



Navigation Panel

[Home](#)

[About Us](#)

[Reunion Information](#)

[Photo Albums](#)

[Alumni Calendar](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Other Alumni](#)

[History](#)

[Midshipmans Foundation](#)

[Forms](#)

[Links](#)

[Contact Us](#)



23rd Annual Alumni Reunion (September 26, 2009)

[Return to: Photos](#) [Matrix](#)

Texas Vanquishes UTEP 64-7

50th Reunion class of 1959 and 40th Reunion class of 1969

Speaking of birthdays, this year's reunion kicked off the beginning of the UT NROTC Unit's 70th year as a program on campus. And UT President Bill Powers was on hand Saturday to present a framed copy of the original letter signed by Secretary James Forrestal on September 11, 1940 and addressed to the University of Texas for the purpose of establishing our NROTC Unit. President Powers presented the charter letter to CAPT Mike Spence (PNS), representing the unit, and to Mr. Joe Smith, representing the Class of 1944, the second year group to graduate from the new NROTC Unit. The reunion was, once again, full of something for everybody.

The festivities started on Thursday night with the Navy League dinner at the Austin Women's Club. Many midshipmen and officer candidates from the Battalion were present as guests of the Navy League. CAPT Mike Spence and his Executive Officer, CDR David Hogsten, were in attendance. The guest speaker was RADM John D. Butler ('74). The President of the Austin Navy League Chapter, Bruce Byron ('70), performed emcee duties. After an excellent dinner, RADM Butler, who is now retired and working for Lockheed Martin, gave a very informative briefing on his company's involvement in and the Navy's development of new undersea and surface platforms.

Friday morning provided beautiful weather for our golfers at the Star Ranch Golf Course. That evening the Class of '69 celebrated their 40th anniversary at Sholtz's Bier Garten and most of the rest of us attended the annual dinner at the Austin Country Club, where Joe Smith ('44) was honored with the Outstanding Service Award. Our host at the Austin Country Club, Rusty Allman ('66), provided a spacious and beautiful setting, The Pennick Room, for the award ceremony. Over 60 alumni and friends attended and the NROTC Unit provided a color guard for the program. CAPT Mike Spence attended and participated in the award ceremony. Also in attendance was MIDN 1/C Christopher Olander, the Battalion Commander, as a guest of the Midshipmans and Alumni Foundations. Ed Mergele emceed the program. The Outstanding Service Award presentation was made by RADM Weldon Koenig ('58) and a lapel pin of the award was applied by Max Miller ('57). CAPT Spence presented Joe with a framed picture of the Battalion in front of the UT tower. Joe had several friends at his table to enjoy the moment with him, including Mr. John Barnhill, a former UT Regent, Joe's brother Max Smith ('54), and Joe's niece and nephew, both graduates of UT. All were guests of the Midshipmans and Alumni Foundations. The evening was capped off with everyone singing The Eyes of Texas, followed by retiring of the colors.

Saturday was also a beautiful day. Activities started at the Russell A. Steindam Hall (ROTC Bldg), where at 7:45 a.m. an informal dedication ceremony was held in the library on the 1st deck, which has been remodeled to accommodate the library of Howard R. Lowe ('44), a donation to the NROTC Unit. All of the Battalion members, who were to receive scholarships later in the day, were in attendance. A framed certificate was presented to CAPT Spence by yours truly to be displayed in the library for all to see. Attendees enjoyed light refreshments and some camaraderie after the ceremony. Next year the dedication certificate will be replaced by a more permanent plaque in a more formal dedication of the Howard Lowe Library. Immediately following the dedication, the board of directors for the UT NROTC Alumni Foundation met in the Howard Lowe Library to conduct their quarterly business. Those present at the library dedication were invited to stay and observe the meeting if they wished.

After the Board adjourned, attendees strolled over to Welch Hall to join other Reunion attendees, visitors and friends for the General Business Meeting and Fall Awards Ceremony. Three of our Flag Officers were in attendance, RADM Weldon Koenig ('58), RADM Brady Cole ('58) and RADM John Butler ('74). We were again this year honored to have the President of the University of Texas, Bill Powers, attend our meeting. We started with the presentation by President Powers of our Charter Letter. President Powers then gave a short talk to the audience on how pleased he is to have this NROTC Unit on campus and to have a strong alumni group supporting it. President Powers was a naval officer himself and feels a strong connection with the NROTC. He thanked everyone for their service and congratulated the scholarship recipients. After President Powers' departure the meeting proceeded with annual reports. Ed Mergele gave the Treasurer's report in Dan O'Neil's absence. Bob Brown followed with a very good Gifts Committee report. Max Miller gave the Midshipmans Foundation report and then it was time to refocus on the Unit. The Battalion Commander, MIDN 1/C Christopher Olander, gave a briefing on Battalion activities of the recent past and its plans for the near future. After his briefing it was time to award some scholarships. CAPT Spence and members of the Midshipmans Foundation did the honors. Fifteen Scholarships, totaling \$22,000, and two officer swords were awarded to Battalion members before an audience of over 100 alumni, family and friends. Adding two more scholarships awarded last spring, totaling \$5,000, that brings the 2009 totals to 17 scholarships and 2 swords totaling \$27,000. A detailed list of awardees can be found on the History Page. After scholarships were awarded the meeting shifted back to Foundation business. The Nominating Committee, chaired by Mike Waldron, Vice President of the Alumni Foundation, reported that two of our members were rotating off the board, Robert W. "Bob" Looney ('62) and Dennis Olson ('69). We shall truly miss these two members. Bob was Secretary of the Board for one year and also the newsletter Editor. It was through Bob's efforts that Raytheon Company has donated the printing of our newsletter. Dennis has been highly instrumental in getting papers drawn up and filed with the State and with the IRS to make the Alumni Foundation a more formal veteran's association which can accept tax deductible contributions. Mike went on to report that two new candidates were identified, invited and accepted the call to serve for a three year term on the Board. They are Luis de la Garza ('66) and Jim Higdon ('67), both from San Antonio. Luis was in attendance and was recognized. Jim had a prior commitment that he was unable to break. Two other directors were re-elected to another three year term, Dan O'Neil ('80) and Spencer Smith ('73). The last item of business was mention of next year's Reunion date. The primary date will be November 13, 2010, which will be the Oklahoma State game weekend. This date was favored because of the proximity to Veteran's Day. Most thought it would be great to end this Unit's 70th year on the football weekend where veterans are honored. The meeting was then adjourned and all were invited to stroll back over to RAS Hall for the BBQ on the loading dock.

Pok-e-Joe's provided the BBQ and fixins this year, as usual, and it was delicious. This year we had a lot more midshipmen and officer candidates join us than in years past. It had been our custom to invite and pay for the scholarship recipients. The other Battalion members, though, expressed a desire to come even if they had to pay. We were delighted by the expanded Battalion participation and had no problems accommodating the larger crowd, well over 100. Everyone wanted to soak up the ambiance of the day since this may be our last gathering at RAS Hall. Next year the Geography Building, on 24th Street, just down from the Littlefield House, is slated to be the new home for all three ROTC programs. Plans are still being formulated but it did add a bit of a sad note to the occasion. As time got closer to game time, folks started to disperse. Some went to the stadium for the game and others went to the Alumni Center to watch it on their big screen TVs. Texas, as expected, whooped up on UTEP.

The last activity of the weekend for some was breakfast at Cisco's on East 6th Street. Several gathered there for "migas" and one last visit before heading home.

By Ed Mergele '75