

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

SEPTEMBER 2018

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Dear 'mates: Once again, you've been extremely kind to your Scribe. My challenge this issue is to fit everything in! Firstly, congratulations to **Mark Klett**, who was presented with the *Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award* by Marquis Who's Who. BZ Mark!

Let's continue with a story from **Steve Curlee**.

"One of the perks associated with being a grad is the opportunity to acquaint the children of classmates, and to have 'mates befriend our own progeny. It is a tremendous blessing that each of my three kids have continuing relationships with many of our classmates, independent of Dad. One of those relationships glowed on 28 July, when classmate **John McTighe** administered the wedding ceremony for my son Sam (USNA 09) and his bride Audrey on Mission Beach in San Diego. Years ago—when Sam was but a nine year-old—John and Joyce McTighe hosted him in Coronado. Subsequently, John traveled from San Diego to Burlington NC during Sam's gun lap in high school to offer Sam his USNA appointment. In May 2009, John and Joyce joined the Curlee family at NAVY for Sam's graduation and commissioning. Treasured memories all, and a special thanks to "Reverend McTighe!" Sam is a surface nuke, currently serving as WEAPS aboard USS BUNKER HILL CG-52. Wanda and I are truly honored to experience the love of John and Joyce as they continue to care for our kids and grandkids while we are on the other side of the country.

Another classmate maintained a continuing relationship with Sam for years. Sandy and **Phil**

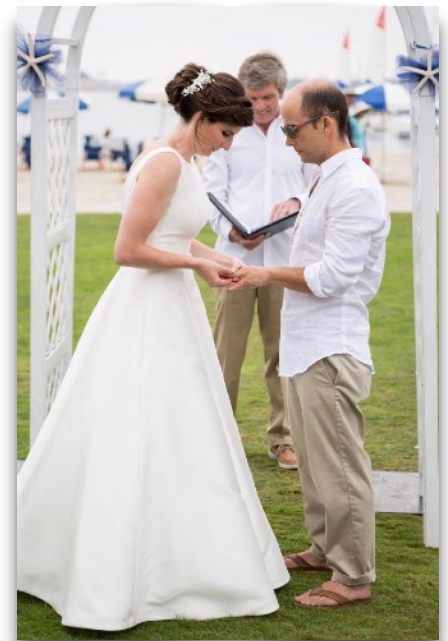
Carlson took time off from his responsibilities at Taylor Family Vineyards in Napa to fly in for the wedding, bearing a very loving gift in support of Sam and Audrey's reception. We all agree, the best that anyone could ever do for us is to do well for our kids. Thanks John, Joyce, Phil and Sandy!"

<photo 75#1: "John McTighe officiates at Audrey and Sam's wedding.">

<photo 75#2: "Curlee (pere et fils), McTighe, and Carlson">

Cindy and **Gary Miller** traveled to Chicago this summer so Gary could attend Rock 'n Roll Fantasy Camp with three Rock 'n Roll Hall of Famers — Buddy

Guy, Nancy Wilson of Heart, and Chris "Whipper" Layton (of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble). Campers were formed into a dozen bands that rehearsed at a local recording studio. Every one had their



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own “hands on” mentors (in Gary’s case—Slim Jim Phantom of Stray Cats and Gary Hoey of Hocus Pocus). Over the course of the experience, participants learned band dynamics, received instrument and voice training, heard from industry speakers, and participated in Q&A sessions with the guest musicians. However the “heart” of the experience were five live performances (three with the headliners) over four days at local venues including Reggie’s, Buddy Guy’s Legends blues club and The Music Garage studios. Gary says it was an “exhilarating, challenging, exhausting ... and ultimately unforgettable experience.”



<photo 75#3: “Gary with Nancy Wilson”>

<photo 75#4: “Gary’s playing draws a smile from seven-time Grammy winner Buddy Guy”>

Another cool (actually, **COLD!**) adventure story from **Peter Damisch**.

“It has been an interesting year. At the end of one very long day, our team was buried in high, freezing seas then unexpectedly trapped ashore overnight in Antarctica by 100+ mile per hour winds since our two, small rubber zodiacs could not be recovered on board ship. Later in 2018, we made an armed landing on the Northern coast of Russia. I was leading hikes as well as providing security because we had three polar bears in sight nearby. We were looking for an X-Ray machine in a very small indigenous village of less than 150 native people living on the edge of the Arctic. This was for my lovely wife, Lesley, who had sustained a fracture while we were exploring an abandoned Soviet weather station on an offshore island above the Arctic Circle between Siberia and the North Pole. Since I was on the weapons team, she had to be supported in the zodiac by a group which included the former Vice President of Russia. As Lesley would say, “You just can’t make this stuff up.” ”

<photo 75#5: “Armed landing in Russia.”>

Berny Foerster spent three years in his garage building a Sonex airplane around a VW engine. This year he checked a bucket list item by flying it to the Oshkosh Air Show. Here are some notes from his log:

16 Jun—Crack of dawn flight from Jacksonville. Headed to Lagrange, GA but ended up at Pine Mountain due to fog. Dodged bad weather for the next two legs, finally landing at Festus (south



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of St. Louis) where he found a very narrow 2200' runway. (Nothing a Naval Aviator couldn't handle...)

