

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column MAY 2023

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Dear 'mates, Wow! Ask, and ye shall receive! A simple plea on the '75 Facebook page brought forth a veritable plethora of great information.

First of all ... congratulations again to **Ron Nicol**, who became a Distinguished Graduate at this year's DGA ceremony on 24 March. Look for a report and some photos in the June issue.

The brand new USNA Alumni Center is scheduled to open this summer. Everyone of the millions who will eventually visit this fantastic center will know that the Class of '75 is alive and well. There will be a large USNA 75 plaque in the garden. The arrival center will be the USNA '75 Arrival Center. The entire Operations Wing will be the **Tig Krekel** USNA 75 wing, and the business lounge will be the **Ron and Liane Nicol** USNA 75 Alumni Business Lounge. As of this column deadline, we have 89 classmates who will be recognized as Plank Owners of the Alumni Center. Tig Krekel is sponsoring plank owner status for several classmates who lost their lives while serving our country. Personally, I can't wait to proudly tour the beautiful new alumni center.

From 50th Reunion Chair **Bob Guida**:

"Time, tide, and formation wait for no man," and neither do Class Reunions. A dedicated group of twenty-one volunteers has begun planning for our 50th. We're holding monthly Zoom meetings (for now – frequency will increase as the reunion gets closer) to report progress and assign and manage tasking. We're coordinating with the Academy, the Alumni Association, and various private entities that will be working with us to make this the best reunion ever. We've divided up our work into committees and hired a professional Event Planner who specializes in USNA reunions to coordinate and manage our progress.

The 50th Reunion is traditionally the last "big" one, as we all advance into our sunset years. Because of this, we're making plans to provide assistance to any who might not have the financial resources to attend. There'll be more about this and other reunion information by email and in future issues of *Shipmate*, as appropriate.

Hopefully, you completed the survey you received in February. We will use your preferences on scheduling, events, dinner(s), activities, etc. Your input is vital to helping us make our Gold Reunion the best it can be, for as many as possible.

Finally, please mark your calendars. The reunion has been set for Homecoming Weekend, Thursday, October 23 through Sunday, October 26, 2025. Start planning for the cost and for any special needs you might have. We want you with us in Annapolis!"

On Monday, 24 April 2023 the Class of 2025's class officers accepted donations of personal Naval Academy rings, ring miniatures, and pins from their Class of '75 Links in the Chain in a solemn "*Bonds of Gold*" Ceremony in Memorial Hall. The donations also included 100-year link rings from the Alumni Association ring bank. The donated rings and pins are melted down and added to the gold that will be used to forge 2025's rings, creating a lifelong physical bond between our two classes. Note that '75 will also be invited to attend 2025's Ring Dance in 2024.

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It's hard to believe that our link-in-the-chain class of '25 is nearly finished youngster year! At the end of 3/C year, the entire class meets at a designated venue for an informal picnic to celebrate being halfway through the Naval Academy program. This year's Youngster Luau will be on Wednesday, 17 May. Contact ALITC chair **Steve Hubbard** if you are interested in attending.

Nielsens and Kondracks
in Gesky Krumlov



<photo 75#2: "Kondracks with Chris and his daughter TJ">

Last October, Chuck Kondrack and his wife, Terry, set out on a trip to Eastern Europe and a Danube River cruise. After all these years, they were able to take advantage of the close proximity to visit his 21st company classmate Chris Nielsen and wife, Jana, who live in the Czech Republic near Prague. Since both Chuck and Terry had family that immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe, it was an easy decision to add some extra vacation days with Chris and his family to explore the old world and countryside.

Kondracks with Chris and his daughter TJ



Chris and his family live in a wonderful village about an hour south of Prague. It is surrounded by rolling hills in the Bohemia Region of the country. Farms and orchards dot the countryside, with small towns and villages throughout. Castles, old churches and stone houses are everywhere. Besides enjoying the great hospitality and time with Chris and his family, Chuck

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and Terry were given a personal tour of Cesky Krumlov — one of the world's best-preserved medieval cities, complete with castle. While there, Chris and Chuck caught up on the latest gouge while indulging in beer and Trdelniks (Czech cinnamon sugar pastry) which were both outstanding. Unfortunately, Chuck couldn't tell which contributed more to his waistline, but he was on vacation so it didn't much matter!

All told, it was a wonderful experience and they couldn't have asked for a better time. Chris and his family made them feel right at home as did his Czech friends. The food was amazing and countryside was gorgeous. When the time came to leave for the cruise, Chuck and Terry wished they had included a few more days to visit with Chris and his family. They can't wait to figure out a reason to return back to that part of the world!



