

U.S. Coast Guard Academy Class of '53 Newsletter January 2009

About this Newsletter: The Class of '53 Newsletter is published "as soon and as often as we can get around to it". Its purpose is to keep members of our class informed about our classmates' lives and activities, and to occasionally provide some tid-bits of trivia and information.

Because not all of our classmates are members of the Alumni Association, and not all of our classmates have e-mail, and the deadline for articles for our class notes section in **The Bulletin** is almost two months before it's published, there will be, from time-to-time, duplications and gaps in what is included here, what is sent by e-mail or "snail-mail", and what appears in **The Bulletin**.

Send items for **The Bulletin** and this **Newsletter** to: Wee Smith, 19 Coachman Pike, Ledyard, CT 06339 - Tel./FAX 860-464-8425 or e-mail to jdsbridge@aol.com.

Looking Back At 2008

The following were among the positive events and milestones for our class in 2008: we sponsored the CAPT Ernie Rowland Cadet Art Contest and Fred Long '52 was the 2008 '53 Fellow; we provided \$98,000 from our '53 endowment fund for the press box for the Academy's new soccer field and track; we presented the Nels Nitchman graduation award for the outstanding intramural athlete; continued sponsorship of the Hall of Graduates plaques in Hamilton Hall and the Presidential Passageway in Chase Hall; 36 (41%) of our living classmates attended our 55th reunion at Homecoming; the number of octogenerians in our class increased to five (**Dick Kott, Frank Frauenfelder, Bud Mathieu, Gene Trainor, and Drury Williford**); eleven of our married classmates, (**Ken and Eve Barrett, Dan and Helene Colussy, Rick and Beth Cueroni, Hank and Gloria Fisher, Frank and Jan Frauenfelder, Dave and Nancy Howland, Walt and Elma Matherly, Harry and Barbara Oldford, Bill and Mickey Reilly, Bob and Mimi Schmidt, and Dave and Millie Zurzuzki**), celebrated their 55th wedding anniversaries; **Wade Smith** married Sally DeWitt 57 years after he first proposed to her; **Hal Olson** and **Wee Smith** joined classmates **Bob Benson, Mike Boggs, Rick Cueroni, Bill Reilly, Bill Russell, and Nat Spadafora** as members of the Academy's Athletic Hall of Fame; and our classmates made 5-year pledges of more than \$225,000 for our '53 endowment fund to support the acquisition of Leadership 44s for the Academy's Coastal Sail Training Program.

On the negative side of our 2008 ledger: sadly we lost our 50th classmate, **John McKenna**, (our 15th classmate to die from cancer); a number of classmates were hospitalized during the year for hip or knee replacements, back surgeries, broken bones, body part repairs, or cancer treatments, and several of our classmates were in nursing home residents.

Looking Ahead To 2009

Our Class of '53 legacy at CGA is continuing through **Bill and Ann Clark's** grandson, Mike Higbie, who will be graduating this year and **Bill and Margie Russell's** grandson, Travis Russell, Class of 2011.

Our Northwest classmates (**Kirk Greiner, Dick Donnelly, Ed Cope, Ed Nelson, George Everett, Bud Mathieu, and Dimpy Spadafora**), are planning a mini-reunion to

be held in **Seattle, WA September 21-25.**

In that regard, by March 1st, please return the enclosed post card to indicate your potential interest in attending the Seattle reunion.

Class of '53 Directory

Enclosed is an up-to-date directory of our classmates. Please let me know of any corrections.

Misc. Bits and Pieces about our classmates (in alphabetical order.)

Betsy Anderson Wolfe, her husband Paul, and her daughter Malinda are on 3-week trip to New Zealand and Fiji. They return February 4th.

In November **Roger Bascom** had surgery to correct a bowel obstruction and remove his right kidney which was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma. After that, Roger was home for awhile, but then had to go back to the hospital because of some internal bleeding. He's home now and **Shirley** says that in spite of all he's been through that Roger is really doing well..

Mike Boggs advised that his mother, Charlott, is now 102!! **Mike** and **Kaye** enjoyed a Panama Canal cruise in December and proudly mention that their grandson, Jackson, 7, was the quarterback on the South Beach Flag Football Super Bowl Champions in Satellite Beach, FL!! Could he be a member of CGA Class of 2023??

