June 26, 2024

Shipmates and family of the U. S. Naval Academy Class of 1966,

As Jim Long takes over as Class President, I wanted to close out my third “term” with a note of thanks and, hopefully, encouragement. I was privileged to work with Jim after government retirement and am confident he will take us up a notch. It’s also been a blessing to work again with the Executive Committee, ’66 wives and widows, and many others who have ministered to us all. Special thanks to Phil Bozzelli for establishing the “wellness initiative” and to those classmates who contributed to it.

On a longer view, in many ways, the recent passing of our classmate and former POW, Joe Mobley, is a fitting capstone of our corporate voyage through history. \* You will be familiar with the broad story line of that voyage but – also like many of us – may need more to be reminded than to be informed.

‘66 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. Our class lost more killed in action (KIA) than any Naval Academy class since WW-II. Many of our class suffered – and still suffer – from both the seen and unforeseen effects of that war (especially Agent Orange). Sadly, but appropriately, our class had the highest representation at last year’s Honor our Fallen Heroes (HOFH) ceremony in Memorial Hall. Joe was the last POW to leave active duty.

Viet Nam was the first, but not the last of our combat rodeos. Raised in the shadow of the Cold War, we manned the ships, planes and 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, America 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, our country 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. Yet another 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 at sea for the first time in five decades on USS Abraham Lincoln, the flagship of another ’66 classmate. Today, shipping in that theater in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is defended by Navy combatants armed with weapons developed with a strong ’66 involvement - a continuing reminder of the lasting value of our service in so many ways.

As the new millennium dawned, 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.

Then, on a September morning in 2001, the world changed again. Some of us were called into service again in a new and different war - the global war on terror (GWOT). Several classmates were deeply involved at the highest levels of government. Another classmate served as USNA Superintendent, training the next generation of warriors.

Looking back over history, our sacrifice in the name of freedom was historic. Probably more so than most of us realize.

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 almost six decades past:

*“Non Sibi Sed Patriae”*

Not for self, but for country.

 Blessings,

Scott

John Scott Redd

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\* (<https://usna66.org/2024/06/20/passing-of-vadm-joseph-s-mobley-usn-ret/>)