

Annual Report (2025)

With our 65th in the rear-view mirror, it is worth another expression of gratitude to the great team that made it such a success. So, another heartfelt Bravo Zulu to Gary Cogdell, Jack Paepke, Willie Taylor, Bob Osmon, Ken Batchellor, Bill Ballard, Richard Harper, and Bill Lewis.

Among those who were unable to make it because of a medical challenge was Ward O'Brien from the 22nd company. As a graduate of the 5th Company myself, we never crossed paths at the Big House and only did so much later at the DC class luncheons. At one of those lunches, we all shared humorous anecdotes from Academy days, and Ward's was one of the funniest. One night to prove his manhood (to himself), he went over the wall, a procedure he described in great detail. Once he made it into town, however, he found himself bored to tears. There was absolutely nothing going on. So, he reversed course, with the return proving even more challenging than the exit. Making it back to Bancroft undetected proved his manhood twice over and provided the grist for uproarious laughter some sixty-two years later.

Ward's wall escapade wasn't his only claim to fame. Prominent in the swimming and diving section of the 1960 Lucky Bag is a photo of Ward airborne and in perfect form above a caption that reads "Undefeated diver, Ward O'Brien." As it turns out, Ward was one of the better divers USNA ever recruited. An acorn that didn't fall far from the tree, his father was a National Collegiate diving champion as well. In the homestretch, Ward initiated a program for the Library of Congress titled "American Valor," for which he directed and produced 83 videos that captured the remarkable stories of an array of veterans from each of the military services. These are now on permanent file in the Library.

I am reading the bios of any number of classmates these days who, like Ward, have gone on to their higher reward. The above overview of some of Ward's accomplishments is illustrative of the exemplary lives lived by all the others I have read. It certainly makes one proud to be part of such a stellar group. **At this point, we've lost 467 classmates, leaving us with 42% of the class still intact.** While aging certainly has its challenges, it has advantages as well. When a centenarian was asked what the best thing was about turning 100, he replied, "no peer pressure."

The Academy

- The \$1.8 million required to break ground on a **new 650 niche Columbarium** up the hill from the old one was raised in record time over a four month period. Once construction begins, it will take approximately two years to complete. Meanwhile, anyone wanting to use it can contact USNA Memorial Affairs to get on the wait list. For updates on the progress, the person to contact is Wes Huey '87, Executive Director of Memorial Affairs at (410) 295-4023.

- In its most recent rankings, *U.S. News & World Report* listed USNA as the top Public School in the Nation, the 3rd best National Liberal Arts College, and as having the 5th best undergraduate engineering programs.
- As of the end of last year, the faculty consisted of 46 % military instructors and 54 % civilian. Steps are being taken to restore its historic 50/50 ratio. Those civilians with former military service are not considered to be “military” in these calculations.
- Although there have been varying numbers of electives over time, the core curriculum hasn’t changed in the last 30-40 years.
- USNA has 120 recognized extracurricular activities.
- The incoming Class of 2029 was 69% male and 31% female.

Navy Sports

- Navy has a total of 36 Division 1 sports (the most in the country, equaled only by Ohio State, having ten times as many students), which enables it to attract elite high school athletes. For example, 92% of the class of 2029 played on varsity teams, and 58% were team captains.
- Navy also has a robust program of club sports, with women’s softball having recently won the national club championship.
- Over the past 20+ years, Navy has had 251 conference titles, 352 All-Americans, 139 Academic All-Americans, 12 Commander-in-Chief Trophies, 16 Bowl Games, first or second place in the Patriot League President’s Cup competition in the last 18 years, and a record of 21-3 over Army in the annual Star Series over the past 24 years.
- The Class of ’60 members of the **1960 National Champion Lacrosse Team** will be memorialized in a Ring of Honor at the new Navy Lacrosse Center, which will be dedicated later this year. In addition, that team will be the subject of a plaque saluting their undefeated season and the standard it set for the decade of dominance that followed (in which Navy was either outright national champion or shared the title with another school nine out of eleven years).
- The NAAA is 95% self-funded; only 5% is appropriated.

Class Gift

Foremost among the contributions our class has made to the Academy is the Chair we endowed in National Security. Dr. Gary Espinas, who currently occupies the Chair,

continues to provide top-quality instruction. This past year, he taught widely popular courses on “Russian Foreign Policy” and “Russian Politics” to a total of 74 Midshipmen. To enrich their experience with additional perspectives, he included a number of formidable guest speakers, including a former CNN Moscow Bureau Chief and the Ukrainian Defense Attaché among others.

In addition to the above, Dr. Espinas has conducted a number of presentations to various other audiences on campus, ranging from the Center for Regional Studies where he spoke to a packed auditorium of Mids and faculty on “Analyzing the Russian Threat” to noon trainings on “Why Putin invaded Ukraine” to several individual Midshipmen companies. He will also be taking a group of eight Midshipmen on a 13-day trip to Germany and Italy where they will meet with regional experts at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and visit the Headquarters of Naval Forces Europe and the NATO Joint Forces Command in Naples.

Finally, Dr. Espinas will be the Faculty Representative for this year’s **Annual Naval Academy Foreign Affairs Conference (NAFAC), which will focus on “Winning the Strategic Terrain, Countering PRC Influence in Warfighting Domains.”** It is an annual affair that will take place from **April 7-9** and which is a real highlight of the year for the Academy, involving as it always does a number of high-level outside experts and guest speakers. I had the privilege of participating in one of these conferences some years ago, debating David Gergen, then White House Director of Communications, on our strategy in the Balkans when that conflict was in full gear. All in all, I was greatly impressed with the number of new ideas that emerged from interactions between the various speakers and the audience.

For any of you who would like to attend this conference or to visit one of Gary’s classroom sessions, that can be easily arranged. **If you can make the conference, let me know as soon as possible, so we can provide you with an escort and VIP seating.** There is no charge to attend, but it starts early on Tuesday the 7th at 7:45 am and runs until 3:00pm. The same for Wednesday, and from 8:00am to 12:00pm on Thursday.

As for classroom sessions during the Spring semester, Gary teaches on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10:45-11:35 am on “Russian Military Strategy and the Ukraine War” and from 1:40-2:30 pm on “The Politics of Russia.” These classes run until April 27, and are likely to remain the same once the Fall semester begins. Here again, let me know as soon as possible if you would like to witness the fruits of your labor on either front.

In closing, the above is a tribute to all of you who, in one way or another, contributed to the Chair and, more generally, to a class reputation second to none. On behalf of the class officers, including Bob Osmon (Vice President), George Dowell (Treasurer), Bill Lewis (Secretary), and Richard Harper (Webmaster), we salute you and look forward to doing so again next year.