

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024

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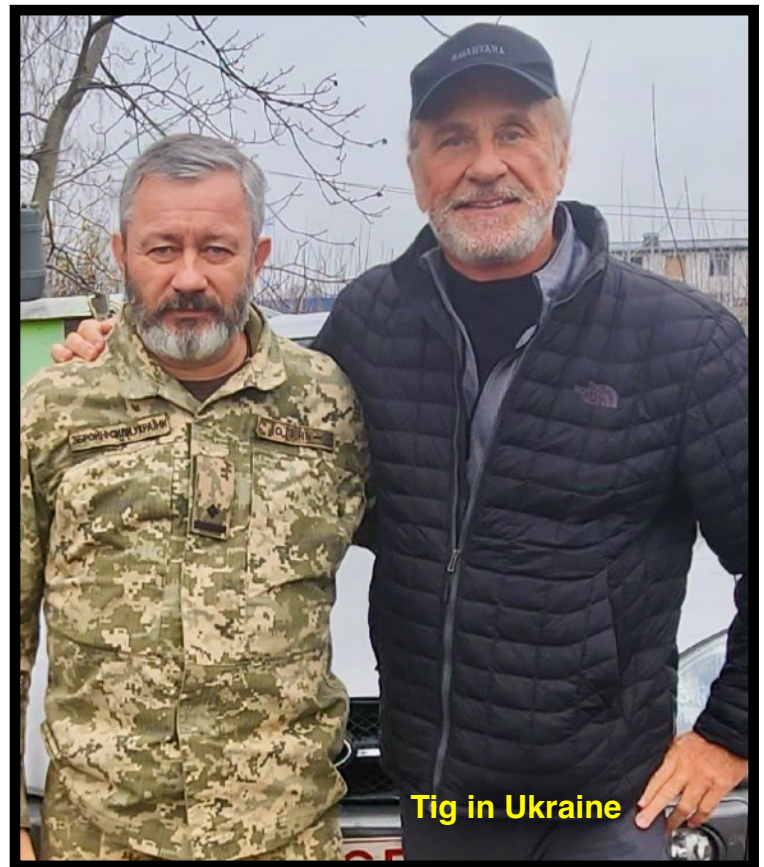
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Dear 'mates, The Class of '75 never disappoints. You guys have provided so much great input that our gouge locker is overflowing! [I almost wish *Shipmate* still published eight times per year.] I will just have to work to pack each issue with good stories ... and beg forgiveness from the editors for the extra long submissions. If you've sent items, they may be pushed back a slot. It's not like you're reading this column for the latest news! Most stories age OK.

You know that **Tig Krekel** has been a very generous donor to USNA (eg., fully funding the business wing of the Fluegel Alumni Center, a chair in the Aero Science Engineering department, along with other important class and Academy causes). Lest you think he's just sitting back and stroking checks, read on. "The government of Ukraine recently recognized Tig Krekel for his work on behalf of the Special Forces Assault Brigades in helping to fight Russian aggression this past year. Tig and a small team operating close to the front lines in the southeastern part of the Ukraine rendered technical and financial assistance to the drone and anti-drone programs that are a major part of the conflict. Also, his team imported and equipped much-needed transport vehicles for the movement of injured troops in and out of the combat zones."



Tig in Ukraine

Most of you have seen the Class Blasts about the *Gulf to Goat* charity bike ride. The ride is dedicated to several classmates and those charities that have assisted them or their families. The ride is set to begin 1 October 2025 in Apalachicola, FL, transit up the East Coast (1160-miles) to arrive at the *Bill the Goat* statue inside USNA Gate 1 on 22 October, just as festivities begin for our 50th Reunion. Sixteen Flower Children have signed up to make all (or parts) of the ride, covering their own costs to ensure all donations go directly to the four selected charities — cancer research, kidney disease research/patient support, cystic fibrosis, and frontotemporal dementia. Charity #1 is the Emily Whitehead Foundation—named for Dr. **Carl June's** first

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pediatric cancer success. Carl, who is widely known for the development of CAR-T therapy for cancer, will be one of the 16 riders in the “*Gulf to Goat*”.

Being 70+ years old and agreeing to ride a bike 1160-miles takes a significant amount of commitment, dedication, preparation, and training. **Mike Meier** and **Dan Murphy** are coordinating. The services of a professional guide have been secured to help ensure the safety, logistics, and enroute support for the bikers.

More on the ride and the other charities in future issues. I assure you that every one of us will recognize a classmate who was or is supported by one of these amazing charities. Let’s not forget those who have volunteered their time, energies, and sore bottoms to ride in support of a Classmate and a charity. Our prayers for rapid healing go to **Pat Sloan**. He was struck by a car while riding his bicycle in August and suffered a concussion and multiple broken bones. Pat swears he will be back in the saddle in time to train for *Gulf to Goat*.

