

U.S. Coast Guard Academy Class of '53 Newsletter Second Edition - July 2010

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.

Class of '53 Website

(www.cga53.org)

Kirk Greiner recently added some classic photos to our website that **Jim Grabb** took back June 1993 at our 40th Reunion in New London. They are under the "Reunions" section on the website. The people in these photos are: **Mike Boggs**, *Gene Bowers*, Dan Briganti, Dan and Helene Colussy, Rick Cueroni, Dick Donnelly, Hank Fisher, *June Flanagan*, Bud Foster, Shirley Grabb, *Don Hintze*, Roger and Esther Holmes, *Dave* and Nancy Howland, Bernie Hoyland, Bill King, Bill Lehr, Gerry Lipsett, *Skip Lord*, *Graeme Mann*, *Ernie Rowland*, Keith Schumacher, Wade Smith, Al and Pat Stirling, *Arty Striker*, Teresa Stryffeler, Dave and Isabel Tredeau, Bob West, *Louie Westphal*, and Glenn Young.

Sadly, those people whose names are in *italics* are now dead, but seeing their pictures will bring back some wonderful memories of them. For questions about our '53 website: contact **Kirk** at kirk.greiner@gmail.com or Tel. 425-640-5137.

News about our classmates (in alphabetical order)

After reading the earlier *July '53 Newsletter*, **Ken Barrett** said, "it reminded me that others in our class are dealing with Alzheimers. That's not a surprise, considering our ages. **Eve** and I feel that sharing what we have learned might prove useful to some others. **Eve** was first diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment (early stage Alzheimers in her case) in early 2006 by a neuropsychologist. He suggested two drugs to our primary care doctor that he thought might be helpful. They are *Namenda* and *Razadyne*. He started **Eve** on one of them, and we were hopeful. A few months later there was an emotional incident which we reported to the doctor, and he suggested we try both drugs simultaneously which we did. **Eve** was re-evaluated in early 2009, and both the neurologist and the neuropsychologist were surprised at how little change there had been in her condition. They are inclined to credit the combination of the two drugs taken together for slowing the progression of the disease. A recent clinical study concluded that the two drugs taken together can be more effective than either one taken individually". **Ken** added, "in making this public, **Eve** and I are not looking for sympathy, but merely trying to be helpful".

After reading in the earlier edition of the *July '53 Newsletter* that 15 members of the Class of '52 joined our class, **Mike Boggs**, formerly of '52, observed "it's obvious that the courses were more difficult before 1949".

Dan Briganti reported that **Sue** can now put full weight on her repaired leg, rather than 50%, and is making good progress toward normal walking. **Dan** said, "a bit longer on the 'practice 'field' and **Sue** will be able to score some goals".

On June 6th, **Bill and Ann Clark's** grandson, ENS Mike Higbie '09 married his CGA classmate, ENS Keely Jane Balthrop in a beautiful ceremony in Charleston, SC at Magnolia Plantation on the banks of the Ashley River on the Carriage House lawn. Both Mike and Keely were Civil Engineering majors at CGA. He is stationed on the CGC DALLAS in Charleston and she is on the CGC DILLIGENCE in St. Petersburg, FL. On their honeymoon they went sailing in the British Virgin Islands.

Gerry Lipsett had 4 hours of surgery on July 23rd at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital in Boston, MA to remove the steel plate which had been installed to repair his broken neck back in February of 2008. He has been on a feeding tube into his stomach since that time and this surgery was done to facilitate his swallowing. Dr. Chen said the surgery was difficult because of the scar tissue which was implicated in the area between the esophagus and the site of the plate. As a result of the "difficult terrain", the doctor who conducted the surgery with Dr. Chen felt there

was a possible tear in **Gerry's** esophagus. They left a drain in the neck around the wound site to capture any saliva escaping from the esophagus. As of July 24th, Dr. Chen did not detect any fluid in the drain system, so he thought that either there was no tear or that the work Dr. Frankentheller (the ENT doctor) did had mitigated the tear. It's expected that **Gerry** will remain in the hospital until at least July 26th when the Doctors will re-evaluate the drainage problem and his over all condition. He is not expected to begin any swallowing efforts until after about a month. When **Gerry** is discharged from the hospital, he'll return to his condo at 13 Hayloft Lane, Marblehead, MA 02025; telephone: 781-536-4016; and e-mail: byglip@gmail.com.

Bob and Mimi Schmidt (544 Labelle Ave., Oconomowoc, WI 53066; e-mail: bobmimi@charter.net; and telephone: 414-567-6846) are battling some health issues. **Bob** advised that "**Mimi** is semi-crippled by a combination of osteoporosis and muscle weakness. Travel in cars or planes has become uncomfortable for her. She uses a cervical collar to keep her head and neck steady when traveling in a car. Although she eats and sleeps well, her weight is down to less than 110 pounds and she is rather frail and needs support and assistance". **Bob** added that it has been 15 years since he had his quadruple by-pass open heart surgery. A stress test that he had recently indicates that **Bob** probably has a blockage and an upcoming heart catheter exam at the Oconomowoc Hospital will probably lead to the placement of a "stent" either immediately or soon after. Keep the **Schmidts** in your thoughts and prayers.

