CAPTAIN’S CORNER

Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy!

Another fantastic semester has come to end, and we are currently training and preparing for a new school year and a new class! As many of you know from our last newsletter, Captain David Schweizer retired this semester from the Navy with over 30 years of service. Our new Commanding Officer, Captain Dave Meron, will be joining us in early August after recently having command of Naval Support Bahrain. CAPT Meron started as a Naval Flight Officer (NFO) earning his Wings of Gold in 1991. After joining the TAMACO community, he was selected for the NFO-to-Pilot program. We are very excited for his arrival and the mentorship that he will bring to the Battalion.

We are making preparations for our upcoming Orientation and Indoctrination. This week-long training session prepares the incoming students for life as a midshipman, but more importantly it provides an opportunity to get to know each other and form a close bond. O&I is five days long, including time on our USMC obstacle course located on west campus, KU’s leadership course, shooting range, swimming, drill, lots of running, and so on. We currently have an incoming class of 16 students; 9 scholarship, 6 college program, and 1 MECEP.

As Captain Schweizer discussed in the Fall, we are still looking for the right way to go about restoring the Military Science Building (MSB). Unfortunately, the leaks are getting worse and repair requests are not a priority with declining State budgets. We reluctantly remain patient for the University to return the MSB back to its original condition. Our fear is that it will be ignored to the point of disrepair, and the solution will be to tear down this beautiful and historic building.

We continue to reach out to our Alumni! We will hold the Annual Alumni Tailgate at the MSB on Homecoming weekend, prior to the football game and hope to see you here! This year Homecoming will be October 31st, against Oklahoma University. As always, we invite you to come back and visit with midshipmen, staff, and check out how the MSB has (and hasn’t) changed since you walked these halls. We will provide refreshments and will have Unit hats, t-shirts and patches for sale. Also, we are excited to offer Alumni contributions to the Pegleg Article this semester! We hope you enjoy reminiscing through the articles and pictures provided by the Class of 1976, as much as we did! A big ‘thank you’ for their contribution.

Rock Chalk and Go Navy!

CDR Chris Higginbotham

ROTC SECURES A SEAT ON THE STUDENT SENATE

MIDN 2/C Jefferis and Walker

The student senate at the University of Kansas is an important facet of the Jayhawk community, one that often goes unnoticed. Although the great majority of KU underclassmen may not pay attention to the student senate, the group is pivotal in bridging the gap between the student body and the leaders that run our school. Until recently the ROTC community at the University of Kansas had no voice in the student senate; however a group of Midshipmen set out with their cadet counterparts to change that.

On February 11th, five Midshipmen and a group of cadets from the Army and Air Force ROTCs attended a student senate meeting with the goal of earning a seat for a ROTC senator. Conveniently, a pair of Army Cadets was already a part of the senate serving as representatives from other KU communities. As senators, the Cadets were able to present a bill that would establish the seat, and the senate overwhelmingly passed the bill with the Midshipmen present to show their support for the bill.

Following the approval of the bill, several midshipmen and cadets sent out to create a committee that would elect the senator on behalf of all three ROTCs. Within two short months, the committee successfully appointed a senator ready to be confirmed into the senate body.

All of the ROTCs are excited for the upcoming school year thanks to the opportunities this new senate seat will provide. Before now the student senate was largely unaware of the ROTC community, and the good we can do for the University of Kansas. With this new awareness in the senate, and the ability to propose and pass bills that reflect our views, the Midshipmen and Cadets of KU are looking forward to strengthening bonds with the greater KU community.
SWIMMING
MIDN 2/C Shope

The Naval ROTC battalion at KU has a tradition of physical training exercises that encompass a wide range of strengths and skills. From formation runs, to martial arts, to teambuilding exercises, the Jayhawk battalion has demonstrated learning ability in a multitude of workouts and activities that hone not just the body, but also the mind. One such evolution was a swim PT at Lawrence aquatic center on March 3, which I had the honor of leading. Being one of the few competitive swimmers in the battalion, I was eager to share my experience as a swimmer in high school, where competition is fierce, and the best swimmers would be highly competitive even at NROTC drill competitions. Being an ocean oriented fighting force, it’s not difficult to see why a strong swimming ability can be of paramount importance to one’s survival chance.

