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24th Annual Alumni Reunion (November 13, 2010)

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Texas Loses to OSU 33-16

50th Reunion class of 1960 and 40th reunion class of 1970!

On September 14, 1940 then University President Homer P. Rainey received a letter, dated September 11, 1940, from then Acting Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal, authorizing the creation of a Naval ROTC unit on the campus of the University of Texas. Forrestal would go on to be the last Cabinet-level SECNAV and the first Secretary of Defense. UT would go on to produce hundreds of Naval and Marine Corps officers for the United States. So there is now another, but more pleasant, reason for remembering 9/11. It's the birthday of the University of Texas Naval ROTC Unit. Happy Birthday!

Planning this year's reunion involved a lot of moving parts: the new location for the NROTC, the second relocation of the WWII Memorial Library, competition with the Army to find a BBQ venue near our new quarters, and the last minute announcement on when the football game would start. It made a few of us a bit nervous wondering how it would all play out and, fortunately, there were no major snafus, even though the Saturday schedule required last minute adjustments. All in all, it looked like everyone had a good time and found where they had to go without a lot of difficulty. This year there were no planned activities for Thursday before the weekend, so things got started on Friday morning.

Although the weather looked threatening, our annual golf outing which typically pits Navy against the Marine Corps, got off on time at the Star Ranch Golf Course. A breakfast buffet started things off right. We fielded three foursomes this year with good representation on each side. VADM Bill McRaven '77, one of our guests of honor; CAPT Dan Dixon, the new PNS; CDR Butch Neuenschwander, the new XO; and MAJ Ty Kopke, the new MOI, were among the contenders. The front nine came to a drenching pause as the skies opened up on us. Almost half got to the clubhouse without getting wet. For the rest it was a time for drying out and enjoying a lunch buffet before tackling the back nine. Some wondered if the weather would cooperate, but, low and behold, the clouds cleared up and the sun came out for a perfectly beautiful afternoon to end the game. Afterward the players lingered in the clubhouse to find out the results. The best four scores were taken from the Navy players and averaged. The same was done for the Marines playing. The result was that the Marines won this year by ONE stroke. Winners and losers bought beer and made donations to the Midshipmans Foundation before wandering back to Austin for other activities.

VADM McRaven, who has been serving since June 2008, as Commander, Joint Special Operations Command, working for GEN David Petraeus in Afghanistan, spent about an hour of his time during the afternoon addressing a gathering of midshipmen and officer candidates of the Battalion at the Sanchez Building. He gave an overview of BUDs, the SEAL Teams, the Special Warfare Combatant Craft Crewman (our fleet boat guys), and a little bit about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He then took Q&A for a few minutes.

Friday evening Battalion members, staff and alumni gathered at the Austin Country Club for a fine dinner and to honor distinguished alumni. At 1830 the guests started arriving and informally visited with one another over cocktails. The Battalion Color Guard presented the colors to get the program started at 1900. There were four awardees this year, two of whom, sadly, were awarded posthumously. The families of Keys Curry and Wayne Miers were there to accept the Distinguished Alumni award for their loved ones. In addition, Jack Ritter '55 was also honored as another Distinguished Alumnus and Bob Gartner was presented with the Distinguished Service award. The other honored guests, who have helped our Unit during the Reunion weekend to celebrate its 70th Anniversary, were WWII veterans, represented by Joe Smith '44 and Howard Lowe '44, and one of our 1977 graduates, VADM Bill McRaven. After the awards ceremony, the Chairman of the Midshipmans Foundation, J. Weldon Koenig, and CAPT Daniel Dixon, our new Professor of Naval Science, each had some parting remarks for the guests. Ed Mergele, the emcee for the evening, then led the room in singing The Marine Hymn, Anchors Aweigh & The Eyes of Texas. With retirement of the colors the night's festivities came to a pleasant end.

Also on Friday night there was another gathering going on at Scholz's Bier Garten. The Class of 1970 was celebrating their 40th anniversary. Fifteen classmates from that year, along with their family members gathered together for good food and lots of camaraderie. Ten other Crow's Nesters from the Classes of '67, '68 and '69, along with their families, joined them. This group was still at Scholz's long after the awards dinner finished.

Saturday morning was a bit new for everyone since the NROTC Program has moved to temporary quarters in the George I. Sanchez Building on MLK Blvd (19th St.) across from the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum. Demolition has already begun on the old ROTC Building (Russell A. Steindam Hall) and a new building for the College of Liberal Arts (COLA) will be erected on that site. When finished, NROTC and the other ROTC programs will move into the new building. In the meantime your UT NROTC Alumni Foundation Board met at 1030 in the Sanchez Building and elected a new President and Vice President. At 1230 board members and other visiting alumni moved next door to rededicate the WWII Memorial Library. Howard Lowe '44 and family members were on hand for the rededication. Because of the late announcement regarding the football game Saturday, events got changed at the last minute which caught more than a few people by surprise. Fortunately it moved events later so no one should have missed anything.

