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USNA Class of 1957 Chair in Naval Heritage
Report of Activities 2018-2019

It is with great pleasure that I submit this report of my tenure as the Class of 1957 Chair in Naval Heritage during the 2018-2019 academic year. I arrived in July 2018 with few preconceived notions of what to expect - from the midshipmen, from the History Department, and from the Academy. What I found has been challenging, enlightening, and immensely rewarding and I am so grateful to the Class of '57 for making it possible for me to be here.

Teaching

One thing I did know before I got here was that I would be teaching two courses each semester – one section of American Naval History (HH-104) to plebes and an upper level course of my own choosing.

HH-104

I was fortunate to be able to rely on the advice of Jim Bradford whose recommendation I followed to use his edited volume *America, Sea Power, and the World*, as the main text for HH-104. I based the structure of the course on that book, using its chapters as the outline for my syllabus. My own field of research and writing has been mostly in World War II naval history, with a particular focus on the men and women scientists and technicians who developed the new weapons and devices used in that war. I was very glad, therefore, to have as a guide a text that so competently covered the earlier years of the U.S. Navy. For my class I also recommended additional reading from Bradford's *Quarterdeck and Bridge* and reference to Craig L. Symonds *Historical Atlas of the U. S. Navy*.

My primary goals for HH-104 were:

1. To introduce midshipmen to the challenges facing a new young navy and to examine how it developed and matured over the decades to meet an ever-changing national and international situation.
2. To develop the midshipmen's research skills.
3. To develop the midshipmen's ability to write clearly, concisely and accurately.

4. To improve the midshipmen's oral presentation skills.
5. To enhance the midshipmen's ability to work as a team.
6. To improve the midshipmen's knowledge of geography and to recognize its effects and significance.
7. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, to inspire in the midshipmen a love of history and an understanding of its value and continuing relevance to their lives.

As we work our way through the syllabus I do my best to provide fast-paced and interesting classes. I rely largely on a question and answer format to keep the midshipmen's attention and to gauge how well they are keeping up with the reading. We focus on events/people/ideas that have proved pivotal in creating the navy they will soon be joining. We also constantly refer to geographic locations and we examine the maps provided, stressing the critical role of geography in naval affairs.

Midshipmen's research and writing skills are developed by having them identify, become familiar with, and write a paper on an individual who exemplifies the American Naval tradition (and who is not represented in *Quarterdeck and Bridge*), and to justify that choice. They must get approval for their topic ahead of time and we discuss in detail the elements of good writing, how to outline a good paper, and how to correctly format footnotes and bibliography. Essays in quizzes and exams also call on their writing skills.

Midshipmen's oral presentation skills and their ability to work well in teams are developed through an oral report process. In addition to reading the Bradford text each midshipman also reads Edward Beach's book *Submarine*. Then they are divided into small groups (chosen alphabetically), with each group making a thirty-minute report on two or three assigned chapters from the book. Every member of the team must make part of the oral presentation and they each get the same grade. They are encouraged to be creative and to keep the attention of the class.

In addition to stressing the pleasure to be derived from the study of history I invite guest speakers each semester to give midshipmen a view of how some military officers have made a career as historians after their military service is over.

Each guest is an expert on topics that we discuss in HH-104. In the fall semester 2018 we heard from W. J. R. Gardner (retired Royal Navy officer), Dr. Stephen Bourque, Dr. Edward Marolda and Dr. Brian Sullivan and in the spring 2019 we heard from Dr. Mitchell Yockelson, Dr. R. L. DiNardo, Dr. Donald Bittner and again from Dr. Edward Marolda. When I questioned the midshipmen after these presentations they told me that they enjoyed hearing from other people and thought it was valuable to get different perspectives.

HH-386

In Fall 2018 I taught an upper level course called “War at Sea: Science and Technology, 1939-1945. The class was assigned five texts to read, including William McBride’s *Technological Change and the United States Navy, 1865-1945*. The goal of the course was to understand the interplay of science and technology and the U. S. Navy in World War II; to examine the role of scientists in developing that science and technology; and the role of government in harnessing science and technology in the service of the war. Students were required to do extensive research for individual oral presentations and for a long research paper. Although the class was small, the midshipmen were engaged and very productive. Their final papers were excellent and I believe they thought the course was both interesting and helpful.

