

U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY, CLASS OF 1975, SHIPMATE COLUMN

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2017

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Dear 'mates: You are too kind to your Scribe! I've got more great input than ever—and this is the midsummer deadline (when I'm normally begging for column-stuffing). So without further ado, here we go.

A sad note at the start. **Tom Waechter** succumbed to a massive heart attack while hiking in New Hampshire. Tom and Ann-Marie were back in NH while the Mercy Ship Endeavor was undergoing a yard period in the Azores. Sandra and **Scott Bauer** were visiting the Waechters at the time of his passing. Tom and Ann-Marie, Sandra and Scott, Tom's son Aaron with his wife Lisa, and his 9-year old grandson Benjamin all went on the hike. Ann-Marie and Scott were holding Tom's hands when he took his final breath on this earth. Aaron and Lisa were instrumental in trying to summon help, and Aaron helped administer CPR along with other hikers on the trail. Sandra took Benjamin down the mountain to remove him from the difficult scene. The Waechters made a great impact through their work with Mercy Ships. Sandra and Scott were able to spend ten days on board with them in Madagascar last year to see their servant hearts firsthand. Tom was in charge of the maintenance of the pier-side facility that the ship uses to bring patients on board for surgery and later discharge them. Later, Tom became the Transportation Manager. Ann-Marie was a nurse in the outpatient clinic. We lost a great classmate. He will be missed.



<photo 75#1: "BGO of the year!">

Congratulations to **Tom Gregory** who recently received the Commandant's Award from Dean **Bruce Latta '78**. The award recognizes the top Blue and Gold Officer (of the more than 2,200) in the USNA Admissions Office program. Tom covers the greater Colorado and Wyoming area. His rural outreach plan is being used as a model for all rural recruiting areas.

<photo 75#2: "Hampton Roads, I-Day Eve 2017">

Several Flower Children gathered at a watering hole in Virginia Beach to appropriately recognize the 46th anniversary of I-Day Eve. How's that for a clever excuse to get together over a beer??!? Left to right, lower level: **Craig Quigley, Mike Groothousen, Bill**

McGloon, Rick Schwarting. Standing, left to right: **Dave Pruett, Pete Squicciarini, Gary Yagiello, Lloyd Bohn, Doug Schlaefer, Clay Absher, Mark Klett, Roy Chesson, Gary Jones.** Thanks to Quigs for the note and photo.



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Richard J. Thomas (not Richard C.—we had two Richard Thomases) worked in the medical screening section for 2021's I-day on 29 June. The young men and women coming to USNA were incredible to talk to—even after getting blood tests drawn and two armfuls of immunizations. Richard says, “They seem much more composed than I was on a hot day in the basement of Bancroft Hall just 46 years ago.” After thirty years on active duty and seven years as a civilian physician at the National Naval Medical Center (morphing into the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center), Richard now works as an Occupational Medicine Physician for OSHA. He and his wife Anne went from zero to two grandchildren last summer—both of their sons are Navy helo pilots. Their daughter is half way through Elon University in North Carolina. One of the highlights of the Thomas's spring was a trip to Denver to visit with Judy “JG” and **Carl “Jake” Jennings**. Jake has developed a tradition of rounding up USNA and West Point grads to root together against Air Force at USAFA football games in Colorado Springs.



<photo 75#3: “Richard Thomas back in Mother B”>

Annette Hall (wife of **Chris “CJ” Hall**) is one of the founding members and the driving force behind the Slidell Ladies for Liberty—a group of women who put in amazing hours and effort to gather materials and put together care packages and ship them to our active duty members deployed today. New Orleans' *Lifestyles 55+* magazine featured them in their July issue ... with Annette on the cover.



<photo 75#4: “Junes with Mark Kelly”>

Lisa and **Carl June** had an event to remember when they attended the commissioning ceremony of the USS GABRIELLE GIFFORDS (LCS 10) on 10 June in Port Galveston. Over the years, Carl got to know former astronaut CAPT Mark Kelly, USN (ret) and his equally heroic wife, Gabby Giffords—former member of the House of Representatives from Arizona. The event began with an evening reception attended by VCNO ADM **William Moran '81**, Katie Couric, and many others. The evening concluded with a performance by Jon Bon Jovi. (He can still sing!) The Saturday commissioning was highlighted by former Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden, the ship's sponsor, and Hillary Clinton, who gave the main remarks. The plank owner ship's captain—CDR Keith Woodley—was given a baseball hat that had traveled more than 140 million miles over 5,440 orbits. The cap had been aboard the year-long mission on the International Space Station led by Mark's identical twin CAPT Scott Kelly, USN (ret).

<photo 75#5: “Ron and Carl killing the mountains”>

In July, Carl and his son Ron rode in the California Deathride (120 miles through the mountains along the CA-NV border with 15,600 feet of climbs and a max elevation of nearly 8,700 feet). Awesome accomplishment for someone who spends so much time in his research lab! Speaking of which, on 11 July an FDA panel unanimously recommended approval for Carl's CAR-T gene therapy to be used by oncologists everywhere. Congratulations Carl—on an amazing month!



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<photo 75#6: "Fun One at the home of golf">

Gary Jones sent documentation of First Company's 2017 golf outing.

"Members of the First Company Golf Team gathered together at the home of golf in May. On hand for the Scottish adventure were Sherry and **Doug Ayars**, Nan and **Terry Blake**, Tammy and Gary Jones, Pat and **Jimmy Miller**, Tina and **Mike McDermott**, Jenny and **Bob Phillips**, plus Jane and **Rob Reed**. Even though Mike is a non-golfer, he



walked along for a few rounds, provided expert commentary, plus escorted the wives on various excursions while the golfers experienced the gratification of links golf. We met up in Edinburgh, and over eight days played five rounds sandwiched in between sightseeing in the Scottish Highlands. While tours of castles, museums, and driving along Loch Ness occurred, the daily highlight normally ensued at a local pub or distillery. Given the popularity of the TV series "Outlander," a tour of the Culloden Battlefield was also a must do.

As for the golf, after a soggy first round outside of Edinburgh at Gulland, we moved north to play Royal Dornoch (near Inverness) and our luck with weather improved. By the time we arrived in St. Andrews, Rob Reed had shifted into shorts, and our three rounds there were conducted under blue skies, warm temps, albeit breezy conditions. The overall winner of the golf competition was the trip coordinator and tournament director, Doug Ayars, with Bob Phillips coming in second. As both were CEC officers, there was a protest filed by the aviators (Rob and Gary) on the grounds of unfair advantage given their knowledge of excavation and sand composition (important gouge ... given the numerous and treacherous bunkers of links golf). The protest was denied by the tournament's audit chair and Professor of Practice at NPGS, Terry Blake.

Nancy Burd-Laabs attended the wedding of Hima and **Andrew Thompson '05** on 17 June. Andrew is the son of Missy and **Dan Thompson**. Jamie and Nancy were Andrew's plebe sponsor back in the day. It was a beautiful wedding at the USNA Chapel followed by a waterfront reception at Celebrations at the Bay in Pasadena, MD. **Steve Laabs** was not able to attend with Nancy. But other classmates included **Mark Lamboni**, Mary and **Dave Rogers**, Debbie and **Tom Donaldson**, and Patricia and **Rich Torgersen**. (Unfortunately, the pictures at hand are too low-resolution to print. If you have a clearer version, I can put it in the next issue.)

Speaking of the October issue, I have some more great photos of 35th Company's Italian adventure (see the August *Shipmate*) in the hopper, and probably some first impressions of the 2017 football season.

'75 Sir! Larry