

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column JUNE 2020

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Dear 'mates, Across the land, Flower Children hunker-down, shelter-in-place, self-quarantine, bump elbows, shop during "seniors only" hours, and laugh at toilet paper hoarders. Those in Florida practice social distancing in their backyard swimming pools. Meanwhile, in a well-landscaped home in the suburbs of our nation's capital, a small man bravely makes his way to his keyboard. Ignoring the pain from multiple broken ribs, he gathers intelligence from sources all over the country and produces ... the St. Patrick's Day 2020 Rudy-Gram! **Dan "Rudy" Elins** does a fantastic job of keeping 18th company classmates connected.

The common threads of the 2020 Rudy-Gram seem to be "retired" and "grandparent." Good things — both of them. Some other tidbits: **Randy Avers** is quickly approaching the "retirement" status from his position as a dentist in the DC VA Hospital. **Larry Kloth** is spending his retirement as a "gentleman farmer" in upper Michigan. He is the proprietor of Whispering Leaf Farm. He and Anne also tutor students in reading—specializing in kids with dyslexia. **John Stufflebeem** is still active in his consulting business—The NJS Group, LLC. **Bob Young** is the Rear Commodore of the Annapolis Sailing Club. Vicki Burger (Gerry's widow) co-owns a book shop in Casper WY.

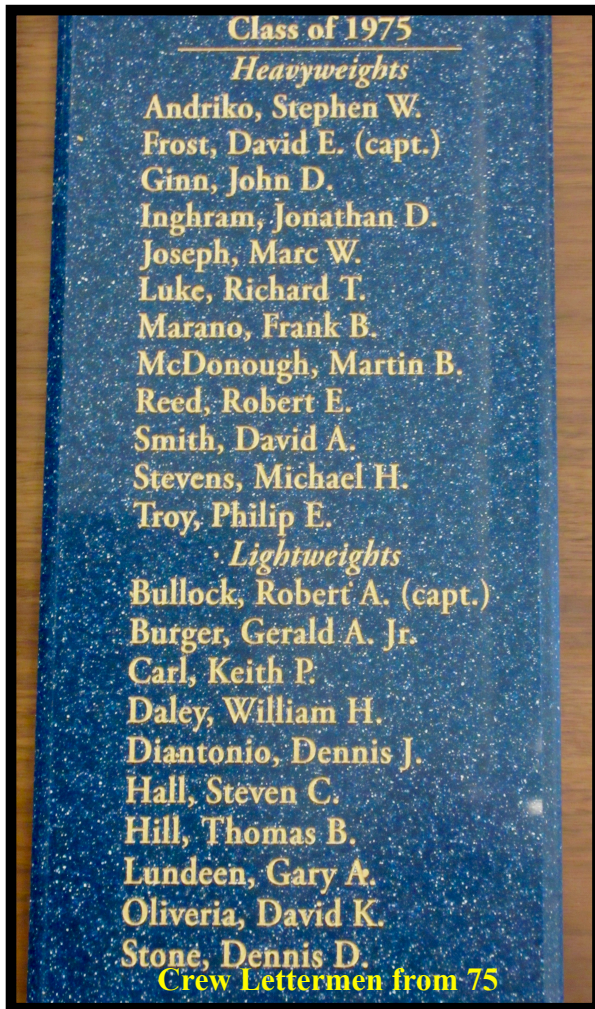
Joy and Bob Young traveled to Livermore CA to attend the wedding of Max Burger, son of deceased classmate **Gerry Burger**. They made it back out of California just as the state was shutting down and ordering everyone to shelter-in-place. Bob says that he's never washed his hands so well and so often in his life. The photo shows Gerry's wife Vicki, son Max (the groom), bride Jordyn, and sons Will and Alex.

President Chick says that the job description for class presidents in our age group should include many solemn visits to the USNA Columbarium. Likewise, our ***Shipmate*** column often includes mentions of classmates who have fought the good fight and finished their races. This month we mourn **Roy Chesson** and **Larry Weckbaugh**. Roy succumbed to gastroesophageal junction cancer in Smithfield VA. Larry (the driving force and the strong back behind many reunion tailgate parties) died from complications resulting from cardiac arrest. Our sincerest condolences to the Chesson and Weckbaugh families and to their many friends.



