

*U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column*  
*July - August 2016*

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President: **Chris Cikanovich** (chickc975@gmail.com)  
Sec'y: **CAPT Larry Warrenfeltz, USN (Ret.)** (usna75scribe@hotmail.com)  
5732 Tamarack Drive, Pace FL 32571 850-525-8727  
Web Page: <http://1975.usnaclasses.net>

Dear 'mates, The deadline for the summer *Shipmate* always seems to sneak up on me. Fortunately, our classmates have kept the gouge locker from running empty. You guys make my job easy! Let's start with a reminder to check out the Distinguished Graduate Award page on the USNA Alumni website. The videos and speeches from this year's ceremony are now posted. Go to "Distinguished Graduate Award" under "About Us," then click on DGA Recipients near the bottom right side. It's my opinion that **Carl June's** acceptance speech is one of the most humble, straight-from-the heart talks the Brigade has ever heard.

Photo 75#1: "Erwin Wunderlich and his son, EJ Jr. '99"

**Erwin Wunderlich** sent a photo and a short e-mail. EJ Senior pinned on EJ Junior's LCOL insignia earlier this year at his Quantico office. EJ Jr. was invited to the upcoming national championship for triathletes, but had to decline as he and wife Kim have a newborn on the way then. At least he will be in-country for this little one!



Here is a wonderful story that would never have happened without the thoughtfulness, generosity, and dedication of two of our classmates—plus a timely email from **Chick Cikanovich**. Several years ago, **Mike Zeiders** started the Quality of Life Foundation with this mission: *"We seek to improve the quality of life of individuals and families who provide daily, substantial care for catastrophically wounded, ill, or injured veterans. We want to ensure that every caregiving family is recognized, accepted, and supported in their civilian community."* Go to their website—[qolfoundation.org](http://qolfoundation.org)—to learn more and to support this wonderful foundation.

When **John Kittler** read Chick's email, he thought the QoL people might be able to help a veteran in real need. Kitts has been very active helping veterans in their dealings with the VA in his Panama City, FL home area. Recently, he has been working with a veteran named Dan. Here is Kitts' description of the problem:

"Dan has no family and has been living alone. Dan suffered a stroke in 2013 about a month after dropping a door on his big toe. He does not speak very well and cannot write more than enough to write a check. The toe did not heal well, despite the hospital's efforts to treat it while he was hospitalized for his stroke. Gangrene set in. The gangrene literally outraced the VA bureaucracy—resulting first in the toe, and then the lower part of the leg being amputated in the four months in 2014 following his stroke. Since then he has gone blind from cataracts. When I found him, he was in a wheelchair and had about given up hope. He could not use the wheelchair well as the right side was affected by the stroke and the right leg was amputated below the knee.

Shortly after that, the landlord of the house Dan rented advised Dan that the house was being foreclosed on. Dan had paid \$680 of his \$1070 monthly pension faithfully for three years and the

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landlord had done nothing except collect the rent and had recently not even been making the payments. I realized Dan could do better by buying the house at a short sale, since the payments would only be about \$335 per month. The house is worth about \$44,000 but is very livable. Dan qualified for the loan. (He insists when he passes that the home is to be used for other Veterans.) Unfortunately, because of the landlord had not been doing any maintenance, the “very helpful” VA appraiser advised that the VA would not approve the loan unless a new roof was put on.

I had gotten two roofing businesses involved in getting costs cut. I had already taken care of the other three things (bathroom not working, termites and damage, and exterior paint peeling). I needed help with the roof, and I needed it quickly.”

John contacted Mike and the QoL Executive Director Rachel O’Hern. Within two days, the Quality of Life Foundation provided a \$4,000 grant. John found local donations to cover the balance, and contracted a very Veteran-friendly local company to finish the roof. Dan had cataract surgeries on both eyes through the VA Choice program, and should be able to see the paperwork when he signs to own his home just a few days after column deadline! BRAVO ZULU John, Mike, and everyone who contributes to the Quality of Life Foundation.

Babs and **Bill Konrad** sold their house in Severna Park and bought a home in Mt. Pleasant, SC. With four-and-a-half grandchildren in Charleston (plus Babs’ mother and brother), it was the obvious choice for the Konrad retirement home. The new house will get a facelift before Bill retires next year. He is now United’s Chief Pilot in Newark. Bill received a weather question for the “Ask the Pilot” column in United’s *Hemispheres* magazine. Being Navy-trained, he knew immediately that the gouge was out there—and I got the chance to explain upper-tropospheric temperatures for United’s customers. Thanks, Bill. I enjoyed the opportunity.

Photo 75#2: “A most knowledgeable group of fast pitch softball umpires”



The reason that this deadline always seems to catch me unaware is that it comes at the end of my busy season. My retirement avocation is fast pitch softball umpiring. Since I can only get on the field a few games each year, I put my time into training other umpires. I was the Lead Evaluator for the Florida High School Athletic Association again this year. With

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District tournaments, followed by Regionals leading up to the Florida Finals, I spent a lot of April and May evenings at softball fields.

The state tournament was held in Vero Beach, at the old Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers spring training home—now called Historic Dodgertown. It's cool to stay in the cabanas and use the locker rooms that Sandy Koufax, Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella, Duke Snider, and many other greats once used. We were scheduled to evaluate 27 crews over four days—until rain completely wiped out the first day. We got all 27 games played over the next three days. We were at the fields from 0800 until nearly midnight. I love it—but I'm too old for that!

Enjoy the remainder of your summer! ----- 75 Sir! Larry