

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

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Dear 'mates, Our July column was overflowing with good information and great photos. *[Thanks to the Class column editors for allowing me to "slightly" exceed our allotted space.]* Unfortunately, one important photo got buried near the end of our page. Sincere apologies to **Phil English's** widow and to his USNA family. Let's give it another shot ...

Weddings and funerals tend to serve as family reunions. 19th Company "brothers" — along with wives, family members and guests — gathered at USNA on 9 May for the sad occasion of the inurnment of our beloved classmate and companymate, Phil English. Phil passed away in November in Seattle with his loving wife Kitty by his side. Phil was loved and respected by all who knew him. Thirteen members of the 19th Company gathered for the inurnment to pay their respects. In the picture are **Bob Eichelberger, Jim Emery, Kevin Hart, Mark Klett, Mike Lord, Roger McFarland, Gary Powers, DC Ray, Mark Satorius, Joe Sweeney, Randy Sweeney, Dan Wheeler, and Steve Wheeler**. Phil's inurnment was a great reminder not to miss class reunions, while we still have a chance to enjoy each other's presence.



We lost another great classmate just before the September column deadline. **Erwin Wunderlich** was a multi-faceted renaissance man. Educator, scholar, author, scrimshander, historian, beekeeper, veteran bow hunter, coach, family man — EJ collapsed while playing senior softball and could not be revived. Our sympathy to Sue and his wonderful family

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023



Gary Miller stars at the National Senior Games

12th Company's **Gary Miller** achieved a goal he has been working on for many years — reaching the podium at the National Senior Games. Gary won the Florida Senior Games 800m event each of the past ten years. However, the top three eluded him in each of his previous trips to the Nationals ('09, '13, '19 and '22). This year in Pittsburgh, Gary earned the Bronze! Gary wants classmates to know that even if you're not as compulsive about a sport as he is, there is a spot in the National Senior Games for you. They have nearly two dozen different individual and team sports for ages 50 and older (in 5-year age groups). The Games ordinarily take place every other year, and typically draw about 10,000 senior athletes from all over the country with many competing simply for the fun and camaraderie. (Thanks to **Steve O'Brien** for the gouge.)

David Gray sent this great report.

“After a year of planning, “Operation Whitefish” became a reality in July when Mary Lou and **Ray Wassel**, Denise and **Tom Cihlar**, and Mary and I spent a wonderful week visiting Sandi and **Craig Solem** at their beautiful home in Whitefish, Montana. Many hours were spent enjoying the views of Glacier National Park from their deck, playing games, laughing (a lot), reminiscing about old times, and catching up on new events. Craig and Sandi are living their retirement dream, enjoying golfing, hiking, camping, skiing, fishing, and—of course—Glacier National Park. They were the perfect hosts and made our

week extra special. They took us to the top of Whitefish Mountain (via a ski lift) for the panoramic vistas, on a day trip through Glacier NP, golfing, on a cruise on Flathead Lake, on visits to historical places, and on a drive through the Bison preserve. We also spent a few nights sampling Craig's bourbon collection. It was hard to determine which was the best, so

we just kept tasting. It was a fantastic and memorable week renewing the camaraderie we began over 50 years ago. Nancy and **Steve Laabs** happened to be in the area at the time, so they were able to join us for dinner one evening. Ray and Mary Lou are retired near Richmond. They drove from Virginia with their Airstream trailer, camping several weeks up and back. Tom and Denise are enjoying retirement in Ponte Vedra, FL. Like us, they took the quicker route by flying into Whitefish. Mary and I are still in Clifton, VA. We keep busy traveling every chance we get.

Speaking of traveling, Mary had a



Laabs, Cihlar, Wassel, Solem, and Gray in Montana

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023



conference in Austin in May, so we headed to Texas a few days early to spend a couple of days in Dallas. We visited the George W. Bush Presidential Library (our goal is to see all of them) and the Dallas Book Depository where JFK was assassinated. (That brought back a lot of memories from that tragic day). We also had a fun dinner with Liane and **Ron Nicol**. Then we headed to Austin for Mary's Clay Minerals Society

Conference. Since my only job was to carry bags, I took the opportunity to head down to Texas A&M to see **Hank Lawson**. He is the Interim Director for Texas A&M's Extension Services for Emergency Response. Hank gave me the VIP tour of their facilities—including the Fire Training Field, Disaster City® and the Emergency Operations Training Center. It was quite impressive! We also took some time to visit the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin.”

Pete Squicciarini (our world famous Salty Sam) took a group of Hampton Roads area classmates on a River Cruise in his 47' yacht. Ann Squicciarini (fantastic hostess) provided the hospitality with an amazing spread of food. A great time was had by all on a beautiful warm night traveling through historic Norfolk on the Elizabeth River. (Almost like youngster cruise.) Participants included **Mark Klett**, **Bill McGlooin** and Beth, **Rick Schwarting**, **Dave Duffie**, Ann Squicciarini, Diane Schlaefer. In the back—**Doug Schlaeffer** and the Commodore—Salty Sam. (Dave Duffie reporting.)



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Fishing Team in Ontario



The first week in August saw the anglers of the First Company Fishing Team assemble in Naubinway, MI for their second annual trip north to fish on Lake Esnagi in the wilds of Ontario. Joining the team this year were first time anglers **Chuck Geyer** and **Randy Avers**, plus **Joe**

NFO Mike McDermott completing his walk around of the Otter float plane before boarding for his seat in Business Class



**U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023**

Austin. Joe started Plebe Year with '75, but chose a different path. He played collegiate football at Central Michigan University then became a very successful HS football coach. As fate would have it, he now lives in Naubinway along with **Mike Meier**, **Dan Murphy**, and **Ron Nicol**. With a population under 500, Naubinway is located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It is the northernmost community on the shores of Lake Michigan. Very small world! Much to the team's surprise, in spite of the Canadian wildfires, the week saw clear skies and no hint of smoke. Plentiful walleye were the preferred catch, with the occasional pike to make it sporty. Lake Esnagi is only accessible by float plane or train. Thanks to Mike Meier for coordinating another great trip to a beautiful location with lifelong friends. In the photo above, the Fishing Team is assembled outside of Lodge 88 on Lake Esnagi. (L to R): **Gary Jones**, **Mike McDermott**, **Chuck Geyer**, Mike Meier, Ron Nicol, Randy Avers, **Rick Gribble**, and Joe Austin. In the back right are **Dan Murphy** and **Rob** *"you should've seen the giant pike that swam by my boat"* **Reed**. (Gary Jones reporting.)

The class was well-represented in Dublin at the season-opening Navy—Notre Dame football game. The Fighting Irish dominated the football game, but national-champion Navy rugby walloped Notre Dame 78-0 at Trinity College the day before. We won the weekend!!

75 Sir! Larry