

U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY, CLASS OF 1975, SHIPMATE COLUMN
APRIL - MAY 2018

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Dear 'mates: Recently, I was talking to my friend, Pensacola Chapter member, and fellow scribe, **Royal Connell '70**. We agreed that one of the tougher parts of the position is sharing the far too frequent reports of deaths in our class families. This month, 25th Company's **Tom Kelley** did a superb job on this duty, so I will turn the column over to Tom.

It is a sad truism that as we enter our mid 60s, many of our gatherings or mini-reunions revolve around attending funeral services. This was the case in January 2018. **George Melnychenko's** (25) wife Desiree (a Navy veteran) died on 9 January after a long battle with cancer. Services were held 12 January (St. Andrews Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Silver Spring, MD) and 13 January (St. Michaels Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Baltimore, MD). Both services were beautiful; the Ukrainian Orthodox rituals were as unique as they were inspiring. Several classmates attended one or both services. In the accompanying picture from January 13 are **Bob Guida, Steve Hubbard, Chris Cikanovich, George, Paul Viscovich, Mike Groothousen, and Denis Powers. Jim Thoms, Steve Laabs, and I** were at the January 12 service.

Steve Cole (25) died on 7 January in El Paso, while on his annual Rio Grande duck hunting trip with his brother Jeff and son Andrew. Steve also fought cancer for many years. Steve's wife, Carole brought Steve back to North Carolina to be remembered by family, friends, and classmates. I do want to mention that the service was very powerful—from the eulogy by the Pastor, readings or poems by Steve's three children (Steve Jr., Andrew, and Sara), and the singing of *Navy Blue and Gold* to the folding and presentation of the flag to Carol. There was one interesting glitch during the service: the music stopped during the first stanza of *Navy Blue and Gold*. Only eight 'old men' continued to sing *a capella* (8 of the 18 surviving members of 25th Company attended the service). Later in the afternoon, Carol hosted a celebration at the local country club. Many beers were hoisted in Steve's honor; many stories were told—some of them were even true! The two pictures from Steve's service are the guys (**Lunce Bass, Jim Thoms, Denis Powers, Bob Guida, Mike Groothousen, Dave Corley, Bo Clark, and me**); and the gals (Tricia Groothousen, Karen Powers, Betty Betz, Chris Thomas, Diane Bass, and Dixie Clark).

On a happier note, Betty Betz and I got engaged in December after a relatively short courtship; you can't waste too much time when you are 64! Betty has a connection to the Navy—her Dad was on USS IOWA in the 1940s—but very little knowledge of her Dad's service. After spending a weekend with eight classmates, she has been properly indoctrinated. I am a retired NFO (S-3s). I tried to explain to Betty what an NFO did; she boiled it down to, "So you don't know how to fly a Navy jet." My response was, "Uh. No." So that was that!

<photo 75#1: "At Desiree's memorial service">



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<photo 75#2: “The guys at Steve’s service”>



<photo 75#3: “And the lovely gals”>



<photo 75#4: “Tom and Betty”>

Excellent work, Tom! Well said. We also lost **John McCauley** and **David Chatlos** in December. After the two events affecting his company, **Bob Guida** composed a beautiful poem that deserves to be shared throughout the USNA family:

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On Heaven's Seas

(by NH State Sen. Bob Giuda, USNA '75, USMC 1975-84)

On banks of Severn, band of brothers born,
Stand tall today, as here we join to mourn.
As bid "Farewell," another slips away.
But never gone, though not in present sight,
Still holds the course as comes the still of night;
Though silent, now stands watch on Heaven's seas.

Our love a bond we formed so long ago,
We stand as brother leaves this earthly home,
As bid "Farewell," another slips away.
Through blur of tears we lift him now to You,
Sound "Taps," as draped in nation's symbol hue.
He stands the watch for us on Heaven's seas.

"Flank speed!" we called, as sailed from Mother B,
Our service under, over, and on sea.
As bid "Farewell," another slips away.
We traversed all the wonders of the world,
Our love of country, strong with flag unfurled.
He stands the watch for us on Heaven's seas.

"Eternal Father, strong to save" our song,
The hymn that binds our hearts and souls so strong.
As bid "Farewell," another slips away.
As men who served in every clime and place,
We now commend him to thy loving grace.
To stand the watch for us on Heaven's seas.

No more salutes to flag, nor warm embrace
Of love, or passion, ended now the race.
As bid "Farewell," another slips away.
We stand, heads bowed, as one, with single plea.
Now bring him home to harbor, God, with thee.
To stand the watch for us on Heaven's seas.

He lives within us, now and ever more,
As guidon sets our course to Heaven's shore.
As bid "Farewell," another slips away.
With stunning cadence, flag is folded tight.
As days of life give way to quiet night.
He stands the watch for us on Heaven's seas.

As he has done in previous years, **Marc Siedband** set up a Capstone Ethics Program seminar sponsored by the Class of '75 on 31 January. Held in the Chesapeake Room, the Capstone seminar is the culmination of the midshipmen's four-year ethics continuum and is designed to simulate some of the moral and ethical dilemmas graduates can expect to experience as junior officers in the Navy or Marine Corps. Joining Marc as table facilitators were **Chris Cikanovich**, **AJ Ronacher**, **Tom Gray**, **Roger Still**, and **Bill Etsweiler**. They all agreed that the interaction with the midshipmen throughout the day really charged

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them up and left them supremely confident about the future of the Navy and Marine Corps team. They could not have been more proud of this superb group of future officers. A mini-reunion over dinner at Galway Bay capped off the Capstone seminar.

<Photo 75#5: “(top left to bottom right) Tom Gray, Marc Siedband, Diane Cikanovich, Bill Etsweiler, Roger Still, AJ Ronacher, and Chris Cikanovich” >



<Photo 75#6: “It’s pretty obvious to me!”>

Finally, Craig Quigley found that even Walmart likes our class. Type to you in June! ’75 Sir! Larry

