

**U. S. Naval Academy Class of 1966  
55 + 1 Reunion**

**Class Dinner**

**Friday, 2 September 2022**

**Closing Remarks**

**John Scott Redd**

**Incoming Class President**

**1966 Class Dinner**  
**Friday, 2 September 2022**

**Closing Comments and Toast**

Just to put this in context, and to keep you from getting too settled, here's the plan. I'm going to talk for about nine minutes and then we're going to have a toast. So . . . charge your glasses . . . and don't get too comfortable.

As you know, this may well be our last major reunion.

And, as you heard at the memorial service today, some 279 of our members have crossed over the bar. They will no longer grow old. For the most part, our service to the nation has been completed.

So, it's useful, I think, to stop for a very few minutes and consider how we have done. What have we accomplished as a class? What's the final FITREP for the class of 1966 going to look like? Have we fulfilled our mission?

There are lots of ways we could measure our performance. Most of you remember the mission of the Naval Academy. The abridged version of that goes like this: "To develop Midshipmen who have [the] potential to assume the highest responsibilities of **command, citizenship and government.**" Command, Citizenship and Government.

There's another yardstick, one which our Link in the Chain class saw when they reported in 2016. It serves as the introduction to the Honor Concept. Most of us haven't looked at Reef Points in quite a while so here's what it says:

- *Our Primary Calling is to be a warrior . . . to fight and win the Nation's wars.*
- *Our primary job is to be a leader . . . we'll do lots of things in uniform, but our primary job is to lead sailors and marines*
- *Our primary qualification is character . . . honor and integrity are the sine qua non of good leadership and effective service.*

So how have we lived up to those standards. Who are we and what have we done? Did we live up to our potential? How did we fare as warriors . . . as leaders . . . and as men of character?

Let me try to answer that briefly.

### Who we are

On a hot June day in 1962, some thirteen hundred of us raised our hands and were sworn in as Midshipmen. Four years later, almost exactly two thirds that number - eight hundred and sixty-eight of us - passed out of the crucible and were commissioned as officers, primarily in the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

We came of age at the peak of the Viet Nam war. We fought on the land, the rivers, the offshore waters and in the skies over that divided country. We paid a high price. According to the USNA Virtual Memorial Hall website – which I encourage you to visit online – a total of **23 different Naval Academy classes lost classmates killed in combat action in Vietnam. Of those 23 classes, our class had the largest number of combat KIA, 16.** One of our classmates spent five years as a prisoner of war. That service – and sacrifice – is reflected in our sponsorship of two ships - USS Hue City and USS Gonzalez - both with hull numbers of 66. They are the only ships with names related to that war.

More broadly, we were raised in the shadow of the Cold War. We manned the ships, the planes and the submarines that hunted and parried the Red Fleet in the icebox – the cold and barren northern waters of the planet. We helped develop and execute the strategy and tactics which convinced the Soviet Union they could not prevail. In the end, we won the cold war and '66 was present and accounted for in a major way.

When the world changed in 1989 with the fall of the Iron Curtain, America pivoted to the hot sandbox of the Middle East. We fought as senior leaders in the first Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm, dropping bombs, firing missiles and protecting the fleet in unfamiliar waters. One classmate commanded the Marine Task Force which began the war with offensive operations in Kuwait. Another commanded a battleship which fired the last 16-inch rounds in anger – in history. We went on to establish and command a new fleet, the Navy's first since World War II.

The flag of that new fleet – the FIFTH Fleet - was broken for the first time at sea on a carrier under the command of another '66 classmate. Later, two classmates served as four-star Deputy Commanders of all United States military forces in Europe and most of Africa.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of us had transitioned to the citizenship category. We put our leadership and other skills to work in the broader society, serving as leaders and professionals in the private and public sectors and continuing to strengthen our country. Many classmates have also continued to support the nation and the Naval Academy generously with their time and treasure.

As the new millennium arrived one classmate served as Superintendent of the Naval Academy continuing the cycle of training the next generation of leaders.

Following 9/11, several '66 classmates were re-bridled for service in government as the new war of the twenty first century, the global war on terror (GWOT). One served as the first Deputy Homeland Security Advisor to the President. Another served as the first Director of the National Counterterrorism Center.

Looking back over history, our sacrifice in the name of freedom was historic. Probably more than most of us realize. Amazingly, **our class lost more classmates killed in action in combat- not just in the Viet Nam war - but in all conflicts since the class of 1945! 1945!** Note that **includes the Korean War -**

In addition to **direct combat losses**, we served in a dangerous business. In addition to combat killed in action, **we lost an additional 20 classmates in operations** – 19 in aviation accidents and one when USS Scorpion was lost at sea.

**So, here's the astounding bottom line: In the 65 classes since 1957 no other Naval Academy class has lost more total classmates in combined combat and operations than the class of 1966. Let me repeat that. In combat and in operations preparing for combat, we lost more classmates than any Naval Academy class in the last 65 years.** That's a sober reminder that **Freedom isn't free.**

I would submit that we have completed our mission – the mission of the Naval Academy - with honor, character and integrity . . . and we have served honorably in the highest levels of command, citizenship, and government.

Today, our tribe is thinning. We are old now - those of us who remain - well past our biblically allotted three score and ten. Our heads are graying. Our steps are slower. We are fading away. But one thing hasn't changed. Our SPIRIT IS STRONG. Our class rings may be worn smooth with time, but we have not forgotten the motto engraved on them over five decades past:

*“Non Sibi Sed Patriae”*

Not for self, but for country.

We kept the faith with those who went before.

. . .

Please rise . . .and lift your glasses . . .

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the United States Naval Academy class of 1966