

U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1975, Shipmate Column JULY-AUGUST 2025

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Dear 'mates, Our links have graduated! It seems like only months ago that many of us were addressing gatherings of eager, anxious youngsters who were about to leave home for Mother B. The Flower Children have pulled alongside '25 from I-Day to Commissioning. There are deep bonds that will keep our two classes together as long as we breath. *[In your Scribe's opinion, we asked the absolute right classmate to head up our Another Link in the Chain program. On behalf of '75, a huge THANK YOU to Steve Hubbard!]*

Steve had the opportunity to address the Class of 2025 prior to their indoor graduation rehearsal. After his talk, President Chick carried out another new tradition when he presented our class gavel and sounding board to '25's president. The gavels and sounding boards are made from the wood of USS CONSTITUTION. **Kerwin Miller** and **Ric Johns** attended as well. Here is part of Steve's excellent remarks to our links.

*“On the strength of one link in the cable,
Dependeth the might of the chain.
Who knows when thou may'st be tested?
So live that thou bearest the strain!*”

“When we Flower Children were midshipmen, we didn't have a Link in the Chain program. Indeed, for us, 38% of the class of 1925 were gone. Many of them had fought in World War II. Some made it to the Korean Conflict. When we were your age, guys who were 70 years of age were as old as dirt! '75 graduated 811 and today we are still 718 strong, not counting the non-grads who are still part of the class. We're the old farts now!

In 2015, I told new class president **Chick Cikanovich** that I only wanted one thing—to be the lead for our **Another Link in the Chain** effort. Most of you were about 12 years old at that time and had no idea that you would come to the Naval Academy, but we already knew you would be a great class!

It's been our privilege to walk with you during your four years by the Severn. Indeed, it's been an honor. We are especially honored to have permanent representation in your class crest. Your journey has stirred lots of memories within us. We want you to know that we'll be here for you for as long as we're still able, and you're always welcome at our tailgates. Never hesitate to reach out for counsel, friendship, or just to have a tall cool one. (We might even buy!) But you had better have your Honor Coin with you!

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*Four years together by the Bay
Where Severn joins the tide
Then by the Service called away
We're scattered far and wide
But still when two or three shall meet
And old tales be retold
From low to highest in the Fleet
We'll pledge the Blue and Gold*

As you venture off on your individual professional paths, I have one bit of advice. While you've experienced these past four years together, you have become as close-knit as any family. Going forward, make the extra effort to keep in touch with your company mates for sure, and all classmates to the extent possible, even those who, for whatever reason, didn't make it to this point. This won't be too difficult for the first five years, but once some of you decide to transition to non-military careers it will become much more challenging. Bottom line — there is no greater family than your classmates.”



Twelve classmates were honored to share in graduation ceremonies as diploma presenters. Great looking group!

Chris Cikanovich; Steve Hall; Steve Hubbard; Bob Sweeney; Kirk Donald; Tig Krekel; Jon Greenert; Zach Wilhoit; Richard Johns; Kerwin Miller; Ron Nicol; Bill Squires

Mary and **Dave Gray**, along with daughters Corey and Chelsea, ticked off one of their big bucket list items in February with a trip to Antarctica. Mary and Dave have now set foot on all seven continents. It was an unbelievably exciting trip. After a day in Buenos Aires enjoying the city and indulging in the outstanding food, they spent a couple of days in Ushuaia (the southernmost city in the world). Once on board the 115 passenger ship, they were in a holding pattern in the Beagle channel for two days waiting for the Drake Passage winds and seas to calm

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Service Assignment night for '25

Kerwin Miller; Steve Hubbard; Bob Sweeney; Steve Hall; Ron Nicol; Chris Cikanovich; Kirk Donald; Zach Wilhoit; Jon Greenert; Tig Krekel; Ric Johns

down from 150+ kt winds and 30' seas to a safe level for crossing. The captain crossed the Drake Passage as fast as possible, so they only lost one day. Mary proudly wears her "I survived the Drake Passage" T-shirt. Antarctica was like entering another world. They woke up one morning surrounded by icebergs and sailing along



Continent number seven

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glaciers. Everyone had plenty of opportunity to observe whales, sea lions, seals, sea birds and of course lots of penguins. It was fun walking around with the penguins and seals (designated paths only). They are very entertaining. Seeing the harsh environment gave all an appreciation for the early explorers and what they endured. Zodiacs provided transportation to the beaches and cruising the waterways to observe the wildlife at eye level. A scenic 5km kayak trip (not bad for beginner kayakers) through icebergs and glaciers all while the snow was falling was memorable. The Grays also did the inevitable Polar Plunge—fun and **cold** — nobody needed much encouragement to get back on the ship. Dave won the contest for predicting the longitude and latitude the first iceberg would be seen. Must have been an old Nav P-work re-surfacing.

In the winter of 1979, **AJ Ronacher** was deployed with HS-12 on board the USS AMERICA (CV-66). In the O-Club in Rota, a General Motors overseas sales representative approached AJ and his shipmates, carrying four pitchers of Sangria and an armful of Chevrolet brochures. After “more than one round,” the group focused on the 1980 Corvette. AJ had several reservations: the price, the logistics, the two-seat practicality for a young family, and California’s restrictions on the 350 cubic-inch engine paired with a 4-speed transmission. Naturally, the sales guy had all the answers — register the car in AJ’s home state of New York, have it delivered to Las Vegas, and then drive it to San Diego himself. He ordered the car in the exact configuration he wanted, but sold it only six months later, because it just wasn’t practical. (Sangria-based plans don’t always work out.) Almost forty-five years later, AJ’s 41-year-old son TJ, remembered the Corvette story, and began looking for one like the original. He located two 1980 models: one in Ohio and another in Santa Paula, California. Initially informed that the California car had a 305 engine, he purchased the one in Ohio. When the CA car turned out to have the 350, he bought that one too.

Both ‘vettes were delivered to Braun’s Automotive in Lomita, California, where they underwent inspection, tune-ups, and replacement of worn parts, belts, and hoses. The weekend before Christmas, TJ invited his dad to Chula Vista’s “Sunday Funday Cars and Coffee” event. As they walked through the lineup of vehicles, AJ spotted a Corvette in the same dark blue color with Oyster leather interior as the one he once owned. There was a large bow on the hood. TJ handed his father the keys and asked him to see if it drove the way he remembered. The ultimate friendship bracelets!

The class web page (see the column header) has the latest and greatest on the 50th Reunion plans. The FAQ section under the 50TH REUNION tab is especially helpful. See you in October!
—-75 Sir! Larry