This semester my upper level course is called “World War II in History, Memory and Film.” I was advised that the word “film” in the title would draw the midshipmen in and indeed it did. I have 22 students of whom 19 are firsties. We read memoirs such as Sledge’s *With the Old Breed* and read histories like Richard Overy’s *Why the Allies Won*. We also watch, analyze (and write reviews of) seven WWII films. These were made at different times and cover different aspects of the war including the build-up, the home front (“Since you Went Away” 1944), the air war, the war in the Pacific, the war at sea, Normandy (“Saving Private Ryan” 1998), and the aftermath of the war. In addition, each midshipman chooses one from a long list of other WWII films to analyze in a term paper and present orally to the class. The goal of the course was to give the midshipmen familiarity with the broad scope of work done on WWII in different mediums and to examine how views of war can change over time. Through reading film reviews produced at the time the films

were made, and writing their own reviews of the films assigned, midshipmen hone the skills of criticism, analysis and clear, concise writing. The guest speakers I invited for HH-104 also made presentations to my upper level courses. I believe the course this semester has been going well and the term papers, which the midshipmen have already turned in, are very good indeed.

Professional Development

This past year has been a productive one for me professionally. I completed the editing and created an index for a book titled *Painting War: George Plante's Combat Art in World War II* that will be published by the Naval Institute Press next month. I have also been working on a new project. When I arrived at the Naval Academy I had an idea for an article that was based on my fascination with a number of World War II warriors I had come across in my research who later wrote books for children. Talking to history department chair Rick Ruth about it he told me he had been re-reading J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and thought we might expand my idea into an edited volume, including works by veterans from both world wars. We now have a firm proposal for a book called *When Warriors Write for Children* to cover six writers who served in World War I and another six or seven who served in World War II. Among them are A. A. Milne, Hugh Lofting, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien and Farley Mowat, J. D. Salinger, Roald Dahl and Charles M. Schulz. The contributors, all historians who are expert in their fields, include four from the Naval Academy as well as myself. I will attach our proposal to this report.

In addition, I wrote a book review, published in January's *Journal of Military History*, of the two-volume work *Hunters and Killers* by Norman Polmar and Edward Whitman. The books cover antisubmarine warfare from 1776 to the present. In March I gave a talk at the New York Military Affairs Symposium in New York City called "George Plante: Artist and Propagandist at War" (recorded by C-SPAN and now available on their website). Last fall I was invited to join the editorial board of *Marine Corps History* magazine and the Naval History Advisory Board of the U. S. Naval Institute, and I also continue to serve on the editorial board of the *Journal of Military History*. As I have been doing for many years now, I helped to put together a

panel for this coming September's McMullen Naval History Symposium and if it is accepted I will act as the panel commentator. Recently, I was invited to write an article about Grace Hopper for *Sea History* magazine, which I hope to get to later this month.

And finally...

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity the Class of 1957 has afforded me to be here at the Naval Academy and, in particular, to work closely with the fine, enthusiastic and keen young midshipmen. They are a delight to be with and I will cherish many fond memories.

An enormous additional pleasure has been working with my colleagues in the History Department and with the ever-helpful department chair, Rick Ruth. They are a very special group of people representing impressive expertise in a broad range of subjects. In addition, they organize an almost dizzying array of professional activities from "Works in Progress" to teaching "Brown Bags," to "Meet the Fleet," to "Historians vs. Hollywood." They also arrange for outstanding guest speakers from off campus through various organizations, notably the Center for Regional Studies. Both the military and the civilian faculty are dedicated to the midshipmen and to developing in them a lifelong love of history. I feel privileged to have been welcomed into what I can confidently say is the best History Department in which I have ever worked. It has been a wonderful year for me and I will miss everyone here so very much.