This past August the fishing crew from 1st company and a few selected guests (sixteen total) headed north for their third annual Canadian walleye fishing expedition. Once again, the group met up in Naubinway, MI at **Ron Nicol’s** historical cabin on the Millecoquin River for the annual



1st Company Fishing Team and guests

Hiawatha Sportsman Club’s Rocking on the River event hosted by Ron, **Mike Meier**, **Dan Murphy** and their wives. Pat Sloan’s brother Joe provided DeJay services for the event. The next morning the crew of Mike, Dan, Ron, **Rob Reed**, **Gary Jones**, **Mike McDermott**, **Mike Mathews**, **Jeff Bust**, **Randy Avers**, local retired football coach **Joe Austin**, (plebe year departure), **Chris Cikanovich**, and five other friends headed into Canada for a week of walleye

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Nice fish!

and pike fishing. After some issues with a threatened Canadian railroad strike and low ceilings that cancelled the bush pilot flight into the isolated fish camp, the group finally made it to Lake Esnagi late Saturday evening for five days of fishing and reminiscing about our 53 years of friendship. The non-academy guests once again were astounded and entertained by the stories, individual

biographies, and total disrespect shared by all. That people can remember Plebe year stuff so vividly 53 years later is amazing. Although the fishing wasn't as good as in past years, a great time was had with the help of plenty of beer and



Another nice fish!



Another nice fish!

other libations. The big walleye fish winner of the week was Mike Meier with a 27-incher. Dan Murphy and Mike Mathews tied for second with 25-inchers. Trip first timer — class president Chick — was voted most stylish fisherman, easily beating out last year's winner class vice president Gary Jones. They did not ride in a boat together since we did not want to risk losing most of our class leadership in a single boating incident. After taking a break next year for our 50th reunion activities, the Fishing Team will be looking forward to another adventure in the summer of 2026.

Another fish story (with photos to prove it) came from **Tony Barbieri**, who sortied north to Sitka, AK for another great 4-day fishing adventure. The '75 Warriors were **John Carman**, **Laverne Lovell**, and Tony. Tony's two grandsons and Verne's son and

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grandson completed the crew. *[Yep, we're that old!]* They spent three terrific days fishing with Kingfisher Charters (top-notch folks, highly recommended for a top-shelf charter service). A two-boat armada with nine fishermen took twenty-seven king salmon, ten halibut, and eight ling cod (including one at 55" that had to be returned to Davey Jones).

Tony Barbieri also reported on the 9th annual "Hackin' for Harden" golf tournament. Six 20th Company classmates participated at the Legacy Golf course in Phoenix. The Harden family started a memorial fund in the name of their son Josh, who passed at 32 years of age after a (very) brief bout with cancer. Josh was a terrific young man whose passion, besides family, was golf. A certified professional caddy, Josh worked at the Legacy Resort. One of his true joys was getting children and young adults involved in golf. Recognizing Josh's devotion to the sport, especially the involvement of young people, the Hardens, in concert with the Legacy Golf Resort, sponsor a golf weekend with the proceeds going to First



Tee of Phoenix. The festivities started with our usual toast (and roast) of those in 20th Company that have gone before us ... and to **Dean Lahren** who was in the final throes of his battle with cancer. 20th Company was well represented at the 31 May pre-ex show at the "Four Peaks Brewery" tasting room. Tim's son Andy is the Brew Master. **Bill Neill, Dave Niedermaier, Dick Shaw, and Greg Hoffman** joined Tim and Tony. This year's event garnered a record breaking donation to First Tee in excess of \$32,000. Tim would like to thank the many Alumni, especially his son, Matt '99 and his teammates, plus hundreds of well-wishers and supporters. Doing the yeoman's work were wife Laurie, son Andy, and daughter Megan and her family (without them this would be just another beer-bust). While the tournament is always the first Saturday in June, donations to First Tee in Josh's honor are always welcome.

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20th Company lost another brother and great shipmate on 1 June. Dean “Deano” Lahren had been battling colon cancer for several years, which metastasized to his liver. He was holding his own there until the colon cancer once again reared its ugly head. Classmates continuously connected with Deano. Six were able to attend his funeral services. Deano rallied the last two years to meet in Phoenix for the “Hackin’ 4 Harden” tournament. By and large, he was his old self ... a great reflection of the old days. Meeting his brother and kids gave company mates new insight into the “other” Deano, which was enlightening and refreshing. Terrific family! Deano was preceded by five other 20th Company Classmates: **Bob Ramey, John Park, Robb Stephenson, Bill Dixon and AB Johnson.**

Bill Chimiak was on stage in *Music Man* as Ewart Dunlop of the Barbershop Quartet. It played at the Signal Mountain Playhouse for four weeks this summer.

Chris and **Bill Daley** have assumed the leadership role for our football tailgates. Bill says that the first three tailgates had great turnouts. The opportunity to get together with Classmates and share time and stories made the Navy victories even sweeter.

Tune in next year for another **Peter Damisch** adventure and some 25th Company summer mini-reunions.

75 Sir! Larry



Bill in the barbershop quartet. Knock 'em together Chimiak!