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22nd Annual Alumni Reunion (November 8, 2008)

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Texas Beats Baylor 45-21

The 2008 UT NROTC Alumni Reunion was once again a wonderful experience for all who attended - one of several special events, some with very special remembrances.

The Navy League kicked off reunion weekend by honoring UT NROTC Alumnus RADM Steve Smith, USN (Ret) '69 as its Distinguished Speaker. Midshipmen receiving scholarships this year were in attendance and honored as well. The unit provided the Color Guard for the program. The meeting was held at the Austin Woman's Club on San Antonio and 8th Street. The dinner and program was preceded by a social hour where attendees got to meet the scholarship awardees and talk with RADM Smith.

On Thursday and Friday, 14 WWII Alumni, along with other family members, and one alum's widow gathered at the Doubletree Hotel to renew friendships and reminisce in the hospitality suite and over lunches and dinners. Seven of the WWII Alumni participated in the oral histories recording program being conducted by the Institute in American Military Histories of the UT Center for American History. Their recorded interviews brought the total conducted to date up to 20. An updated version of the Texas Traditions, the yearbook of the classes of '43 through '45 that the Class of '43 had put together, was unveiled. The updated version, Texas Tradition 2008, consisting of WWII memoirs of those '43 - '45 class members, was authored by Marge Flados, widow of Norm Flados, Class of '43. On Friday afternoon, most of the group attended the University's ceremony for the Rededication of Texas Memorial Stadium, including the new UT Veterans Memorial. After the very moving, noble ceremony, the group was guests of the University President, William Powers (a Cal Berkeley NROTC graduate) at his Reception in the new North End Club in the upper portion of the new north end of the stadium. The reunion culminated Friday evening with over 32 WWII Alumni and family members having a banquet in the hotel, recalling sea stories, and closing with a song fest of era songs. The festive group started plans for next year's reunion before departing for home.

Friday got off to a good start with seven golfers gathering at the Star Ranch Golf Course to test their skills on the links. CAPT Salazar, CAPT Spence, Bob Collins, Ray Adams, Mike Nipper, Bob Brown and Dave Enstone (part of the Burns family here to present the 1stLt Jim Burns Scholarship award) teed it up with enthusiasm. A fine day of fun and fellowship was enjoyed by all and the Scholarship Foundation received several hundred dollars in donations. Neither Navy nor Marines claimed victory, so we'll call it a draw. Bob Brown failed to make his annual hole in one. Bob says "Wait till next year".

That evening, over 50 alumni from the Korean War era up to present, the Unit CO, XO, and MOI, and wives and guests gathered at the Austin Country Club for a wonderful dinner with our host, Rusty Allman. Among the attendees, six members of the Class of '52 and their wives were there to honor one in their ranks as the evening was highlighted with the presentation of a Distinguished Alumnus Award by the Midshipmans Foundation and UT NROTC Alumni Foundation to LTGEN D'Wayne Gray, USMC (Ret) '52. General Gray's 35 years of active duty service started as an artillery forward observer in the Korean War; was highlighted by two tours in Vietnam and a number of command assignments including the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, 5th Marine Amphibious Brigade, and 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade, and culminated in his final command tour as the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific and Commander, Marine Corps Bases, Pacific.

At that same time Friday evening, members of the class of '68 gathered at Scholz's Garten for an evening of frivolity and the opportunity to meet Jim Burn's sister, Judy Enstone, and her husband David, from Newport, RI. It was but the first of a number of opportunities many of us had to share time and recollections of Jim with Judy and David. By the end of the weekend activities, even David was decked out in burnt orange!

The following morning, the Alumni Foundation Board met followed by the General Business Meeting kicking off at 0830 in Welch Hall, room 2.246. Highlights of this main event were the opening thoughts shared by UT President William Powers, the Midshipman 4/C Ascension Ceremony, the update on the Battalion presented by the PNS, CAPT Salazar '79, and the Battalion Commander, MIDN 1/C Holzapfel, and the presentation of scholarship and sword awards to members of the Battalion. The most poignant moment of the meeting was the introduction of the endowed scholarship named for 1stLt James A. Burns, '68, killed in action in Vietnam. Bob Collin's memorable, detailed recollection of Jim's biographical history and the touching recollections of Jim's sister, Judy Enstone, moved all of us. This year 21 scholarships totaling \$26,000 and 2 swords were awarded to members of the Battalion. A detailed list of awardees can be found on the History Page. The meeting concluded with the announcement of the next Reunion date whereupon many headed over to Memorial Stadium to watch the Horns beat Baylor. That evening, around 70 alumni, family, and friends gathered at the Camp Mabry Texas Military Forces Museum for a BBQ dinner with all the fixins and beverages of choice catered by Pok-E-Joe's. Many continued to renew old friendships and bask in the camaraderie.

Sunday morning found most of the group, staying at the Drury, meeting for breakfast and one last chance to be together, and to make plans for meeting up again in the near future.

By Ed Mergele '75