

Classmates:

Warm greetings to you and yours. Hopefully the numerous effects of the Covid pandemic are fading and better times are ahead for all of us.

This past year started with the first of our Mini-Reunions that took place at New Smyrna Beach, FL at Randy McHenry's Springhill Suites Hotel. About 20 couples participated in what proved to be a very memorable occasion, with any number of highlights.

First-off, though, a more than well-deserved tip of our hat to Randy and his wife Sheri, who hosted the event and provided lodging at a greatly reduced rate. Bob Osmon should also take a bow for coordinating a host of memorable activities, which, among others, included a half-day tour of the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, a boat excursion of the surrounding maritime wetlands, and a memorable dinner at the Smyrna Yacht Club.

Foremost among the many take-aways from our time together was the opportunity to visit with a few classmates we had not previously known. At our typical reunions in Annapolis, there is a natural tendency to seek out classmates we already know to renew old ties and catch up on what has happened in one another's lives since the last reunion. So, this Mini-Reunion created a whole new social dynamic that was warmly appreciated by all.

Although plans for a second gathering last fall in San Antonio had to be cancelled because of the financial risks associated with Covid-influenced pricing policies of hotels at the time, we are on-track for a cruise on the lower Mississippi River. Here our chief coordinator is Don Sanders from the 5th Company, who will bring to bear his considerable experience in running a travel company. Many thanks to Frank Simpson and Ray Burkley for their respective efforts in supporting the San Antonio planning.

Although Randy McHenry's hotel suffered considerable damage in last year's hurricane season, it is on the mend and he has generously offered to host another Mini-Reunion in the Spring of 2024, which he and Oz have already started to plan.

Finally, Doug Johnston, Jack Paepcke, Don Delude, Willie Taylor, and Jim Knorr are making the preliminary arrangements for our 65th reunion in Annapolis which will take place the weekend of August 30, 2025. We had originally timed it for the Air Force game later in the season, but the annual Annapolis Powerboat Show date shifted to that weekend (from a week earlier), and we decided to avoid the chaos by moving to the only other weekend for which a home game has thus far been scheduled. Hotel arrangements have been tentatively booked,

and we are first in line for having the traditional banquet dinner in the new Alumni Association and Foundation Building.

Speaking of the Alumni headquarters building, I am pleased to report that at least 17 classmates made significant donations that earned them recognition as Plankowners of the new facility. These including Peter Bos, Pete Chabot, Jim Eilertsen, Don Freeman, Clint Johnson, Doug Johnston, Bill Keys, Ed Killinger, Ron Koontz, Rich Lang, Bob Meck, Chris Poindexter, John Sammon, Bob Stevenson, and Ed Vinge

It is also notable that USNA '60 gained Class Recognition at the \$250K level. These Class Recognitions will be posted in the North Garden Walkway in front of the Alumni Building.

I am also pleased to inform you that the Class of 1960 Chair in National Security has finally been filled after a year-long hiatus owing to extenuating circumstances. The new chairholder is Col. Gary Espinas, USA (Ret), who brings a host of relevant qualifications to the position (and to the Political Science Department more generally), including much-needed academic and practical experience in Russian and Ukrainian affairs. Among his academic qualifications, he holds Master's degrees in Russian studies from Harvard and in Strategic Studies from the Army War College. He is in the final stages of completing his PhD dissertation on the Future of NATO at Georgetown University.

In terms of experience, Col. Espinas has served at the State Department (including a tour at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow) and at senior levels in DoD and on the Army Staff. Among his teaching credentials, he served as a military professor and Foreign Area Officer Chair at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey and, more recently, taught a highly praised course at USNA during COVID on the "Politics of Russia." Equally important, he appears to be cut from the same cloth as our previous Chairholder in his commitment to guiding the Midshipmen on a personal basis and mentoring junior faculty.

Col. Espinas is currently teaching two courses in Russian foreign policy, which Hank Chiles, Doug Johnston and I will be observing in late April after first getting to know him over lunch at the Academy O' Club.

Our Washington and Tidewater, Virginia class luncheons continue apace, providing ongoing occasions for fun-filled conversations and sea stories that grow grander with every telling.

All in all, a great year all around; and I close with heartfelt thanks to all of you who are contributing in your own way to keeping the torch lit and providing the glue that binds an undying brotherhood.

My best personal regards, Pete