Paul Breed, is in good health but **Sunny** said his activities are very limited because of his short-term memory loss. She said he's able to do some gardening and go to a day-care program.

Dan and Sue Briganti are enjoying being in their new single family home in an "over 55" community in Arnold, MD. It has lots of space, allows "horizontal" rather than "vertical" living, and all of the outside maintenance is someone else's worry now. Early this month **Sue** had her left knee replaced. Unfortunately on January 16th, while using her walker it tipped over, and she broke her left femur, just above the new knee. Dan said, "our fantastically skilled surgeon, used an advanced technique that did not require a cast and Sue was stabilized enough to be moved to a rehab center. She will have to go back to the hospital for hopefully less intensive surgery on 1/26, and then back to rehab, we think". Notes to Sue should be sent to their home at 1216 Whetstone Dr. Arnold, MD 21012.

Roger Britt thoughtfully made print copies of **Kirk Greiner's** 55th reunion photos from our '53 website (www.cga53.org) and sent them to **Frank Frauenfelder**, who was unable to get them off his computer.

On January 11th, **Bill Bruinsma** celebrated turning 80 with a family dinner party, that **Romy** had arranged. All six of his children and seven of his 11 grandchildren attended to help him celebrate this milestone.

After our reunion, **Bill Clark** worked up from 9 holes to 18 holes of golf and said his new knees did fine. He and **Ann** are looking forward to spending February and March in Fla.

Ed Cope has extensive travel plans for 2009 to visit his family members and friends in almost all parts of the U.S.

For New Year's, **Rick and Beth Cueroni** took all their children and all but one of their grandchildren on a Holland-American Caribbean cruise. ENS Carl Comasco, Jr.,

who was on a 7 month USN deployment, was their “missing” grandchild .

Dick Donnelly and Meris Hatfield are wintering in LaQuinta, CA from their home in Bellevue, WA. Over the Christmas holidays they took all of their Donnelly and Hatfield families to Kauai, HI for a vacation.

Wendell and Yvonne Driggers report their lives continue at a comfortable pace with satisfying travels, such as a cruise from Kiev, Ukraine on the Black Sea, up the Danube River and then by bus over to Bucharest, Romania.

Right after our reunion **Bud Grader** and his son-in-law, Rick Ayotte, spent a couple of weeks at Bud's "retreat" in Sapoda, Spain. Bud reports that an MRI of his brain tumor shows that "he's doing as well as can be expected" and that he's "tolerating his chemotherapy".

Hank and Gloria Fisher left January 20th on a 4-week trip to Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji.

Even though **Frank Frauenfelder** loses most of bets on sporting events, he is always game for just one more wager, and greatly enjoys getting notes and cards from classmates (8387 Fig St., Arvada, CO 8005).

Kirk and Jackie Greiner are on a 3-week sight-seeing trip to Egypt. On January 20th he sent this e-mail: “We watched the inauguration from the bar in the St George Hotel on the bank of the Nile River in Luxor, Egypt. They had set up the bar especially for viewing the event and we were very proud”. Before leaving, Kirk did a tremendous job of researching and lining up the motel for our Seattle mini-reunion.

Hap Hazard reported that **Virginia’s** knee surgery in December was successful.

Ralph and Diane Hill wanted to have a place to "hang their hats" when they visit their grandkids, so they bought a house in Middleboro, MA and leased it (with an option to buy) to their son, Cary and his family. The Hills will continue to live in Venice, FL, but will be visiting their son and his family more often and staying longer in MA. In December and early January, Ralph and Diane spent two weeks in California and took a Grand Circle bus tour out of Tucson, AZ into Northern Mexico and the Copper Canyon.

Clay and Jan Hughes wanting to have some sunshine and warmer weather, left Akron, OH on Jan. 6th to winter in Tucson, AZ.

Having been in Arizona now for over a year, **Jim and LaVerne Irwin** report they are “climatized” and “like it a lot!” They say there are a couple of months in the summer that get HOT but they have figured out how to cope ... go East and visit their daughter Julie and son, Matt and their families in Wilmington, NC.

