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Terry Wildrick Singled Out at Commandant of Cadets Change of Command

While trying to stay gray, I watched the you tube video of the commandant change of command between BG Buzzard ('92) and BG Quander ('95) last week (https://www.youtube.com/attribution_link?a=GgrfImZovSrOtWnZ&u=/watch%3Fv%3DRnhZl zKrA44%26feature%3Dem-lbrm), I was pleasantly surprised to note that **Terry Wildrick** was specifically mentioned by the outgoing Comm, which included his year group, branch and combat record. BG Buzzard also called out our class as an example that the "Corps Had" by noting that we were the first class to go home for Christmas... When Terry and I made contact, I asked him how he got such VIP treatment. He chuckled and explained that he regularly plays golf with BG Buzzard's father and Terry's golfing buddy invited him to ride with him and attend the Change of Command Ceremony in Eisenhower Hall. Terry said that he was as surprised as I was that the Commandant gave him such recognition at the beginning of his address. Terry's moment of glory came at about the 34 minute portion of the video.

Sadness During our Reporting Period

This has been a shattering reporting period. Three long time (but not long enough) brides passed away. **Charlie Beckwith** offered, "years [of marriage at our age] gets to be a comfortable fit... from good to not good, in the blink of a mid-70's set of eyes... the pain of loss... hope that[who is left behind] has loyal friends." **Larry Stevenson's** bride, **Cheryl** was attacked by a devastating and quick-acting disease. Among others, classmates rallied around him – and will continue to care and protect. Larry said that classmates at this time really brought home the concept of "grip hands." The disease that took **Frank Nader's** bride, **Connie**, took a little longer, but it was just as brutal and the Zoo is rallying – with each member having a specific duty according to need and ability. **John Cruden** got the word out fast regarding the terrible accident and untimely loss of his bride, **Sharon**. She will be interred later in the summer at West Point. As with our other classmates who have been stricken by catastrophic losses such as these, there are support groups of loyal, loving, and caring family, friends, colleagues, and classmates who help provide support and will not let these ladies go away. They remember and together have lots of others with which to share remembrances, and stories. For those of us who are blessed to still have our brides, hug them.



[Photo #1 – “Colorado classmates Tom Martin, Robby Robinson, Marv Wooten, Chuck Canella, Jay Francis, Gary Halstead, Joe Henry, Les Krohnfeldt, and Chuck Jones rallying around Larry Stevenson at Cheryl’s Celebration of Life gathering”]

The number of classmates passing was also a shock – **Joe Mance** lost his battle with Agent Orange-attributable lung cancer first diagnosed three years ago in this non-smoker. The tissue obtained from biopsy contained Agent Orange “markers” identifying that as the cause. **Jack Bussa** volunteered to put something together so we can all be informed that Agent Orange exposure can lie dormant for all these years. Although **Bud Burrell** had his share of health issues, heart problems was not among them; however, he died quickly of a heart attack. Both had interment ceremonies attended by classmates

Old Rag Conquerors (Continued)

Last reporting period, I slipped in a photo from **Gordon Tillery** of five DC-area Classmates who, on April 28th climbed Old Rag –a “rock scramble” in the Shenandoah Nat Park. This time, **Rick Rhoades** added that it was “sort of hard” on 75+-year old bods, like one last patrol at the Mountain Ranger Camp, but outstanding camaraderie! At the conclusion, **Mike Mears** presented each of the “68 Wheezers” with a specialized T-shirt featuring a dinosaur (wearing glasses) with a walker, scrambling up Old Rag. Returning safely to the start point, the five classmates popped ibuprofen, declared this was their LAST trip up Old Rag, and watched Mike speed away in his cherry red 2021 Miata.



[Photo #2 – “Lee Outlaw, Mike Mears, Tom McNaugher. and Rick Rhoades surround the objective”]



[Photo #3 – “Lee Outlaw, Mike Mears, Tom McNaugher, Gordon Tillery, and Rick Rhoades in their special Ts in front of Mike’s Miata”]

Mike Mears Interviews Classmates Who Have Not Changed

A few years back – and again a few months back – **Mike Mears** proposed holding a contest to see who has changed the least since graduation. It appears that he is holding auditions under the guise of participating in outdoor adventures. A couple of weeks after the Old Rag climb, he hosted a three hour kayaking jaunt down the Rappahannock River. Not deterred by a breezy and chilly start, seven classmates, including Mike, met the challenge. After successful completion of the voyage, Mike further hosted a cookout on his river-front acreage.



