

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

SEPTEMBER2020

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Dear 'mates, Every year, your scribe puts together the September column while overlooking the Atlantic from a Kill Devil Hills beachside condo. We're at our annual family beach reunion. As the September deadline occurs less than four weeks after the August deadline, it's usually a rather skimpy effort. Not so this year! *[Hopefully the other classes will have little to report during the COVID slow down, and the wonderful and generous Shipmate editors will allow me to exceed my allotted column-inches.]*

I was thrilled to receive this email from **Bill Squires**.

"I returned to my home on Friday, June 5th, following a 71-day stay in a hospital (48 days) and rehab facility (23 days) battling and recovering from COVID 19. I was on a ventilator for 32 days and was unconscious for almost the entire month of April. I am currently rehabbing and relearning how to walk, swallow, and improve my speech. I lost 35 pounds, and I am on a feeding tube. I survived thanks to the power of prayer and the support of so many friends and family. I sincerely appreciate the support of my classmates from the great Class of 1975, especially my company mates from 20th Company. I am blessed to have survived this terrible virus, and I believe I will fully recover. Please don't take this virus lightly. It is extremely dangerous. Stay safe!"

Mark Harper's son Patrick graduated from the Naval Academy and was commissioned an Ensign on 22 May. The ceremony was virtual and contained pre-recorded greetings from a variety of celebrities, as well as live speeches by the usual suspects, given in uniform to empty seats in Alumni Hall. The Harpers dressed for the occasion and watched in the comfort of their living room. No stadium parking hassles, no long lines, no sunburn worries. Like his father, Patrick majored in Mechanical Engineering and is going submarines. His "N" however, is gold, unlike his dad's.

Tim Born responded to my plea for column gouge with a great note:

"Under the premise of better late than never ... Our family continued the tradition of military service by starting a second Long Blue Line (Navy style) last summer. Our youngest — MIDN 3/C **Heather Born** '23 just completed her Plebe year and is now at home tele-learning since Youngster cruises were cancelled. On her right is her Mom (Dana, USAFA '83) who, in the spirit of family "jointness," started our family's first Long Blue Line (Air Force style) after retiring as Dean of Faculty at USAFA and successfully recruiting our older daughter Hanna (USAFA '20). Heather's Plebe year turned into a 28th company affair. Unlike in our days, she actually got a "Navy Good Deal" when



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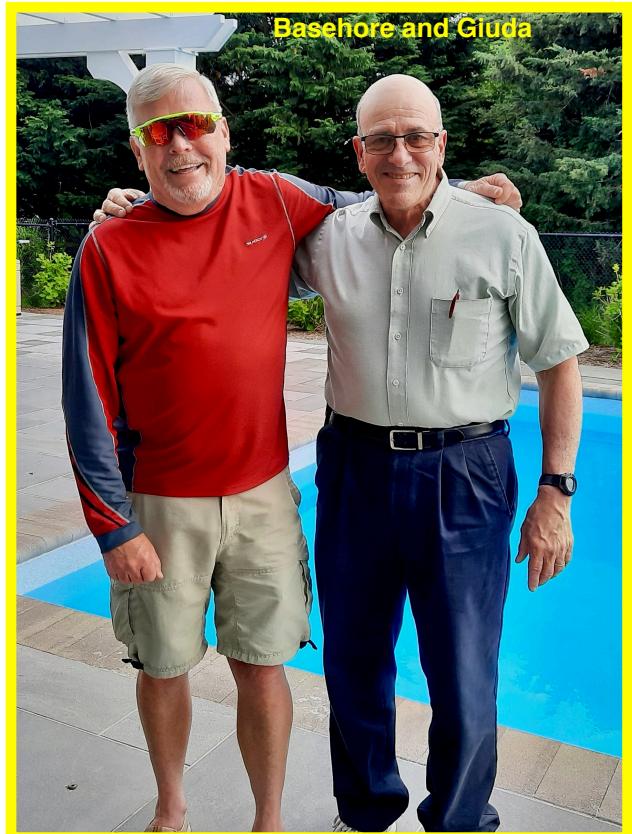
company mate and Annapolis resident **Jay Donnelly** and his wife Mimi volunteered to serve as Heather's sponsor. Jay and Mimi did their level best to spoil her on weekends, most especially with Mimi's home-made pizza.

While doing my civic duty and voting for class officers, I noted your Meteorology background and thought I'd share some Navy "meteorological trivia" which you may/may not be aware of. My Dad also served as a Naval meteorologist ...although in his day they were called Aerologist's. He flew in the South Pacific during WW II and upon return underwent training at NAS Lakehurst, NJ in 1948 where he earned his LTA (Lighter Than Air) "single aviator wings" (for airship and balloon pilots). He then went onto NPS, where he earned his Aerology degree. He subsequently served as an Aerologist at various NAS where he flew manned balloons to take instrument readings that were used to prepare atmospheric charts and weather forecasts. Balloons in those days weren't much to speak of ... just crude hemp-woven baskets ... pilots controlled altitude by dumping sand bags to gain elevation... and releasing gas to descend."

Tom Kelley "semi-retired" on 31 December giving him some time to track down some of the guys from 25th company who did not graduate from USNA. M

Company/35th Platoon started with 35 plebes. Thirty-four began Ac Year. Only twenty graduated on 4 June 1975 — a pretty big attrition rate. Two Companymates died since that date: **Kenan Knieriem** (boating accident) and **Steve Cole** (cancer). Tom has been in contact with 16 of the 18 remaining grads for the past couple of decades. Recently (like many of our Company reps), he looked for the non-Naval Academy grads. He successfully contacted ten of them through various means. You need intel, tenacity, and time. Without exception, they were happy to hear from Tom, often engaging in one-hour plus conversations. As a result, **Bob Giuda** (grad) visited **Mike Basehore** (non-grad). They hadn't seen or talked to each other in 47 years!

