. Here's what Mur wrote. "What a God moment on our Southern vacay! At our RV resort, our good Naval Academy buddies_Ray & Evonne Bracy-surprisingly pulled their RV into the lot right next to us! We couldn't believe this unintentional blessing! We were able to spend another 5 days with them at Camp Margaritaville in Florida. 400 spaces here & they were right next door!" Ray called me to say that when they had settled into their RV slot, he suddenly heard some screaming outside. When he went outside, he found it was Evonne and Mur having an exhilarating "Oh my God!!" shout at discovering they were RV neighbors. He said it was a great week of good times and some *great meals* together.

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Bookmillers and Bracys

In late February, Cathy and **Herb Nyberg** (34th Co) hosted Cassie and **Don Hamblin** (27th) at Grassy Key in Florida. Cassie and Don had put out there with their sailboat as they waited for a weather window to proceed on to the Bahamas.



Herb and Don

Also at the end of February, our newest Distinguished Graduate, **John Young** (4th Co) and **Kevin "Grinch" Lynch** 26th Co, were out west visiting. They were hosted by **John Semcken** (2nd Co) for a round of golf at the Los Angeles Country Club. As if that wasn't enough, Semcken was able to get them to locker of "The Great Communicator," the late President Ronald Reagan! I hope a little Reagan magic helped them shoot a good score.



John Young and Grinch at Reagan's Locker

Here are two examples that we are all fortunate to have these wonderful women by our sides and proof that we all "married up." The first notes the accomplishment of John Semcken's (2nd Co) successful bride, Mee Semcken and her team (to include John's support). In late February, the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles celebrated the ribbon cutting and grand opening of the Koreatown YMCA Center for Community Well-Being. The facility serves the community and neighbors of Koreatown and offers a wide variety of programs and activities and offers exercise facilities, gym classes and community meeting areas. The ribbon-cutting was the culmination of hard work of many people - to include our classmate, John (who sits on the YMCA Metropolitan Los Angeles Board) and his wife, Mee, who played a prominent role in the development of the Center with Lee Consulting. Congrats to a power-couple, who help make their community better, and truly great friends.



Dedication of the YMCA Center

In the second example, we send a "Bravo Zulu" to **Glen Ives's** (10th Co) better half, **Barb Ives** ('80) for another ribbon-cutting. In this

78/79 CLASS NEWS

instance, family, friends, retired Navy personnel, community partners and College of Southern Maryland (CSM) faculty, staff, and students, gathered for a ribbon-cutting to celebrate the naming of the *Barbara Ives Cyber Lab* at the college's Leonardtown Campus. The press release noted that, "The event recognized the many accomplishments of the long-time southern Maryland resident and retired U.S. Navy Reserve captain who is widely known for her impeccable service to the country, southern Maryland, and academia – including her years working for CSM." Congratulations on a well-deserved honor, Barb!



Barb Ives and her Namesake Lab

That's all I have room for. As this *Shipmate* issue arrives our Another Link in the Chain activities are moving along. I-Day is at the end of June, followed by the July Honor Commitment Ceremony and August Plebe Parents Weekend. Feel free to contact **Bob Novak** (34th Co) or me for any questions or to volunteer.

Until the next issue, **Launchin' Spot Four.**

'79

Life Membership: 91%

Donor Participation: 3.11%

Pres: **CAPT Dave Jackson, USN (Ret.)**
e: djackson@usna.edu

Sec'y: **LCDR John "Wiz" Withers, USN (Ret.)**
1886 Woodpoint Ct., Lawrenceville, GA 30043
p: 240-298-1006; 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!

In March, Class President **Dave Jackson** announced that, with the release of the 2024 football schedule, reunion dates had been set. Our 45th Reunion will be held 19-22 September 2024, the weekend of the Navy-Memphis game. A couple of events are still being finalized, but the schedule will run similar to reunions past: golf on Thursday; class meetings, class memorial, Supe brief and P-Rade on Friday; and tailgater and football game on Saturday.

