

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column MAY-JUNE 2024

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President: **Chris Cikanovich**
Sec'y: **CAPT Larry Warrenfeltz, USN (Ret.)**
5732 Tamarack Drive, Pace FL 32571

(chicke975@gmail.com)
(usna75scribe@hotmail.com)
850-525-8727

Web Page: <http://1975.usnaclasses.net>

Dear 'mates, Congratulations to our Links in the Chain as they become **FIRSTIES** this month! Here's an overdue flashback to the beginning of this academic year. The "Two for Seven" ceremony is a far cry from 1973, when we just showed up for our first class and — bingo — we were committed for two more years in Annapolis, followed by five in the Regular Navy or Marine Corps. (Thanks to **Chick Cikanovich** for the report.)



2025 restates their Oath of Office at the "Two for Seven" dinner

As the Brigade reformed, classmates were invited to attend a dinner with the Class of 2025 to celebrate their Commitment to completing two more years at the Naval Academy and five years after graduation. Prior to starting class, the new 2/ C midshipmen fell into line to sign a document recognizing their understanding and commitment. The evening celebration was much more. There was a pre-dinner reception for '75 and '25 to meet and talk about the implication of the commitment. Classmates were assigned

escorts (who volunteered early on and sought out the time to be with their links in the chain).

The keynote speaker was our very own ADM **Jon Greenert**. Jon met all expectations with a very enjoyable, entertaining and informative speech. 2025 came away with many noteworthy and memorable points. In the middle of dinner, '25 rose to reassert their commitment to their class ethos and restate their Oath of Office. A very moving event. Once again, the midshipmen were fantastic hosts. It was a most enjoyable dinner and great fun exchanging stories of life in Bancroft ... then and now.



Wayne Bergman shares wisdom with his host.

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Chick, Jon and Mark Harper with our "Links in the Chain"



President's Circle Weekend

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Fifteen classmates returned to Annapolis for the President's Circle Weekend in October. The USNA Foundation invited donors of a certain level to meet with Naval Academy Leadership and members of the Brigade during a three-day event concluding with a tailgate party prior to the Air Force game. Several members of the '75 entourage took the time to ensure that the Alumni Bar at the new Fluegel Hall Alumni Center was adequately wetted and ready for the general public. In the photo: Raleigh Weckbaugh, Diane Cikanovich, Rebecca Kersey, **Mike Langley**, Julie Langley, **Kerry Kersey**, **Doug Gibson**, **Tig Krekel**, **Chris Cikanovich**, Nancy Gough, and **Dave Gough**. Of course '75 showed the crowd how to party. Other classmates in attendance included Wayne Bergman, **Shaw Cohe**, **John Doherty**, **John Elwell**, **Doug Gibson**, **Tom Gregory**, **Steve Hill**, **Kerwin Miller**, and spouse Jan Schoenbauer.

Several years ago, **Dave Frost** encouraged all of us in the Baby Boomer generation to strive and thrive into our 90s in his book "**KABOOMER**." Dave has come up with the answer for our children in his latest book, aimed at Generation X. In Dave's energetic writing style, "**Strong to Save**" (don't you love the title?) encourages GenX to die harder and later — and gives them the prescription on how to make it happen.

<photo 75: "The Grays at the COLUMBIA Memorial">

We received a nice note in from **Dave Gray** after he perused the January-February issue:

"I recognized the WWII picture on the January-February 2024 *Shipmate* cover immediately. My father-in-law, Warren Shilow, began his Navy career and served on the 5th ship in the picture, the USS COLUMBIA (CL-56), also known as "The Gem." I especially enjoyed reading about Captain Gillooly's service aboard her. Mary and I have had the extreme privilege of being involved with the USS COLUMBIA Association and their reunions. Getting to know the sailors over the years and hearing their harrowing stories has been a very humbling experience. All of them will tell you that they never did anything heroic and that the real heroes were their shipmates that lost their lives in battle. "Gem" participated in many of the key battles in the Pacific, including the final stages of the Guadalcanal Campaign, the Battle of Rennell Island, the landings at Bougainville, the Battle of Empress Augusta Bay, and the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Whilst covering the landings during the Lingayen Gulf invasion on 6 January 1945, she was struck by two kamikazes. Although badly damaged, with many crew members injured and deceased, they managed to stay afloat and continued to carry out their mission without interruption — earning them the Navy Unit Commendation. COLUMBIA also earned ten battle stars. If you are ever passing through Columbia, SC they have a wonderful Memorial Park that is well worth a visit. The association erected a beautiful site in the park where Mary and I have participated in memorial services over the years. Located nearby is the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum. They have a room dedicated to the USS COLUMBIA and are the keeper of all the ship artifacts. The ship's bell is located at Patriots Point Museum in Charleston, SC. There is also a model of the

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The Grays at the COLUMBIA Memorial

COLUMBIA in a floating dry dock at the Navy Yard Museum in D.C. There is a reason they are called the greatest generation — because they truly are. I am happy to see *Shipmate* recognizing the sacrifices of these noble men.”

Have a wonderful summer, and drop a postcard to your Scribe!

75 Sir! Larry