

Shipmate Jan-Feb 2021
Duke Longworth

30 November 2020 – Winter!

I completed this column prior to the Army-Navy game. Army seems to have had an easier, winning schedule. Navy has struggled and may manage a 50/50 season. I am hopeful that Navy will BEAT ARMY! As much as I enjoy winter, the season is not looking good for getting to the ski slopes; however, hope springs eternal, so I will press on looking for that opportunity! I am looking forward to our 50th reunion next fall! Speaking of which, here is an important announcement regarding our 50th Reunion. The Reunion Survey results are especially encouraging - 71% of our Classmates said they plan to attend the 50th in Annapolis! Yes, you read that right - 71%! So far, ten months prior to the event, classmates have reserved 260 rooms at our HQ (DoubleTree) and first alternate (Crowne Plaza) hotels! In addition, I know a few classmates who have reserved homes in the area! Registration: The Reunion Committee and Class Board determined it is in the best interest of '71 Classmates, Families, and Friends to delay the start of registration until approximately four months prior to our 50th. So, the target registration start date is 9 June 2021! Exactly 50 years from the date of our graduation and commissioning. This registration start date should provide needed time for the uncertainties of COVID-19 to subside. The reunion committee recommends you review our class website at: <http://1971.usnaclases.net/> to see preliminary reunion information, including a welcome letter from your 50th Committee, the reunion Schedule of Events, and list of area hotels located within 5 miles of our HQ hotel. You will receive more announcements regarding the class reunion website this spring as the reunion committee adds detailed information regarding scheduled reunion events, class gear, Ship's Store, etc. The reunion committee wants us to feel great about traveling to Annapolis to celebrate our 50th. Rest assured they are working hard to plan and execute a 50th worth remembering! There is more to follow this spring, but for now, please keep your calendars marked with the dates September 30 to October 4, 2021! Jim Elfelt asked me to pass along this note: M "I am sad to report that COVID-19 has claimed the life of my one and only true love, Betty, on Tuesday evening, November 24th. Betty was hospitalized November 7. She put up a valiant fight for two and a half weeks; however, the virus was too powerful in the end. Thankfully, I was able to have a short FaceTime visit with her the day before she died. Death came suddenly and unexpectedly and just one day after her doctors had reported the first measurable signs of improvement. How cruel and heartbreaking can it get? I reached the hospital just in time to say goodbye. "We understood the risks, and we believed we were taking all the recommended precautions—but it wasn't enough. There must have been some unrecognized moment of carelessness that allowed the virus to get a toehold in both of us. I, too, was infected, but my symptoms were mild and short-lived. "To be safe, folks our age need to double or triple their level of vigilance every minute of every day. In the holiday season, that will be asking a lot. Live now; celebrate Christmas/New Year's/birthdays/etc. later. Take it from me, there is no other choice." Jim. Stay vigilant classmates and pray that this will soon be behind us. Regretfully, one classmate, Larry Randall McMaster, a 15th Company Mate, passed away since my last column. Larry, of Cary, NC, died on 8 October 2020 in Colorado Springs, CO. He was born on December 18, 1947, to Alvin and Doreen McMaster in Albuquerque, NM. Larry attended Copperas Cove High School in Copperas Cove, TX, and graduated in 1965. He was an exceptional athlete, lettering in baseball, football, track and field. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and served during the Vietnam War as an Aircraft Munitions Maintenance and Nuclear Explosive Ordnance Disposal specialist, earning a Presidential

appointment to the United States Naval Academy. He came to Annapolis on 28 June 1967 and became a member of the USNA Class of 1971. Upon departing USNA during plebe year, he briefly attended Austin Peay State University, where he met and married the love of his life, Jenny. He went on to earn a BS in Computer Science from North Carolina State University in 1972. Larry worked as a Systems Software and Computer Engineer as well as a Project Manager for RTI International for more than 40 years and was a lifelong member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. He had a passion for aircraft and flying earned his private pilot's license in 1991. He is survived by his wife, Jenny Bigbie McMaster of Antioch, Tennessee; his daughter, Kristal Lee McMaster Alfonso and her husband, Paul Anthony Alfonso, Jr.; his grandson, Paul Anthony "Tony" Alfonso, III; multiple nieces and nephews in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee. Too soon, it is time to close. Please keep our classmates and their families in your prayers for good health, especially protection from the COVID-19 virus, healing when needed, and safety in their travels. Today is the gift of "the present." Certainly, this pandemic highlights how life is precious and too short – love passionately, give and share your blessings generously with others – as we are richly blessed so may we richly bless others. Our leadership at home, in our social circles, and in daily routines is vital to maintaining our nation's constitutional republic. Now is the time to shape the future of our great nation as we strive for a more perfect union. There is plenty of work remaining as we increase our wisdom! Time, tide, and column due dates wait for no man!