

## 72/73 CLASS NEWS

visit him in Westminster, MD back in late November. They went to a Navy game, had lunch in Annapolis, spent some time in the Yard and subsequently took a trip over to Gettysburg. "Always good times when two or more classmates can get together." Thanks, Norb!



Bill, Robertson and Papin

When the Going Gets Tough Dept. **Steve Tomaszski** reports that, with a lot of hard work, support and encouragement, he is making progress.

✉ "The gouge on spinal cord injuries is that the docs just don't know how, when, or if, the nerves will reconnect. Most of mine have. I am very lucky...the program that I am in requires a daily exercise regime of strength and stretching exercise six of seven days. [Kennedy Krieger Institute International Center for Spinal Cord Injury in Baltimore, MD] accepted me despite my age as I was improving. They have me on an experimental acute hypoxic training program to help regenerate nerves. It's just high-altitude training like distance runners and teams visiting Denver do... I am in no pain, but my arms, hands and legs are "tight" ...real tight, like you worked out too much plebe summer (which certainly isn't the case now). So, we are adjusting to life "in the slow lane" and I am just happy to be here as you can imagine. I promise to keep you... posted when I make any milestones in physical therapy. My next two personal goals are shaving with a razor and tying my shoes in under five minutes."

Ski was kind enough to pass along his Christmas letter; the following is an excerpt:

✉ "...I want to let everyone know how much your sustained prayers and words of encouragement mean to me and my family. Whether it was expressed on our website or in a letter, call or card, you are all greatly appreciated and mean so much to us. And a SPECIAL thanks to the many family members, close friends, Naval Academy classmates and shipmates who took the time to drop in and see us in Atlanta and at home. Your "gift" of a visit really ramped up my adrenaline to get well! I have been called "a miracle" by many people. During this Season of Miracles, we are thankful for the restoration of my health. For five weeks I could only move in a wheelchair by blowing through a straw. Now I negotiate the Washington beltway like a state trooper."

Christmas letters are always a great source of information. Take the one I received from **Perry Dempsey**, for example. Not only did he mention that he gave a ring to his "significant other", Karen, back in October (congratulations!), but that he was found unconscious back in July and, when taken to the hospital, was diagnosed with sepsis. Fortunately, following a month-long recuperation, he was back on his feet... thanks to the efforts of his family, friends and neighbors. (*Folks...will you please be careful!*)

We lost two Classmates at the end of last year. **Jim Pierce** (9th Company), who departed the Academy prior to graduation, passed away in Wilmington, NC on Thursday, 14 November 2019. I have no additional details, but condolences can be left for the family at <https://www.wilmingtoncares.com/obituary/james-odell-pierce/>. **Tom Foster** (18th Company) passed away on Saturday, 21 December 2019 after a hard-fought battle with ALS. Tom initially served as a SWO aboard Reeves (DLG/CG-24), then as an Intelligence Officer in London. He ultimately retired with the National Science Foundation after several "Operation Deep Freeze" tours in Antarctica. Tom "...loved

spending time with family and friends, enjoying a bourbon, making people laugh and telling a story." An online tribute can be found at [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). For those who wish to do so, contributions may be made to the ALS Association or a charity of your choice. The Class extends its deepest sympathies to both Jim's and Tom's families.

The mailbag's empty! Enjoy your March and drop your old Scribe a note. More to come. D. O.

### Tried and True with '72.

## '73

**Life Membership: 65%**  
**Donor Participation: 26.29%**

Pres: **Mr. Dirk P. D. Mosis III**

Sec'y: **CAPT James H. Chapman, USN (Ret.)**  
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Hello everyone, I hope you survived the Dark Ages and Spring has arrived where you are. I know of one Dark Ages event. If there are others please pass them on. I have a lot of inputs and news to pass on so let's get to it!

The first is from **John Benjamin** on his first couple of days at the Academy. I suspect it will bring back some "fond" memories! John wrote;

✉ "My first days at the United States Naval Academy were similar to the movie about Abbot and Costello joining the Army. The dissimilar part is that no one was laughing. I was a small town boy from East Troy, Wisconsin. Life had been good, and I was very naive. My time had been spent in school, church, making hay (literally) for local farmers in the summer, a part time job at the town's movie theater, and volunteering as a student manager for the high school sports teams. I earned an appointment to the Naval Academy from Senator Proxmire. I was to report on Monday, June 30, 1969.

It was my first flight on an airplane. On June 29, 1969, I said good-bye to my parents, brother and sister at the Milwaukee airport (Mitchel Field) and flew to the

Baltimore Washington International airport. I don't remember how it was arranged but there were US government busses at the airport to pick up all of us arriving soon to be midshipmen. There were people with signs directing us to the busses. I do remember being completely disoriented. It was a good thing the busses were there. I was wearing my suit and tie. I guess I wanted to look good when I reported. It was the 1960's so my hair was on the long side - not down to my shoulders but much too long for the Navy.

