

12 September 2023

Shipmates,

Welcome to fall and football! It's been a year since our reunion and the Executive Committee is already beginning to plan for our 60<sup>th</sup>!

The class continues to move forward, and I wanted to take a few moments of your time to focus on two things: one looking forward, another looking back.

### **First, looking Forward:**

As previewed in my last letter, we have begun moving out on what we're calling our '66 Class Wellness project. I'm pleased to announce the successful launch of the project under Phil Bozzelli's leadership. Information is available at our class website, [www.usna66.com](http://www.usna66.com) (click on the Wellness tab). We recorded Jim Galvin's 17 August Zoom focused presentation on VA opportunities and benefits, and it is available for viewing at the site. I would encourage you (and your family members) to view that and future presentations.

As Phil notes, we chose the VA claims process as our initial focus since it applies to all of us and offers financial benefits both to you and your families. Within that presentation we laid out the philosophy of the class's undertaking to have classmates support each other and the extended '66 family. When fully populated we expect to see the site offering valuable information based upon the knowledge and experiences of classmates that will help guide others as they consider issues confronting them and their families. Although the site is public, we can accommodate those who wish to offer their experiences in a more circumspect manner. When you look at the site and the video you will also see areas where you (or your family) may make a contribution. We are in particular need of medical and legal professionals to identify themselves and bring their expertise to the applicable legal and medical sector leads.

### **Looking back:**

We were reminded again yesterday on 9/11 that freedom isn't free. It never has been.

As a result, since at least 2013 the Academy has sponsored the "Honor Our Fallen Heros" event, where families of fallen classmates are invited and honored. This year's event will be held on November 11 in conjunction with the UAB football game activities.

In that context, I want to expand on something I mentioned briefly at our reunion. That is our class's significant legacy of service under our motto of *non sibi sed patriae*. Specifically, remembering our classmates who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the country.

As you may recall, '66 lost more classmates killed in action (KIA) in Vietnam than any other USNA class – 16 to be exact.

What you may not know is that represents the most KIA of any class – in all wars – since the class of 1945. That's a period of almost eight decades! Of those 16 KIA, 7 were Marines (including one pilot), 6 were Navy carrier aviators (including one combined '66 pilot/BN crew) and 3 were riverine/ground.

In addition to combat losses, we lost another 20 categorized as "operational loss," i.e., preparing for combat operations. With the exception of Mike Odenning (lost when submarine USS Scorpion sunk), all of our operational losses were aviation related.

Two things. First, I would encourage you to visit the online Virtual Memorial Hall. The '66 list is found at <http://www.usnamemorialhall.org/index.php/Category:1966> (other classes are nearby). It's one thing to hear about numbers and read a list but – as several have been reminded – it's another to see the picture and read the short narratives of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Second, the USNA Alumni Association has family/survivor information on only three of the 36 classmates we lost (Don Droz, Pat Buckley and Jay Prout). Realizing the difficulty given time late, if you know of any living family member, please let me and/or the Alumni Association know so that they can at least provide an invite to the Honor our Fallen Heroes event.

Finally, thanks to the Executive Committee for keeping us underway even as the hull and machinery continue to age. Special thanks to Mike Baird who continues to faithfully write the monthly class report in *Shipmate* and to Chuck Grutzius who – in addition to his class treasurer duties – organizes our DC class luncheons. This year he captured both the Navy football and rugby coaches as speakers.

*Non Sibi Sed Patriae*

God bless,

Scott



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