Chuck with a small Trdelnik

EJ reenacts a Seminole War scrimshander



EJ Wunderlich started 2023 with a Seminole War weekend reenactment at Dade Battlefield State Park as a scrimshaw demo-er/peddler. He used a turkey feather with ink (true to 1836 style) to color his scrimshaw. At that time, soldiers out of Tampa wanted their powder horns and knives personalized. It wasn't **only** sailors who did scrimshaw! Cannons are blasting away behind EJ in the photo. Love that warm Florida January weather!

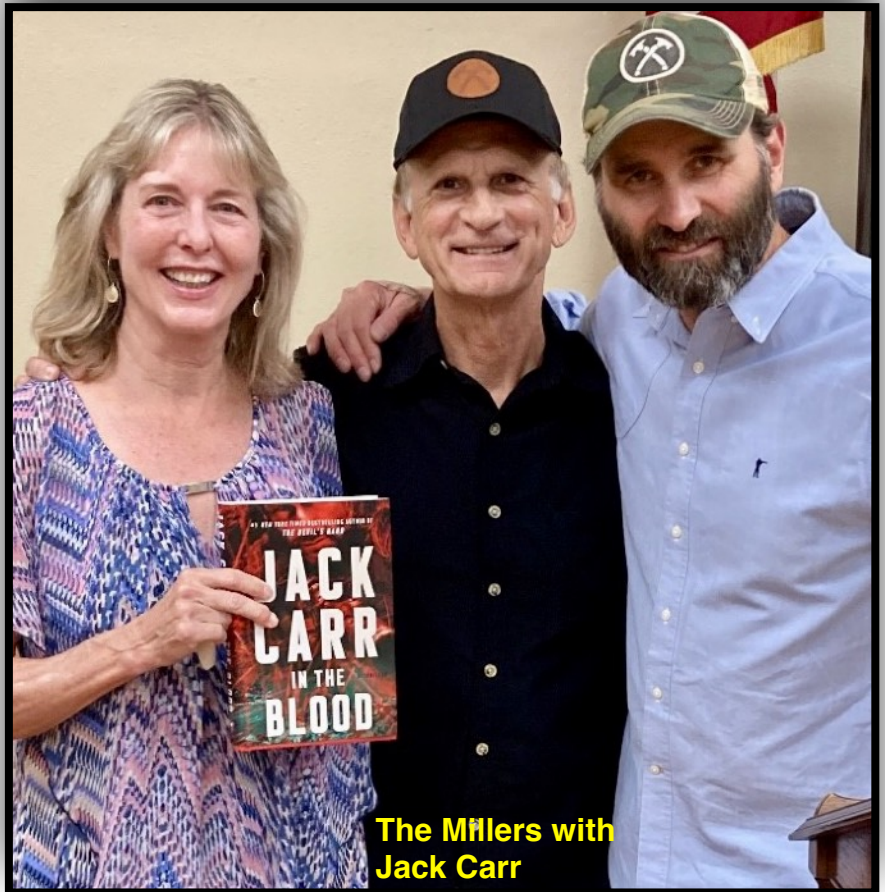
Like many of us, **Gary Miller** is a longtime fan of the military, special operations, counterterrorism thriller genre popularized by such authors as Tom Clancy, Brad Thor, Mark Greaney,

and Vince Flynn. In 2018, the latest author in this line — former Navy SEAL Jack Carr — released the first of his (as of now) five books, "The Terminal List." The first book became the basis of a successful Amazon Prime series of the same name, starring Chris Pratt. Gary saw that Jack was doing a book tour for his fifth novel, "In The Blood." As the author lives in Utah, most of the cities on the book tour were far from Florida. However, at the end the list, there was one book signing in a small bookstore in Winter Park. Gary was thrilled to nab two tickets just before the event sold out. At the signing, Jack spoke to attendees and answered questions for over an hour before greeting everyone individually and signing books and memorabilia. (Some of the souvenirs he was asked to sign by the special operations heavy audience were crazy! Just where

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does one properly autograph a Winkler SEAL tomahawk?) A genuinely nice guy, Jack stayed at least an extra hour beyond schedule to ensure everyone had a meaningful exchange with him. Cindy Miller was smitten with him sufficiently to start reading his books. A second season of Terminal List has been green-lighted. Given the success of his Amazon Prime series, the Millers were especially glad they had the opportunity to meet him before celebrity and success force him to stop making such informal appearances.

Every February the USNA RV Chapter holds a come around in Key West. Lots of fun and great stories of younger days at USNA. Wendy and **Kirk Daniels** led the '75 contingent. Kathy and **Fred Weber** joined up and stayed in the Daniels' 5th wheel. Gail and **David Penman** were in the RV next to the Daniels. **Bob Brown** flew in to join everyone in the fun that is Key West. Diane and **Chick Cikanovich** heard that there were classmates and partying in town so they naturally joined in the fun as well.



The Millers with
Jack Carr



Happy Hour in Key West

Enjoy your summer
— and make some
time to drop a few
lines to your Scribe.

75 Sir! Larry