[Photo #4 – “Bill Gardepe, Tom McNaugher, Rick Rhoades, Lee Outlaw, and Mike Mears warming up after their kayak adventure down the Rappahannock River”]



[Photo #5 – “Glen Hewitt, Ralph Tuccillo, Lee Outlaw, Rick Rhoades, Bill Gardepe, and host, Mike Mears gorging on barbecue after their Rappahannock River adventure”]

Golfing Grads Continue to Celebrate

After the Covid-19 hiatus in 2020, the Class of 1961 & 1962 sponsored Golfing Grads of USMA resumed with its 33th tournament at the Robert Trent Jones' Grand National golf courses near Auburn, Alabama in late April. About seven years ago, **Chick James** was the first to learn about the event and was the only classmate to participate for two years. Hence, he became the de facto '68 Class Captain since it was just him and his son, who had a great time. As time went on, **Bill Robinson** and **Hank Gregor** joined Chick and his son. Chick's son got a new job and only attended the first three events. This year, six classmates – Chick, Bill, **Joe Creeden**, **Joe Guignon**, **Ken Hauck**, and **Dwight Lee** – participated, enjoyed the good weather, and had an overall wonderful time. They were all inspired to see the classes of '61 & '62 still swinging – about 20 members from '61 and about 30 from '62 showed up and played. Although some of our classmates are dealing with replacement body parts, they keep moving, shooting and communicating.



[Photo #6 – “Best of all photos of this year’s Golfing Grads – Ken & Beth Hauck, Chick & Carole James, Joe Guignon, Dwight Lee, Joe Creeden, and Bill Robinson under April’s full moon “Super Pink” Moon”]



[Photo #7 – “This year’s ’68 mule swingers Chick, James, Dwight Lee, Ken Hauck, Bill Robinson, Joe Guignon, and Joe Creeden”]

Puffers Keep Marching Along

This is a busy time of year for **Ray & Robin Puffer**. While Robin tends her gardens, Ray has 25 fruit trees to prune, spray, and graft favorite varieties. They also had two large truckloads of wood chips brought in to use as mulch in the gardens and around the fruit trees. Besides their gardening, Ray also keeps very busy teaching woodworking, and preparing for the auto show season where he shows his 1967 Jaguar E-Type. He is also leading a memorial award program for his high school class in his home town in Vermont. The program gives out over \$2,500 cash awards to graduating seniors with financial needs to continue their education. So far, the program has raised \$50,000 for these awards. Not bad for a small Vermont high school class. Every student they have supported has been a huge success story, and has exceeded their expectations. Speaking of helping, Ray donated a paver to the US Army Museum -- a most worthy cause that we will soon see. Also, while Ray was stationed in Korea, and on a trip to Hong Cong, he had a jeweler resize his class ring – BAD decision. The jeweler pretty much destroyed Ray’s ring making it unwearable. Finally, after 40 years without a ring, he had a replacement ring made by Balfour, just like the original. Now, he’s a happy camper and looks forward to flashing his new crass mass of brass and glass around at next season’s Army football games – he’s a long time season ticket holder – U12, row E.



[Photo #8 – “Ray Puffer in his restored E-Jag”]



[Photo #9 – “Ray Puffer showing off his new class ring while holding a copy of the paver he donated to the U.S. Army Museum and giving his banjo prowess a plug”]

Jetlands Finley

The last we heard from **Bob & Elsa Jetland** last November, they had sold their home in Del Mar, California and suffered while enduring “homelessness” in San Diego while searching for new digs in Southern California in late February. After four months of living out of suitcases (not fun), staying with kids and friends, and cashing in a boatload of Marriott rewards points, they moved into their new (and final?) home in Laguna Hills. Now, they are pretty well moved in and ready to open up for house guests. So far, they do not have to endure the smell of brush fire smoke emanating from their furniture.