

**U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY, CLASS OF 1975, SHIPMATE COLUMN**  
**NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2017**

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Dear 'mates: In the last *Shipmate*, Nancy (Burd) Laabs reported on the wedding of Hima and **Andrew Thompson '05** at USNA on 17 June 17. Andrew is the son of Missy and **Dan Thompson**. Jamie and Nancy were Andrew's plebe sponsor back in the day. Here's a picture from after the ceremony. Classmates attending (in addition to the Thompsons) included Debbie and **Tom Donaldson**, Mary and **Dave Rogers**, Patricia and **Rich Torgerson**, and **Mark Lamboni**.



<photo 75#1: "Thompson wedding">

**Roy Chesson, Pete Squicciarini and Craig Quigley** and their spouses had a wonderful Elizabeth River cruise and dinner on 22 July. Pete and Anne Squicciarini hosted on their beautiful 46' power boat.



<photo 75#2: "Underway on the Elizabeth River">

**John Kittler** has found a calling of value and great service. Leading the Florida Veterans Communities, he played a big role in helping AMVETS open a new housing project in Ocala. The house provides 22 units for veterans (many formerly homeless) that allows them to get back on their feet. John relayed two

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quick feel-good stories: (1) He had a family that was facing homelessness. The vet said to John, “I just wish someone would give me a chance.” John replied “I will.” The guy now has a \$16/hr job as a diesel mechanic, and that is his pay while in training! (2) John also had a female vet—a nurse with PTSD from sexual assault. She had to move due to threats at her old apartment. Florida Veterans got that one done in 24 hours, but unfortunately, the threat claims were validated because her tires were slashed her last night in her old place.

John asked that we publish the “trinity” of websites for Veterans Benefits:

1. Veterans Benefits Navigator (<https://explore.va.gov/benefits-navigator>). You play 20-questions with this secure and easy to use VA site and it provides information on what your benefits may be, based on your answers. Even knowing as much as he does about VA benefits, John found that he was eligible for some insurance he did not know about.
2. Veterans Benefits A to Z (<http://benefits.va.gov/atoz/>). This site provides further information on benefits that you may have found with the Veterans Benefits Navigator. The benefits are listed by general topic and alphabetically.
3. National Archives (<https://www.archives.gov/>) This site can help you find your records you need to file for the benefits above. It also has your dad’s and grandad’s records, including discharge certificates if you need them.

[Thanks to John’s roomie, **Zach Wilhoit**, for this story tip. John is too modest to brag about himself.]

In mid-July, Deb and **Roger Still** took their two daughters and sons-in-law and their two grandchildren to Central Europe for two weeks. First stop was Prague, where on day one they spent an unforgettable afternoon and evening with Roger’s Plebe year roomie and best bud **Chris Nielsen** and his wife Jana at the Nielsen’s “modest compound” in the village of Obory, deep in the beautiful Czech countryside outside of Prague. Their home is a marvel of architecture, comfort and high-tech infrastructure. Having the two families finally meet was a major highlight of the Stills’ trip. The Niensens were exceptional hosts, and all of the offspring were the closest of friends by the time the Still contingent left! They grilled Scottish beef flown in for the occasion; drank Czech Pilsner and some excellent Spanish and Italian wines; shared a few PG-rated USNA stories; and basically just hung out. It was the best of times! As Chris had promised Roger, it was the perfect antidote for eight hours of jet lag!

<photo 75#3: “Chris and Roger together again (46 years later)”>



As an operational consultant to the New York Football Giants, **Bill Squires** works closely with the MetLife Stadium management team. Bill had the pleasure and honor of attending the press conference announcing that MetLife Stadium will host the 2021 Army/Navy game—the 20th anniversary year of the 9/11 attacks on New York City and the USA. This is a very important event for both USNA and USMA and the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region. VADM **John Bird** ’77, USN (Ret) is the Senior Vice President for Military Affairs for USAA, which is the presenting sponsor of the game. His remarks at the press conference were spot on and he clearly articulated the importance of the Army/Navy game to all those who have served and are currently serving our great country.

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<photo 75#4: "Squires '75 and Bird '77 celebrate the announcement of the 2021 Army/Navy game in MetLife Stadium">

Speaking of football, the 2017 season is off to a solid start— as of this writing. Coach Ken has the team at 3-0 with most of the long season still ahead. Nancy and I met up with our Tulane-graduate son and his family in Annapolis for the 9 September game. We didn't realize what a wonderful experience it is to introduce grandkids to the Yard and to Navy football! Thanks to Nancy and Steve Laabs for the great job on the '75 tailgate for every home game. Classmates hung out there or drifted over from their own

parties. It was so nice to see so many friends!

<photo 75#5: "Grandkids loved the Yard">

<photo 75#6: "Tulane Tailgater">



With that, I wish you a Happy 2018 and I will type to you again in the coming Dark Ages.

'75 Sir! Larry