There are a couple of "tweaks" to the agenda for this year. First, on Friday evening there will be a class "Crab Cake and Flank

Steak Dinner" in the "N Room" at the stadium (where we held the tailgaters at the 35th and 40th reunions). Then on Sunday, we'll have the option to join the mids for brunch at King Hall. The entire reunion schedule can be found here: <https://shorturl.at/xKTV9>. If for some reason that link doesn't work, shoot me an email and I'll send it to you.

By now you should have received the link from Dave to register for the reunion. There's a price break if you register before July 15, so I urge you to take advantage of that. Also, if your '79 attire needs a little sprucing up, the class store is now open: <http://www.usnaclasstore.com/79store.html>

IMPORTANT

– seriously, two important items to note:

1) We will not have a block of hotel rooms this year, so everyone is on their own for making accommodations. Please don't put this off. At least two other classes are having their reunions the same weekend, and there are other events going on in the Yard also, so don't dawdle!

2) Our primary means of communicating with you are the emails that Dave Jackson sends out, which are sent to the email address in your alumni association profile. So, if you are not getting Dave's emails, log in to your alumni association account and update your address there. Please email me if you have questions on this. (Note – we've been having issues with the class website, so Dave's emails will provide the latest gouge.)



Jenn and Mike Chanenchuk, with sons Michael and Matt and wives

OK, now let's get to the bold print. Back in January **Charlie Mark** attended the Long Island Lacrosse Hall of Fame dinner held at the LI Marriott in Uniondale, NY. **Mike "Chan" Chanenchuk** was inducted into the Hall of Fame and was also recognized as Farmingdale High School's first All-America, and as a three-time NCAA All-American at Navy. Mike is one of the top ten scorers as a midfielder in USNA history.

In later years, Chan established the Long Island Express Lacrosse Club, training thousands of student athletes. According to Charlie, the LI Express is where the coaches of top NCAA schools go to recruit tough, blue collar, strong competitors from "The Island" for the sport of lacrosse. In his speech at the dinner, Chan speech emphasized the leadership developed at Navy. Quoting Charlie: "He did our USNA Class of '79 Proud". Congrats, Chan, on this well-deserved honor.

Dave Lindsey may be retired from the airlines, but he hasn't retired from cruising. Heather and Dave spent time earlier this year on a cruise to Antarctica, when it was "summer" down there. Later this summer they're on another cruise to Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Dave took a brief moment from out from their travels to let me know their daughter Shannon, a Navy Lieutenant, recently received orders to the USS *OSCAR AUSTIN (DDG-79)*, which will soon be forward deployed to Rota, Spain. Thanks, Dave, for the note. I'm looking forward to seeing the pictures!



Mike Kantaris, daughter Major Alexis Kantaris, USMC, and Russ Penniman

Mike Kantaris then checked in with a family update:

✉ Hi Wiz! Falling into the category of "we are getting old," I was honored to promote my youngest daughter Alexis to USMC major in February 2023. A 2014 Auburn University graduate of their NROTC program, she is a hard-charging combat engineer (1302) at MWSS-372 (The Diamondbacks) Camp Pendleton. Alexis is a company commander in the squadron and has already completed a tour with the Marine Logistics Group (MLG), been deployed with 13-MEU to the Middle East and completed a successful tour as a Marine Officer Instructor (MOI) at the University of Michigan where she earned her M.B.A. from The Ross School of Business. She has done a lot, all before age 32. **Russ Penniman**, 20th Company was able to attend the ceremony at the pavilion at Del Mar Beach and is pictured with Alexis and me. It was great to see Russ again and about 30 Marines who were able brave the weather to attend. Semper Fidelis, —Mike

Mike, that's terrific! I know you and your wife are very proud of Alexis. Please congratulate her from all of us.

In wrapping up this month, I unfortunately have to report the loss of two of our own. On 1 March 34th company classmate, LT **Bob Buttrick** passed away after battling cancer. Bob's wife, Carole, forwarded the news to our 34th company representative, **Tom Rychlik**.

Bob was well regarded in the 34th Company, where he seemed to skate along by