



2019-2020 STEWARDSHIP REPORT CLASS OF 1957 CHAIR IN NAVAL HERITAGE

David F. Winkler, Ph.D.

Dear Class of 1957,

Thank you for the opportunity to join the faculty of the History Department at the United States Naval Academy as the Class of '57 Chair of Naval Heritage for the 2019-2020 academic year. I had a two-course load during each semester with one course being the basic HH104 Introduction to Naval History class that all Plebes take and an upper level course.

For the Fall upper level class I leveraged my experience with Naval History and Heritage Command's Combat Documentation Detachment 206 where as a naval reserve commander, I had written a report for Commander Fifth Fleet on the history of the U.S. Navy's presence in Bahrain into a course on U.S. naval operations in the Middle East post-World War II.

In the Spring I drew upon my quarter-century of experience doing oral history with the Naval Historical Foundation to teach a course on oral history methodology, assigning the class to interview members of the Class of '57 on their experiences during the Vietnam War.

Whereas my academic predecessors mostly recycled curricula they had taught elsewhere, as a public historian coming from the non-profit sector, I was starting from scratch. To compensate, I leaned on many members of the NHF, who were subject-matter experts, to come in and share their experiences. Individuals such as Capt. Andrew A.C. Jampoler who wrote *Sailors in the Holy Land*, kicked off my Middle East Operations class with an engaging talk about the 1840s Lynch expedition to the Dead Sea. We used a new text published by Naval Institute Press, *Middle East 101*, and the co-authors

Cdr. Youseff Aboul-Enein and Jos Stanik both came in to discuss chapters pertaining to Arab nationalism and radical Islamic movements.

Dr. Sal Mercogliano discussed the logistics involved in sustaining U.S. forces in the region. We had Master Chief Mark Hacala, a corpsman in Lebanon when the Marine Barracks was bombed in 1983, discuss that grim episode. Steve Phillips, a Ph.D. candidate at Kings College discussed the Tanker Wars in the Persian Gulf in the 1980s. The commanding officers of Samuel B. Roberts and Cole, Capt. Paul Rinn and Cdr. Kirk Lippold, discussed the damage that was inflicted on their respective commands during mining and a suicide attack. Retired senior historian of the Navy Dr. Ed Marolda gave an overview of *Sword and Shield*, the book he co-authored on the first Gulf War. Director of Naval History Rear Adm. Sam Cox briefed the situation in the Middle East post-9/11.

I also leaned on USNA faculty with regional experience to include Dr. Mark Folse who served in Fallujah with the Marines, Lt. Kai Compton who operated small craft on the Tigress, and the Superintendent, Vice Adm. Sean Buck, who commanded the maritime patrol assets in the region. My rolodex helped in other ways. When I tasked

the class to give country briefs I told them to present them to me as if I was a Flag Officer. Then I thought: "Hell, let me bring in real Flag Officers to receive the briefs." The class appreciated the feedback that former 5th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Doug Katz and Naval Historical Foundation Executive Director Rear Adm. Sonny Masso had to offer.

For the Spring Oral History Class I followed that script except I increased the number of guests by hosting roundtables. Basically, there were three groupings. The first were practitioners. We had Cdr. Paul Stillwell from USNI; Drs. Richard Hulver and Regina Akers from NHHC; Jan Herman, retired from BuMed; and Charles Melson and Dr. Fred Allison retired from Marine Corps History Division to discuss their collection efforts. In addition, Laura Orr from the Hampton Roads Naval Museum gave a well-crafted presentation on how she used oral history in the museum's new Vietnam exhibition.

The second grouping included visiting historians who have written scholarly works on the conflict such as riverine and coastal warfare expert Dr. John Sherwood from NHHC and Air Force historian Dr. Darrel Whitcomb. Finally, I brought in groups of veterans such as Brown Water veteran Lt. Cdr. Tom Cutler and Captain Dick Kroulis who flew with HA(L)-3 – the Seawolves. Vice



Adm. Robert F. Dunn and Capt. Charles T. Creekman brought in colleagues who were veterans of the air campaign and naval gunfire support. Later in the semester, Joe Galloway, the famed UPI reporter who co-authored the book *We Were Soldiers Once – and Young* joined the class online.