Monday morning, June 30, 1969, I entered Gate 1 and was directed to the starting point of the check in process. I don't remember exactly where that point was other than it was outside and I had to go up some steps. I was given my Alpha number (730413) and told to get in one of the lines. There were three lines. One line was for the haircut; one was for uniforms, grooming items, etc.; and a third line for bedding. I got in the back of one of the lines. The day was hot and humid. The work day for the Academy staff ended. The lines were shut down for the day. I had accomplished nothing. I was still wearing my suit and tie. My hair was still too long for the Navy. I had no bedding, no uniforms and no clean underwear. Of course, in the eyes of our Second Class Midshipman leaders, it was entirely my fault! I took the Oath of Office with the other 1,378 new midshipmen in Tecumseh Court that evening still looking like a civilian. I was beginning to develop a strong dislike for that suit I was wearing and my longish hair that was keeping my head quite hot. The only consolation for my misery was that I wasn't the only one who had accomplished nothing. There were a few others in my situation. All I remember about that night was sleeping in my clothes on a bare mattress. Somehow, the next day in amongst all the other activities planned for us, the Second Class midshipmen in charge of our platoon got me to the right places to get the gear I needed and my haircut. I do remember the barber

cutting my hair asking me something like if was I sorry to see my hair go. My reply was something like, not any more, it is too hot for long hair and no time to waste grooming it. I've never again worn my hair long. A very few days later I was informed I was to be the Messenger of the Watch in the Fourth Battalion Office. I had seen enough military movies to know what a watch was. I managed not to ask what I'd be watching. The uniform was to be our newly issued Service Dress White uniforms. This uniform was much more stylish than the amazingly comfortable White Works Alpha uniforms we'd been wearing. The White Works Alpha uniforms were little more than pajamas with the sailors flap hanging down behind the neck. We had been issued a pocket sized book called Reef Points. It had the "gouge" in it as to how to be a midshipman. I got out my Reef Points and learned how to wear Service Dress White. I polished the lacquer off of my brass belt buckle, put fresh polish on my white shoes and scrubbed my white belt. I got dressed making sure I had a good crisp tuck in my shirt, my gig line was correct and that I had no Irish pennants. I reported to the Fourth Battalion office at the specified time saying, "Midshipman Benjamin reporting as Messenger of the Watch." I was immediately told I was out of uniform and not to return until I had corrected the problem. Of course, I wasn't told what was wrong. I knew there was no way I'd figure out my uniform problem chopping down the hallways. I went outside. Somehow, I found someone who looked a little less intimidating than the Second Class midshipmen in charge of us. I approached the person and inquired about my uniform. I was told the problem was that I wasn't wearing my National Defense ribbon. I had to go to the Midshipmen's Store and buy my own National Defense medal and ribbon, all the while wondering how I could possibly rate a medal after less than a week at the academy while doing nothing more than trying to adapt and survive my new surroundings.

I pinned the ribbon above my left shirt pocket and returned to the Battalion Office. I had successfully corrected my uniform.

John, Thanks. Your story does bring back memories! I asked John what he is doing now and got back;

✉ "I joined the Hartsville American Legion Post and the local Kiwanis Club civic organization. These two clubs are keeping me as busy as I want to be. The American Legion Post actually made me the Post Commander for the next two years. We only have 50 members, but it keeps me busy enough. Our Post sponsors an American Legion baseball team, holds an oratorical contest for High School age kids based on the US Constitution, sends several rising High School seniors to Boys or Girls State to learn about government processes and helps with preservation efforts for a local cemetery that had been abandoned. The Kiwanis Club helps children. During the school year, we took turns tutoring 1st and 2nd graders after school at the local Boys and Girls club. I did give the Kiwanis Club my presentation on "Fun Facts about Nuclear Energy." They did not kick me out of the club."

I received this great piece of news and picture from **Jim Garban**.

✉ "Jim, I recently attended the Naval Academy Athletic Association, Memorial Celebration Dinner for Coach Rick Forzano and Coach George Welsh held 30 August. A large gathering of former USNA Football players and friends celebrated their lives with Coaches family. The evening reflected on their coaching history and contributions to the community. Among the distinguished speakers included: Roger Staubach, Tom Lynch and Bill Belichick whose dad Steve Belichick was a coaching legend at USNA for 50 years. I was able to reach out to over 75 USNA 73 Football players (anyone who wore pads) to get the word out about the Memorial Celebration Dinner. Throughout that process I was able to capture contact info for most FB players with lots help from team mates, like Andy Pease, Wes Bergazzi and



'73: Coach Forzano / Welsh Memorial Celebration. Back Row: Danny Simpson, Steve LaLonde, John Sparaco, Larry Carello, Bob Elflein, Pat Virtue, Gary Nowak, Steve Ogden, Bill York. Front Row: Jim Garban, Bill Short, Ade Dillon, Kevin Callahan

Bill Short. It was especially exciting to talk to classmates who I had lost touch with, some over 40 years. Many FB Teammates wanted to join the event but late notice and conflicts prohibited their attendance. It was exciting that over 15 FB players were able to come for this Celebration Dinner and USNA 73 Tailgate and game. A great time was had by all. We are committed to come together again, especially as we approach our 50th Reunion. Other FB team Mates who joined the weekend, included: **Jack Forde** and **Bobby Bender**."

On to other news. **Paul Ryan** writes that his son, **Stephen**, Class of 2001, recently took command of VR-53, the Navy's C-130 squadron at Andrews AFB. It's hard to believe we're old enough that our kids can be in command! Also in the picture are **Michael**, Class of 1999, a Supply Corp Officer stationed at DLA Richmond; Laura, the proud Mom; and **Craig**, Class of 2001, a helicopter pilot stationed in Coronado. Paul added that he recently retired from the Department of Homeland Security and is enjoying travel with Laura.



The Ryan's. A Great Navy Family!

I received several pictures of our I Day and I thought I would include some. These are from **Bruce Hargus** and **Tom Storch**.



I Day check in. I think this is the line John Benjamin was in!



Nothing like a little close order drill with your rifle!

If you have any pictures from our time at the Academy please pass them on. I will include them as space permits. I have to stop now. I am over my limit again. As always, Go Navy! and Semper Fi! General