

# **A History**

## **The Great Class of 1973**

### **(as recorded in the Class of 2023's "Reef Points")**

The Great Class of 1973 welcomes the Class of 2023. We're Another Link in the Chain, your connection with our Alma Mater's past. Throughout the next four years, we offer our mentorship as you navigate your way through your service to our nation.

**On Induction Day on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1969, we first stood together and swore to support and defend the Constitution. We recognize no statute of limitations to this commitment. We were introduced to the ideal of "Non Sibi, Sed Patria", and '73's motto is "Non Sibi". It is a way of life that brings out the finest attributes of leadership and citizenship to this day. We expect you to embrace this way of life.**

There were 1,379 of us on our I-Day. In many aspects, we were an anomaly to our civilian contemporaries. At a time of "Peace, Love, and Do Your Own Thing", we entered the Academy - a world of legacy and tradition, of respect for institutions, a world that sought "a balance between Athens and Sparta". Here is a brief history of our Class during our years, what life in Bancroft Hall was like, and major events that shaped the world we inherited when we were commissioned in 1973:

- The draft was on, Vietnam was at its height, and the nation was divided. In June 1969, over 500 U.S. service members were killed in action in Vietnam. While old enough to fight, many were not old enough to vote. That summer in New York, 400,000 of our

civilian contemporaries attended the freewheeling Woodstock Music Festival. In July 1971, the passage of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment established the voting age at 18. Our Vietnam POW's returned home in 1973, and we honored them with a parade. VADM James Stockdale was exemplary of the Academy's best and the Center bearing his name will help you understand leadership's heavy responsibility.

- Racial turmoil roiled our cities and spilled over into the Fleet. The Brigade was overwhelmingly white then, with only 23 minority classmates in '73. Minority representation in the entire Brigade was 1%. Three years later, minority admissions for the incoming Plebe class would reach 93.
- Women's rights were gaining momentum. The Brigade was exclusively male during our four years. The first woman instructor would not be teaching at the Academy until our second-class year.
- Technology was advancing but the digital age was in its infancy. Twenty days after our I-Day, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, we crowded around televisions to witness the first lunar landing, Apollo 11. Our only computing device was a slide rule. The only access to computers was at Ward Hall where we logged in to the "Dartmouth Time Sharing System".
- The Plebe Indoctrination System was inaugurated during our Plebe year. Second Class ran Plebe Summer, and Firsties took over from there. Physical training was conducted by the Phys Ed Department and was no longer in the hands of upper classmen. Hazing was prohibited.

- Use of automobiles was regulated. Initially, 1/C were allowed cars in The Yard after spring break. Unauthorized use or possession of a car earned 75 demerits for the first offense, dismissal for the second. In October 1970, MidRegs changed and 2/C and 3/C could ride in cars but Plebes could not.
- While MidRegs guided our conduct, the Honor Concept was our centerpiece. The Brigade was responsible for its implementation and enforcement. Those who failed to live up to the Concept were separated from the Brigade. It remains a way of life.
- Our daily routine throughout most of our years began with mandatory 0615 reveille. Morning, noon, and evening meal formations were a requirement. Saturday morning classes were routine.
- Liberty was authorized after Saturday noon meal formation until evening meal formation Sunday. Overnight weekend liberty was scarce. Initially, 1/C were granted four weekends per semester, 2/C two per semester, one per semester for 3/C, and none for Plebes.
- The Forrestal Lecture Series was inaugurated May 1970. Speakers included Roger Staubach (Class of '65), Apollo 13 astronaut Captain James Lovell (Class of '52), author Alex Haley, leading feminist Gloria Steinem, and civil rights leader Julian Bond.
- The very first Commander-in-Chief's Trophy was awarded in May 1973, unfortunately to Army.

- Attendance at Sunday Chapel or other religious services was mandatory. In December 1972, the Supreme Court declined to review a lower court ruling that such attendance violated the First Amendment. Mandatory attendance ended in January 1973.
- 884 of us graduated and received our commissions on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1973, followed by four more on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Class of '73 would produce 26 flag officers to include four 4-stars who served as CNO, Commander PACOM, Commander SOCOM, and Commander Fleet Forces Command.

**Our decades of service have taken us from the Viet Nam War, through the Cold War, to the attacks of September 2001 and the confrontation against terrorism.**

At the end of Stribling Walk, you'll find a granite bench dedicated by the Class of '73 to Command at Sea and Command Ashore. Buried there is a time capsule to be opened in 2073, when you are celebrating your 50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion. When you open this capsule, remember those who went before you. Remember us. And tell the Class of 2073 about their namesake class.

**When we began our journey on I-Day on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1969 we had no idea where our service would take us. The journey into the future is always uncertain. Embrace "Non Sibi, Sed Patria" and you will always be on course. We look forward to helping you navigate your way to become the Great Class of 2023.**