

**Bonds of Gold Ceremony
Memorial Hall
26 April 2021**

Remarks by Jim Gruber, 36th Company

When I joined the other young men who had come to Annapolis in June 1969, to form the class of 1973, I really did not know what to expect. Oh, I knew superficially that I wanted to be a Naval Officer and that the U.S. Naval Academy was the place to be if you wanted to be the best, but I didn't know in my heart what that meant.

Over the next 4 years I and my classmates like Joe Stewart 28th Co and John Yackus my 36th Company mate would learn the nautical lore and tradition of service that the Naval Academy has instilled in Midshipmen since the beginning of the United States. During our times here we formed bonds of friendship, camaraderie and sacrifice which would stand us in good stead for the next 50 years.

I am still learning what those bonds mean and am proud to have been here and been part of it and a very small part of the history of this place. My Class Ring is the tangible symbol of that bond.

If that is true, you may ask, then why would I be willing to part with this golden link to tradition, service and friendship stretching back to the beginnings of our country?

I will give you two reasons:

First, the ring is only a symbol, albeit a strong one. The real Academy bonds, which I treasure, are those of the heart and mind and soul. Those will always be with me so long as I live and they can be neither lost nor taken from me.

Secondly, I was struck by the concept of the Bonds of Gold as a part of the Another Link in the Chain program. We did not have these programs back when the Class of '73 graduated. Symbols are a way we bond and become brothers and now sisters, creating links to the past that will extend into the future.

These bonds strengthen and sustain us in good times and bad. It is difficult to give up my ring, for I will never again wear it and will not wear a replacement. But that very difficulty makes it a meaningful sacrifice, worthy to join the Class of 2023 with the Class of 1973, the class of 1923 and Academy graduates back through time.

I am honored to be part of that symbolic bond through my ring and I thank you for your acceptance of it and myself.