

HISTORY CLASS OF 1970

The Class of 70 was sworn in on 29 June 1966, 1337 of us. It was the height of the Vietnam War and numerous classmates had received 1A draft notices.

That summer was the second hottest in Annapolis in 50 years, perhaps explaining our tremendous dropout rate. One company experienced 50% attrition. We got used to the gut-grinding routine: constant accountability – not only always where you were supposed to be, but always on time, in the right uniform, and squared away.

Academic challenges like Plebe chemistry were tough; if you were “Sat” after the first 8-week grading period, then you were “bagging it” as a Plebe. Football took some pressure off, but the Big Blue had only one winning season in our four years, beating Army once.

Our Firsties were determined that we were going to have a “Real Plebe Year,” and we were in the best shape of our lives. Memories were sharpened by the ubiquitous “chow calls” and the imperative knowledge of our “Plebe rates” which could be demanded of us at any time.

Talking with contemporaries over Christmas leave, crystallized our thinking of why we were here and reassured us that what we were doing was important and was really what we wanted to do.

We attended a half-dozen Sunday “tea fights” in Dahlgren Hall at which time we were matched with females in a controlled environment, as ordinarily we could not even talk to women.

The Herndon climb took 81 minutes. Jim Zaborowski replaced the dixie cup with a combination cover. By tradition, he was supposed to become our first Admiral; he reportedly was the first one to make O-3! June Week itself was, other than obligatory watch standing (depending on your exam score on Morse code and signal flags), a blast.

Youngster Cruise in ships of the fleet, had us experiencing the operations, communications, engineering, weaponry, and deck forces from the enlisted viewpoint.

The ability to date made up for onerous Youngster academic burdens. In football, despite beating Penn State, Michigan, Syracuse, and Army, we lost to William and Mary! The following summer we dispersed to New London for submarine indoctrination, to Pensacola for flight training, to Little Creek to play Marine, and to Bancroft Hall for special classes and/or to serve on the Plebe Detail.

October 4, 1968, saw a memorable event that bonded us forever as a class: a spontaneous pep rally, one that was neither planned nor sanctioned. Some wanted to express outrage over a denial of a privilege we had earned. So during the spontaneous pep rally we sat down on the Commandant's lawn. Since we did not disperse "immediately," as the OOD ordered, the powers-that-be proved the fallacy of the claim: "They can't fry us all!" They did fry us all.

At our 2/C Ring Dance we reflected that it's not every school that has water from the Seven Seas for dipping your ring before putting around your date's neck. We danced under the stars by the Reflecting Pool to the legendary Duke Ellington.

Following June Week, we were assigned to JO billets on ships of the First, Second, Sixth (the Med) Fleets or WestPac/Vietnam for our First Class cruise. We were assigned to every class of ship in the Navy. One classmate was assigned armed duty circling his ship all night in Saigon Harbor.

825 of us graduated on 3 June; six graduated on 31 July, and one graduated later. Steve Zavadil graduated #1; Preston Rusch was Anchor Man; 12.4% chose Marine Corps.

Since 1961, we had the second highest attrition rate (37.8%). Only '68 beat us by a tenth of a point. '62 had an attrition rate of only 27.6%. Our class sent SWOs, aviators, and marines to Vietnam, although we suffered no combat deaths, 20 aviators were "operationally lost" elsewhere. Classmates served in the first Gulf War, including aviators chasing MIGs and the commander of paratroopers into Kuwait City. Some 153 of us achieved the rank of O-6 (including reservists). Fifteen made Rear Admiral, five made Vice Admiral, and three made Admiral, plus an admiral in the Peruvian Navy. We had one Marine Brigadier General and two Major Generals, the total giving our class the most flag officers of any class since WWII. Distinguished Graduate Ed Giambastiani, in addition to being the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was NATO's first Supreme Allied Commander Transformation and the commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command; Distinguished Graduate Tom Fargo was CINCPAC; and John Nathman was Commander Fleet Forces Command (CINCLANTFLT) and Vice Chief of Naval Operations. We had one U.S. Congressman (plus a Filipino congressman), five appointed to Deputy Assistant Secretary or above, the head of the Idaho National Laboratory, a CIA operative who was held by the Iranians for 2 years, three college presidents (including Navy's PG school), the national security advisor to the Philippine president, and 16 CEOs

including Distinguished Graduate Dan Akerson of General Motors, Kevin Sharer of Amgen, Steve Reinemund of Pepsico, and Cutler Dawson of NFCU.

In addition to providing a “leadership arch” at the western end of the football stadium, we are primary financial sponsor of the Capstone Leadership Seminars for First Classmen.

The Class of 1970 welcomes the Class of 2020 to the USNA and offers our friendship and support along with our sincere hopes for your success at the Academy and in your professional careers.