On July 20th, **Dimpy and Nat Spadafora's** granddaughter, Natalie Spadafora, an outstanding softball player from Kent, WA, was sworn in as a "Academy Cadet Candidate". After receiving two weeks of orientation at the Academy she will report to the Alabama Military Institute in Marion, AL for a year on a full Coast Guard scholarship. Then next summer she will receive an appointment as a member of the Academy Class of 2015.

Ilma Striker is going on a vacation to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Austria. She said, "My parents were both from Budapest and I thought I should go see the ancestral homeland before I kick the bucket".

"When Pigs Fly"

Captain Susan D. Bibeau graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1980 with the first Academy class to graduate women. She had a distinguished 30-year career on active duty in the Coast Guard that included: serving six years at sea with commands of the CGC CAPE HENELOPEN (Woods Hole, MA) and the CGC MAUI (Miami, FL); earning a Master of Science in Systems Management, a Master of Public Administration, and, a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College. She also did an outstanding job during her nine years as the Academy's Director of Admissions. During that tour, these grandchildren of our classmates received Academy appointments: **Bill and Ann Clark's** grandson, Mike Higbie '09; **Bill and Margie Russell's** grandson, Travis Russell '11; **Frank and Jan Frauenfelder's** grandson, Tyler Babkiewich '13; and **Nat and Dimpy Spadafora's** granddaughter, Natalie Spadafora '15. At her retirement ceremony in April this year, Captain Bibeau shared this wonderful story from her experience during Swab Summer in 1976.

When Pigs Fly

"Swabs out! Gentlemen, tomorrow you will dance. Leamy Hall at 1800 – be ready. And one more thing, make your contributions into the Pig Pot right away!" A pulse of anticipation passed through the ranks.

What was up? What is the Pig Pot, and why do the guys know about it and I don't? And what's up with "gentlemen?" Don't these cadet cadre know who they are talking to? Am I invisible?

Then I remembered, I am invisible. This second class cadet would rather pretend we didn't exist than learn to cope with "girls."

With the same burning questions, my roommate and I flung ourselves into our stifling room. Just when we'd been getting the hang of Swab Summer, something new and much more threatening had landed like a ton of wet slop on our freshly waxed deck. A dance! We weren't ready for this. Bring on the obstacle course, morning calisthenics, math class – anything but this!

The ugly truth dawned. We were going and we were expected to dance. Worse, we would be dressed like prison convicts. But it got worse, much worse. "Real girls," as the cadet cadre called them, were coming, and they would be wearing real clothes, perfume, and even makeup. It didn't take much imagination to know what would happen...these silly vacuous girls would fall all over the guys and we would be left abandoned by our classmates. Social outcasts while the men have a wonderful time! The descent from smart, pretty, and successful in high school

to unwanted and invisible was dizzying.

Ignoring the pit in our stomachs, my roommate and I worked up our courage, demurely asking, “Mr. Wilder, what is the Pig Pot?” When he answered, I felt like I was suffocating in the stench of that wet slop. Not only were we destined to become outcasts, we were about to become the entertainment as well! Mr. Wilder smugly explained that the Swab who danced with the ugliest girl would receive all the money the men had been busy collecting – over \$300! Kind of a consolation prize and rite of initiation all wrapped up in one tidy package.

Back in the room again, furious: “Which of us will be The Pig? You know one of us will be! We have to do something!” But what could we do to save ourselves? How could two Swabs barely able to memorize the next day’s menu take this on?

We hatched a plan of desperation. With hours to go, the women in the Corps scraped together every single cent in their possession, exceeding, just barely, the amount in the “Pig Pot.”

We reported to Mr. Wilder with a solemn request: “Sir, could you hold onto this money? We collected it so we could have our own Pig Pot. We thought it might be better if you could lock it up until we need it tomorrow, when we choose our Pig.”

Victories came in small measures back then. Mr. Wilder's goofy smile melted away. “Where did you get all this money?” he demanded. Matter of factly, we told him. He stammered, “But that means you will have to pick one of your classmates to be a Pig...”

“Well, I guess so, Sir, unless of course you are inviting any “real boys” to the dance.”

We knew the hook was set when the corner of his mouth twitched and he retreated into the shadows of his room, like a fish escaping to safer, deeper waters. We doubletimed down the passageway repressing smiles, grateful the plan had worked, at least for the moment. Whatever indignities awaited that night, at least we could relive and savor this moment countless times over as our own consolation prize.

The next day, Mr. Wilder quietly returned the money we had collected. He never asked who danced with the ugliest boy. Nor did anyone ask who danced with the ugliest girl. Without fanfare the cherished “Pig Pot” died a quiet and deserved death.

After that day we were still unwanted, but we weren’t quite as invisible. Together we had forced a pig to sprout wings and fly out of our lives forever, much to everyone’s surprise.