Because the Class of 1957 was generous enough to endow my one-year stint in Annapolis I thought we could show some appreciation by having the class of 15 midshipmen interview 15 members of the Class of 1957 about their Vietnam experience. What is fascinating about the Class of 1957 is that a quarter of class went into the Air Force as well as opti for the Marine Corps, so we had representatives from three services in the interview pool. Once the interviews were transcribed, the class was assigned 15 time segments and they meshed the transcriptions with other historical sources to write a narrative on “The Class of 1957 Experience in Vietnam.” The goal is to publish copies for each of the students and participants for presentation this Fall.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic after Spring Break we transitioned to online teaching. Because the oral history class focused on subject matter experts making themselves available to meet with the class to talk about their experiences, we did not miss a beat when it came to carrying on the conversations. Another great presentation was given by the team that produced the *2Sides Project*, a PBS documentary that united the now adult children of men who were killed on both sides in the Vietnam War. The class also enrolled and participated in an online symposium hosted by Columbia University on oral history and pandemics.

With the Plebe HH104 class I decided to use the online format to expose these future officers to some great lecturers, so Dr.

Chuck Steele from the Air Force Academy, came on to discuss with Vice Adm, William Sims, Dr. Craig Symonds at the Naval War College covered the Pacific campaign, Dr. Sal Mercagliano discussed logistics in the Korean War, Dr. John Sherwood discussed Vietnam, and for the Maritime Strategy former Navy Secretary John Lehman was delighted to spend an hour with the class.

Given the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on the U.S. Naval Academy, I decided to assign my class of novice oral historians to capture this unique history. On the day of the final exam they opened a packet sent by e-mail that revealed their interviewee. Subjects ranged from a plebe living near a meat packing town in Iowa, a firstie living in Queens, members of the staff including the head of Food Services, and numerous members of the faculty. They spent an hour prepping questions, another 30-40 minutes conducting and recording the interview, and then spent the rest of the exam period writing the interview abstract.

Later in the day, we reconvened the class to do a group interview with Coach Ken Niumatalolo. A theme in the interviews was the sadness surrounding the cancellation of many of the Spring activities such as the climbing of the Herndon Monument to the graduation week ceremonies. On the other hand, everyone remarked that overall, the U.S. Naval Academy showed remarkable resilience given the it was forced to try something never tried in its 175-year history.

Unfortunately, the pandemic cancelled presentation opportunities at conferences. We had a panel accepted at the Oral History Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR) conference planned for 13-14 March at Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Two midshipmen from my oral history class were to be joined by Capt. William Peerenboom from the Class of 1957 to discuss the class documentation project.

I had also been accepted to join with other Class of 1957 chairs for a roundtable panel on teaching midshipmen at the annual meeting of the North American Society for Oceanic History that had been scheduled for mid-May. Finally, I had been accepted to present a paper on safety at sea measures between naval forces at the 8th International Maritime Heritage Conference scheduled for Porto, Portugal at the end of June.

Fortunately, the pandemic has had little impact on my ongoing scholarship and writing. Indeed, freed of a daily commute to the USNA from Northern Virginia, I actually gained ground in this aspect of my profession. I completed work on *Tribute to a Generation*, a book about the design and construction of the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC which will be published by the Naval Institute Press this Fall. I made substantial progress editing a memoir written by Adm. James L. Holloway III, to be titled *Destroyers at War*. I made headway identifying source materials for my next project on the Navy's first aircraft carrier – USS Langley – which I will undertake next year as the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum's Charles Lindbergh Chair of Aerospace History.

I'm proud that I was able to play a role in the transition of the USNA to online learning and conclude by saying it was a privilege to teach at what US News & World Report ranks as the #1 public college in the country and build friendships with faculty that will endure for years to come.

Sincerely,

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Cdr. USNR (Ret.)