In December, **Dan Briganti, Dick Littlefield, and Hal Olson** thoughtfully made a trip from Maryland up to Mechanicsburg, PA to visit **Rin and Bert Keyzer**. **Bert** advises that the cancer that Rin had several years ago is in total remission and that his health is good but that his confusion with what the doctor’s think is Alzheimer’s is worsening.

Dick Kott reports he has “a lot of aches and pains and a little prostate difficulty, but life is good. Political, economic, and religious issues keep my head occupied”.

Bill Lehr is doing well after falling in his garage in November and breaking his hip. He said it was his “dumb mistake” that gave him an unplanned total hip replacement.

Adele Lewis says she is doing “o.k.”. But, because of the economy, some of the companies that were good customers of **Steamboat’s** company have moved out of Connecticut.

Gerry Lipsett continues to make progress in recovering from his broken neck. He is able to get around the house without a cane or walker. He has put his home in Cohasset, MA on the market and for the foreseeable future will be staying at his daughter Koren's home, in Gettysburg, PA. (573 Spangler School Rd., Gettysburg, PA 17325 - email: byglip@gmail.com).

Roger Madson advises that he and **Juanita** are doing fine and on January 24th were headed for a week of fun in the sun at the CG Recreation Facility at Hillsborough, FL

Bud and Betsy Mathieu report they are well "and couldn't be happier" in Bellevue, WA. They go to an exercise club three days a week and both have very busy schedules working at and/or for their church. They say they are also fortunate to have three married sons and eight grandchildren living in their area.

After our reunion, **Ed Nelson** had quite a time of it with some medical problems. He had a dangerous bacteria infection in his heart valve and a condition called Zenker's Diverticula (a pouch that shouldn't be there that caught some of the food he was trying to ingest). This resulted in Ed spending some time in the hospital in Portland, OR and some serious follow-up home care with an Antibiotic Infusion "rig". And, if that wasn't enough, he and **Joyce** were "marooned" in their home for a while because of the snow and ice storms. Joyce asked, "if we're having 'global warming', why has it been snowing in Astoria, OR for a week where it doesn't ever snow?"

Harry and Barbara Oldford cannot think of anywhere they would rather be at this time in their lives than in their Winter Park, FL adult community home ... "sleeping until 8 has become the norm, rather than a special indulgence, life is laid-back, with less and less urgency and stress, and too many meals out !!!"

Nina Rowland is still living in Canada but is planning to sell her townhouse there and move to the Chesapeake Bay area to be near her family. She spent Thanksgiving with her brother in California and said she has been taking some art classes and hopes to be able to finish some of **Ernie's** unfinished paintings.

Bill and Margie Russell are doing well. They had all their children and grandchildren visit for the holidays with 22 at their home for Christmas dinner.

Dimpy Spadafora spent 3 weeks in Anchorage, AK visiting her son, Ken and his family. He's a Commander on the police force there. She said that while she was there the temperature was 17 degrees below zero :-(!

Al Stirling reported that "Pat's MS continues to progress and travel is not possible. She also had a TIA in November which put her in the hospital for three days. Pretty scary but no permanent damage. But, I'm disgustingly healthy (knock on wood), still working (playing really) as a computer technician with a bunch of smart young kids who keep me thinking. I'm also winding down my flying activities".

Barbara Trainor advises that she is doing fine, but unfortunately and sadly, **Gene**, who is now in a nursing home, is becoming increasingly confused.

Ted and Colette Wojnar report "all is going well for both of us. No major medical events, just the usual aches and pains.". He added that he plays golf on Saturdays and Sundays. "We get a few frost delays, but if I can keep my drives in the fairway, I get an extra 10-15 yards :-)"

Reflections of the 1953 Presidential Inaugural

On January 20th, I sent an e-mail to our classmates who marched in President

Eisenhower's Inaugural Parade in January 1953 asking for their memories of it.

I was receiving replies as I was had this Newsletter printed. It's interesting to see the "diversity" of the recollections by our classmates about the same aspects of our trip down to Washington and back.

I will try to provide a "composite memory" of that event based on the various replies.

Cruise Control Safety

Ted Smith sent this and asked "Wonder how many people know about this?"

A 36 year old female had an accident totaled her car. It was raining, though not excessively, when her car suddenly began to hydro-plane and literally flew through the air. She was not seriously injured but very stunned at the sudden occurrence!