17 Jun—Five rides to kids.

18 Jun—Rides for adults and a niece out of Spirit of St. Louis (much longer runway).

19 Jun—Outran weather to Chicago Bolingbroke to give his aunt a ride. (Helping her out of the plane took longer than the flight.) Berny had to rescue two baby skunks out of his aunt's basement window well. (Another first).

20-22 Jun—Lousy weather everywhere.

23 Jun—Crack of dawn again. Got to Oshkosh with LITERALLY 100+ planes holding. After 3:40 holding time, went to Fond du Lac for gas and another hour to get into Oshkosh.

23-27 Jun—Volunteering and seeing just about everything an aviator could want to see. Even the Blue Angels made a pass!

28 Jun—Early departure to St. Louis via Logan County, IL (nice museum). Two rides for the kids.

29 Jun—Yet another crack of dawn departure. Quick fuel stops in Lawrenceberg and Pine Mountain, then the fun began. On the way to JAX the weather really got even with Berny. After Alma GA, the storm cells were growing everywhere. JAX center was a huge help directing him around all the stuff—taking him over the entire Okefenokee Swamp to a west entry to Cecil Field. From there he could see Herlong (home field) and after a very exciting windy landing, got the plane to the hangar 20 minutes before a class 5 thunderstorm.

<photo 75#6: “Berny and his Sonex”>



John McTighe decided that it was time to head “Under Johnny Mac's duties at NSW took precedence. Yes, he is still working hard and keeping our country safe (when he isn't performing wedding ceremonies). So, Bloomy and Doug decided to rendezvous somewhere between Boston, and Wrightsville Beach, NC. It was a flashback to the Spring Break of '72 dive and visit to Bermuda. The night prior to the excursion way off the coast of Rhode Island ... well, all they will say is that **Jeff Winston** was nowhere to be found. The dive was cold, fun and even quite educational. (Think blue sharks!) Our classmates are planning a dive in warmer waters in 2019. Where in the world will we find them next? Who knows?

<photo 75#7: “Doug and Bloomy before the dive of '18”>



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Some Fun One news: Three years ago, **Ron Nicol** and **Dan Murphy** bought summer places in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan—very close to Mike Meier's permanent home on the Millecoquins River in the Hiawatha Sportsman's Club. Being a Marine and an outdoorsman, Mike decided he needed to indoctrinate Ron and Murph to the joys of overnight backpacking so he put together an op-order for an trip to Chapel Rock on the southern shores of Lake Superior. Dan told him that his last overnight hiking trip was **SERE School** in 1987 and that he had better not see anybody hiding behind trees. Ron's last night in the woods had been in Boy Scouts. After much planning and some purchasing of needed equipment, Ron and Dan reported for **come around** at Mike's place on the morning of departure to inspect gear and distribute supplies. After a hard day of hiking (and based on the challenge of *"I will if you will"*) Mike and Dan took a dip in 59 degree Lake Superior where 4-6 ft waves were breaking on the beach. Luckily, they had plenty of Kentucky's finest to warm them up and provide needed nourishment. The 5-star meal of steak and ramen noodles was great, followed by a night of sitting around the campfire (a citronella candle since fires are prohibited at the site) reminiscing and solving most of the world's problems. The following day they hiked back out to civilization and a late hamburger lunch at a local pub full of very mean and hungry looking stuffed black bears.

<photo 75#8: "Three old mids, carrying about 45 lbs. of gear each, headed off into the unknown.">



Rock 'n Roll camp, armed landings in Russia, flying cross-country in homemade airplanes, diving in the North Atlantic, overnighting in the UP wilderness ... my amazing classmates, I am living vicariously through you! Keep it up!



<photo 75#9: "In the stand on the first day of archery season">

Received a selfie from Erwin Wunderlich. "Day breaks over the Ichetucknee in north Florida on the opening morning of archery season. I am up in a tree with conditions buggy and muggy, and hope all our classmates up in the Carolinas have fared well after Florence. Just heard a deer snort, so gotta run, but Go Navy!"

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<photo 75#10: "Warrenfeltzes and Thumms. Brunch in P'cola">

Patty and **Mike Thumm** drove over to Pensacola from their beach house in Navarre to have brunch with Nancy and me. They're selling the place, but that will just give them more freedom to travel and enjoy life. It's always great to see classmates! '75 Sir! Larry