Tom also found an I-Day 1971 photograph in the ubiquitous "shoebox of miscellaneous snapshots." No, it is not the Bataan Death March, but some of 35th platoon on the way into T-Court for the induction ceremony. Tom's dad took the picture. First rank, **Tom Larsen** (prior enlisted, non-grad), **Kent Dillon Schickli** (non-grad), and ?? (can't tell). Second rank, **Jim Thoms**, **Denis Powers**, and **Wynn Calland**. Third rank, **— Stevenson** (non-grad) and Tom. Fourth rank, **Kevin Casey** (non-grad) and **Paul Phalen** (non-grad).



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Like Tom and other company reps, **John Kittler** has been tracking down our classmates who left us before graduation. Here's his first edition of the illustrious "lost boys" of 10th Company '75:

"**Marty Blacklock** and **Tom Hensler** are kind of unique with respect to me. I was a roomie with Tom and then moved into Marty's room when he left. Marty left us Plebe year after some medical issues caused some academic problems and things just were not working out. I moved into his room and rack when he left. I also got his mentor — "Diamond Bob" Moon (Mayor of Palm Springs of late).

Marty finished school, moved to Houston, got into the Oil & Gas Industry, did well, then went with FMC Technologies, Inc. for 35 years, ending as the Global Account Manager and world traveler (more than one way to skin that cat). The last five years there he was Western Hemisphere General Manager for the divisions out of France that made high end LNG transfer equipment. A friend talked him into retiring early to run his manufacturing plant. He eventually negotiated for a long term payout and went into business consulting. Marty finally "retired" in 2019. He's married to a great lady, Kimberly. They have a son, Ryan and a daughter, Lauren, and four grandkids. Ryan is a Class of 2004 grad, a Naval Aviator who flew EP-3 and P-3's. Ryan is now a Delta pilot and Blue & Gold officer. He and his family are in Greenville SC. Daughter and her family are in San Antonio.

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Houston has a large USNA Parent's Club. Marty was President of the club for 1.5 years. It took him up to the Academy for business between the B&G Officers, the Alumni and the Parent's Club(s). The Houston area had more Midshipmen at USNA (155) than any other region. They were a Navy Proud Parent's Club. Marty has some bragging to do on his son. Ryan was un-sat his first semester of Plebe Year. During an academic review he was asked what his goals were for 2nd semester. He said to make the Supe's list. He was told that no one has gone from un-sat to Supe's list in one semester and was asked why he thought he could. Now for Ryan, math was his thing. He said it was because he had three math classes and no chemistry. Ryan made Supe's list and was on Supe's or Dant's list from that point forward. He was also the captain on the USNA pistol team. In his youngster year in competition at Ft. Benning GA, he won the national championship in three of four events. That's where he met a petite little blonde who became his wife. She was on the Women's Junior Olympic Pistol Team.

Marty says that he appreciates still being a part of the USNA family. When Ryan wanted to attend USNA, his B&G Officer was a retired O6 who told Marty that he was part of the Alumni family, grad or not ... nice to hear from another angle. Best quote: "It was weird, but I actually liked Plebe Summer."

Tom Hensler weighs in as our "Black N" rep. He is famous for telling off a firstie during plebe year. (Geez Tom, you did what most of us only dreamed about.) Sometime during second semester youngster year, he came to the conclusion that Mother B and Navy at Sea was not for he. He left to finish at a real college, Georgia Tech. He got a BS in Industrial Engineering and an MS in Industrial Management. He also got his CPA while working as a consultant for what is now Ernst and Young. He finally settled at the Coca-Cola Company. At Coke he rose to be CFO of the Minute Maid Company for ten years. His last job was as the finance lead for the SAP software system install at Coke. He also worked on many acquisitions and divestitures of various Coke bottlers. He retired from Coke after 28 years in 2015. He lives in Sugar Land TX, and is married to a wonderful woman (Kathy). They are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary this December. The Henslers have triplet daughters who are now 30 years old. Whitney went to George Washington University (Journalism major), is married and works as an account rep at an internet marketing company in Austin. Her husband is currently at the University of Texas law school. (Her father-in-law is a 1971 graduate of USNA who went Nuc Sub). Regan attended Emory University (Economics) and Northeastern University (Master of Accounting). She is an internal auditor with a financial services company in Atlanta. Kelsey attended Agnes Scott College in Decatur GA (History) and The University of North Texas (Master of Information management). She is a Collections Librarian at the University of Texas Cancer Research Library in Houston.

After retirement Tom and his wife have been traveling almost nonstop up until the COVID-19 event. They have been to Peru, Brazil, Japan, Iceland, Mexico, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Singapore, Australia,



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Russia, India, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and a few others. Little known fact: Tom has caught both a foul ball and a thrown bat at a major league baseball game (hopefully with his hands).

Tom says, "I always tell people that I am very glad that I went to USNA but I am also glad I left. Life has been a blast. Thank you so much for getting in touch with me. It has reconnected me to a time and place that I was aware of but had been kinda forgotten. My Black N is framed on my wall in my office at home."

Interestingly, Tom attends many of the Army Navy games in style as his daughter's father-in-law has a box at the stadium in Philly. That is a long way from plastic shoes and 100 pound overcoats in freezing weather Tom! Makes me wish I had treated him better as his roomie plebe year...."

Well, Classmates — this was fun, but the beach is calling me! Type to you again in November.

———'75 Sir! Larry