When she explained to the highway patrolman what had happened he told her something that every driver should know - **NEVER DRIVE IN THE RAIN WITH YOUR CRUISE CONTROL ON.**

She thought she was being cautious by setting the cruise control and maintaining a safe consistent speed in the rain. But the highway patrolman told her that if the cruise control is on when your car begins to hydro-plane and your tires lose contact with the pavement, your car will accelerate to a higher rate of speed making you take off like an airplane. **Only use the cruise control when the pavement is dry.**

The Stranger (Author Unknown)

A few years after I was born, my Dad met a stranger who was new to our small Texas town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around from then on.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in my family. In my young mind, he had a special niche. My parents were complementary instructors: Mom taught me good from evil, and Dad taught me to obey. But the stranger...he was our storyteller. He would keep us spellbound for hours on end with adventures, mysteries and comedies.

If I wanted to know anything about politics, history or science, he always knew the answers about the past, understood the present and even seemed able to predict the future! He took my family to the first major league ball game. He made me laugh, and he made me cry. The stranger never stopped talking, but Dad didn't seem to mind.

Sometimes, Mom would get up quietly while the rest of us were shushing each other to listen to what he had to say, and she would go to the kitchen for peace and quiet. (I wonder now if she ever prayed for the stranger to leave.)

Dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions, but the stranger never felt obligated to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our home... Not from us, our friends or any visitors. Our longtime visitor, however, got away with four-letter words that burned my ears and made my dad squirm and my mother blush. My Dad didn't permit the liberal use of alcohol. But the stranger encouraged us to try it on a regular basis. He made cigarettes look cool, cigars manly and pipes distinguished.

He talked freely (much too freely!) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant,

sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing.

I now know that my early concepts about relationships were influenced strongly by the stranger. Time after time, he opposed the values of my parents, yet he was seldom rebuked... And NEVER asked to leave.

More than fifty years have passed since the stranger moved in with our family. He has blended right in and is not nearly as fascinating as he was at first. Still, if you could walk into my parents' den today, you would still find him sitting over in his corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk and watch him draw his pictures.

His name?.... We just call him 'TV.'

He has a wife now....We call her 'Computer.'

Know Where You're Going in Life

A boat docked in a tiny Mexican village. An American tourist complimented the Mexican fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took him to catch them.

"Not very long," answered the Mexican.

"But then, why didn't you stay out longer and catch more?" asked the American.

The Mexican explained that his small catch was sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family.

The American asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a siesta with my wife. In the evenings, I go into the village to see my friends, have a few drinks, play the guitar, and sing a few songs. I have a full life."

The American interrupted, "I can help you! You should start by fishing longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra revenue, you can buy a bigger boat."

"And after that?" asked the Mexican.

"With the extra money the larger boat will bring, you can buy a second one and a third one and so on until you have an entire fleet of trawlers. Instead of selling your fish to a middle man, you can then negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open your own plant. You can then leave this little village and move to Mexico City, Los Angeles, or even New York City! From there you can direct your huge new enterprise."

"How long would that take?" asked the Mexican.

"Twenty, perhaps twenty-five years," replied the American.

"And after that?"

"Afterwards? Well my friend, that's when it gets really interesting," answered the American, laughing. "When your business gets really big, you can start buying and selling stocks and make millions!"

"Millions? Really? And after that?" asked the Mexican.

"After that you'll be able to retire, live in a tiny village near the coast, sleep late, play with your children, catch a few fish, take a siesta with your wife and spend your evenings drinking and enjoying your friends."

And the moral of this story is: Know where you're going in life... you may already be there!!

Electronic Technology Safety

This gives us something to think about with all our new electronic technology.

A couple had their car broken into while they were at a football game. Their car was parked adjacent to the football stadium in a spot reserved for the game's attendees. Things stolen from the car included a garage door remote control, some money and a GPS which had been prominently mounted on the dashboard.

When the victims got home, they found that their house had been ransacked and just about everything worth anything had been stolen.

The thieves had used the GPS to guide them to the house. They then used the garage remote control to open the garage door and gain entry to the house. The thieves knew the owners were at the football game, they knew what time the game was scheduled to finish and so they knew how much time they had to clean up the house. It would appear that they had brought a truck to empty the house of its contents.