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While at the academy for Larry's memorial service, Rudy Elins snapped a couple of photos of the letterman plaques in Hubbard Hall



Crew Lettermen

Larry Kloth and Joe Bertalan had lunch in



Minneapolis in late February (first sighting since that June day in 1975). Larry was back in the Twin Cities visiting former work mates after living there just a few years ago. Larry called Joe, and after 45 years, they had a lot to talk about!

The Pensacola chapter of the USNA Alumni Association held our annual Blue and Gold Banquet on 14 March at the Pensacola Yacht Club. Our guest speaker was not allowed to travel from Annapolis, so we had plenty of opportunity to socialize (while keeping our six-foot distance after

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doing the elbow bump). **Butch Hansen** and his wife Lee have reversed the normal trend, and UP-sized to a larger historic home that is another thirty feet up the hill from their previous house in Pensacola's North Hill district. The new house fits them better and has a workshop for Butch.

Trent Powers returned to the country from Egypt on Friday 13 March. His experiences with COVID-19 travel restrictions proved to him that a week that included the change to daylight savings time, a full moon, and Friday the 13th would have been a good one to hunker down. Here is Trent's story:

"I am still work in the nuclear power world and am a project manager with Worley, an international company providing project management and engineering services throughout the world. For the past ten years I have been working with the Egyptian Nuclear Power Plants Authority, leading a team assisting as their technical consultant as they work with Atomstroyexport — building four 1200 MWe units on the Mediterranean coastline. Much of the work we do is directly in the client's offices, so we end up spending a great deal of time in Egypt. All of the non-Egyptian members of my team stay at a fairly large hotel and I typically spend three out of every four weeks there. This hotel also caters to many tour groups passing through Cairo on their way to Luxor for river cruises, or leaving the country to return to their homes. As the peak of tourist season is from November to April, the hotel sees hundreds of these tourists every day, including many from the Far East. As news of the spread of the COVID-19 virus spread around the world, we knew it would only be a matter of time before it started to impact us.

Sure enough, on 10 March while we were at work, our Egyptian colleagues told us that officials from the Egyptian Ministry of Health had surrounded our hotel and were performing health inspections. Upon return to the hotel, the management informed us that a guest that was there in February had tested positive and that the Ministry was being conservative in following up. There were no restrictions being placed on any guests currently at the hotel. We didn't think much of this until the next day when we found some restaurants suddenly closed for "maintenance." I wasn't overly worried, as I was scheduled to leave Egypt on the 13th and fly home via Frankfurt.

Just to make things exciting, bad weather was forecast for Northern Egypt on Thursday and Friday—dust storms, wind and rain. In Cairo, any amount of rain greater than a few mm is enough to cause massive flooding in the capital due to the complete lack of any storm drain system. The Prime Minister declared Thursday (the last day of the work week in the Middle East) a holiday to close schools and keep the roads clear.

On Wednesday evening, President Trump announced new travel restrictions out of Europe. No details, but on Thursday morning I went into panic mode about verifying if my flight was going to fly or not, as there was no immediate information about when the ban would take effect. Lufthansa had cancelled the Thursday flight that I normally take to the US and the status regarding the flight on the 13th had disappeared from Lufthansa's website.

When we woke up on Thursday, guests at the hotel were informed that there were police surrounding the hotel and a new round of health inspections was going on. Six new infections were reported among guests and hotel staff. Guests could not leave the hotel unless they could show an airline ticket and left directly for the airport, nor could any employee enter the hotel from outside. I spent most of Thursday trying to get my team out of the country before we got quarantined.

Not knowing if I would be able to get home via Europe, I had our travel agent re-book me on a direct flight from Cairo to Toronto and then into Philadelphia on Friday the 13th. All flights going West leave in the very early morning, so I was out of the hotel—after having a temperature screening and declaring that I felt OK—on Thursday evening by 7:00 pm local time for a 1:00 am flight. I was questioned by the police as to where I

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was going as I was waiting to leave the hotel. On the trip to the airport (on a big, but empty bus) I observed massive flooding in several spots, even though there had been only about one-half of an inch of rain. A number of cars were stuck in high waters that they were foolish enough to try to drive through. But I was able to get to the airport and eventually made my way home. I am doing a two-week self-isolation, but feeling fine and enjoying working from home. Egypt stopped all air traffic in and out of the country beginning 19 March, so it was fortunate that I was able to get out.”

As the sun sets on the Western Gate to the Sunshine State, the tall, one-legged scribe closes his laptop and smiles to himself ... mission accomplished.

'75 Sir! Larry