The main event for Saturday, the UT NROTC Alumni General Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony, started at 1330 and was held in a more familiar venue, Robert A. Welch Hall, just like last year. We had nearly the whole class of 1970 in attendance which they all got a kick out of. Colors were posted, honored guests were recognized, and fallen comrades were remembered to get things started. Then we witnessed the first instance of Navy seniors having their warfare specialty insignias pinned on. VADM McRaven helped with the honors. We then moved to the main event of the main event: the award of scholarships and swords to the midshipmen and officer candidates. This year over \$30,000 in scholarships and swords were given to 17 midshipmen and officer candidates of the Battalion by your Midshipmans Foundation. See the History Page for details. Since the scholarship endowment was started, the Midshipmans Foundation has steadily increased the number and size of scholarships it has given out and is very near a cumulative milestone of having given out \$250,000. This is entirely due to the generosity of our alumni and their fund-raising efforts.

After the awards ceremony, general business reports were made by the Alumni and Midshipmans Foundations, the most significant of which was the fact that we have reached a significant milestone as an organization. It was most fitting that on the Unit's 70th Anniversary we have reached \$1 million in our scholarship endowment fund. We then received a briefing on the Battalion by the Battalion Commander, Lee Patterson. One of the last orders of business was to announce the new President and Vice President. Mike Waldron '67 is taking over the leadership reins as President of the UT NROTC Alumni Foundation. Mike has been Vice President for the past two years and has also been doing a fantastic job of organizing our annual BBQs. I know everyone will want to do all they can to support Mike in his new role. Jim Brotherton '68 was announced as our new Vice President. Jim is currently our Historian and has been gathering memorabilia and stories about the Unit's 70 years. That effort will be ongoing. Further announcements made included the upcoming groundbreaking ceremony for the new COLA Building that will honor the man who made the new building possible and who insured that all three ROTC programs would have a prominent home in the new building, our very own James Mulva '68. Also it was announced that next year's Reunion will be November 5, 2011, on the weekend of the Texas Tech game. One of the highlights at next year's Reunion will be dedicating the new 1st Lt James A. Burns Obstacle Course. This "O" course, located on the J. J. Pickle Research Campus, was entirely financed by the generous donations of our alumni and especially former Marines in the area.

Before retiring the colors, we were treated to a special unannounced closing talk by VADM Bill McRaven '77. He spoke about his humble beginnings here at UT and how he envisioned what he wanted to be and worked hard at achieving it with tenacity and commitment. He wanted to leave those midshipmen and officer candidates in attendance with a feeling that they, too, can dream and

that they should listen to their dreams and pursue them. We are indeed fortunate to have so many distinguished alumni from which to draw inspiration. Their military and civilian experiences, when shared with each younger generation, add so much depth and richness to the academics and experiences of our Battalion members. We hope that this will be a tradition that will only grow with time and will continue to provide value to both the mentors and the students. On that high note, the meeting ended with retiring the colors and the attendees moved just outside Welch Hall to the Speedway Plaza for our annual BBQ.

The BBQ represented another first for us. The weather was cooperative and beautiful. We had tables set up, up and down the old Speedway, at the East Mall. This was a much more open venue than what we have been used to and it required a little more control of attendees. Pok-E-Jo's catered the event again and we had much more participation by midshipmen and their families this year, which is a wonderful development. This, together with a few unauthorized participants, probably led to a small number not getting fed. The time allowed for the BBQ was 1530 to 1730 since that was when sundown occurred; however, we had a nice long twilight period with ample area lighting so many stayed, lingered, talked and tried to float the two kegs. An announcement was made at the BBQ of who won the special gifts, that Bob Brown had advertised in the general meeting, based on their pledges to the Midshipmans Foundation. As a result of those donations we are well over \$1 million now. VADM McRaven got to dress up in his orange and white during the BBQ and he and his wife, Georgeann, got to enjoy the outdoors and the camaraderie with everyone else at the BBQ. Another reason for people to linger at the BBQ was the late hour of the football game. It wasn't scheduled to start until 1900. As it got closer to that time, people started to drift toward Memorial Stadium.

The game weekend selected for this year's Reunion had special significance. It was the weekend closest to Veteran's Day in which UT typically recognizes the veterans and it was our Unit's 70th Anniversary. Pre-game activities included special recognition of the Navy ROTC's Anniversary, our WWII veterans and participation in the coin toss by VADM McRaven, for which he was back in dress blues. Since the game was a night game we didn't get the fly over that was scheduled but all-in-all the tribute to our veterans was excellent. With the anticipated loss to OSU, the evening and all scheduled Reunion activities came to a quiet end.

By Ed Mergele '75