Unfortunately, with student schedules being what they are, it’s often difficult to find time to hone those skills in the pool. My goal for the workout was not to create strong swimmers in a day, but to teach drills and exercises that midshipmen can take with them next time they find themselves in the water. Though the workout was rigorous, I focused on technique, breathing and form, because conserving energy while swimming directly translates to speed and endurance. Each new set was also tailored to the particular skills of the midshipmen by grouping lanes by swimming ability. Each lane swam slightly altered versions of the same set. For example, the medium skill lane would swim five 100 yd sets at two minutes, but the top skill lane would do it in one minute thirty seconds. Not only does this help cover the wide range of swimming ability so everyone gets a good workout, but it also increases safety in a potentially dangerous evolution by not pushing weaker swimmers too hard. My goal for the short amount of time we had was 1000 yards in 30 minutes. The Jayhawk battalion not only met that goal, they exceeded it, and put forth great effort in one of the more physically challenging activities we’ve done this year.

OCS PREPARATION
MIDN Bateman

As spring arrives in Lawrence Kansas, three Marine Option Midshipmen start the ramp-up for the endeavor known as Officer Candidate School (OCS). OCS is the necessary screening done over the summer, typically done between the Midshipman’s 3rd and 4th years that is required to commission as a Marine Corps Officer. The six-week course occurs at Quantico Marine Corps Base in Northern Virginia, otherwise known as the crossroads of the Marine Corps. Now that OCS is within sights there is a noticeable change in the atmosphere amongst the Marine Options.

The majority of OCS will consist of the Midshipmen moving very quickly in the severe humidity that is Virginia summers in full camouflage uniforms. The time not spent outside will be in the classroom learning the basics of Marine Corps history, customs, and tactics. The culminating event of OCS is SULE (Small Unit Leadership Evaluation), an evolution in which each Midshipman will be tested on leading a platoon sized element of other candidates. Although these are three primary areas where the OCS-bound Midshipmen will need to prepare, Capt. Collins (MOI of KU NROTC) reveals the biggest aspect that must be accounted for. “Before going to OCS [as an instructor] last year, we thought we needed to show them how to do the specific skills and attain certain knowledge in order for them to be successful. Through my experience there and the things we learned it appears that uncertainty is the biggest factor,” he explains. “They will teach you what you need to know, but they are evaluating how you will react in such a seemingly stressful environment.”

With this information in mind, the Midshipmen are taking the onus upon themselves to prepare physically and academically, while the MOI and AMOI as well as OCS graduates are helping them prepare mentally. To prepare physically the battalion began to see the OCS Midshipmen arrive at PT in boots and utes and a light load. They will sometimes break off from the other Marine Options during the lab period to do their own academic study. They will often be given a FRAGO (Fragmentary Order) and told to present the Op-Order mere minutes before the end of PT and other evolutions. This exercise is intended to improve their abilities to present Op-Orders during SULE at OCS. All of these evolutions supplement each other to fully prepare these Midshipmen for OCS, yet they must be willing to take the initiative and prepare on their own in order to be successful. “It is not our job to feed you with opportunities,” Capt. Collins says during a lab session with the Marine Options, “Be hungry and feed yourselves. Stay Motivated.”
DINING-IN CEREMONY
MIDN 1/C Colleen Wilmington

The Dining-In ceremony is an important function of camaraderie and morale for members of a battalion or unit. The Jayhawk Battalion upheld this tradition on 28MARCH2015 at the Oread Hotel with members of the active duty staff, juniors, and seniors in accordance with OPNAVIST 1710.7A, 8-1.

The event commenced with a cocktail hour where the unit socialized and welcomed one another until it was declared time to enter the banquet hall. MIDN 1/C Benjamin Allman presided over the ceremony as Mr. President with Officer Candidate Jeremiah Karczewski serving as Mr. Vice. Seniors, juniors, and active duty alike participated in keeping the evening light, humorous, and entertaining through their charges. The honored guest and speaker of the evening was Capt. Luke Barnes. Staying true to Marine Corps tradition Mr. Barnes vowed to keep his speech short and to the point, which he reminded all attendees to do in the fleet. He did not flaunt his achievements before the mess, rather he portrayed himself as a peer whose intentions were to better the Navy and Marine Corps, as it should be the goal of every officer.

After Capt. Barnes concluded his speech, port wine was passed throughout the mess and MIDN Allman began the toasts. Charges once again continued and hilarity ensued. Once the ceremony was concluded all members were invited up to the Observation Deck of the Oread Hotel for cigars. On deck, CDR Higginbotham, Executive Officer and acting Commanding Officer, honored the graduating seniors with a sample of Christopher Elbow chocolate followed with a sample of Manifesto port wine. The evening was deemed a success by the actions of all members to look out for one another and conduct themselves in appropriate military behavior.

A special thanks to the Oread Staff for their assistance with our ceremony and to Capt. Barnes whose advice was taken to heart by all present.

LIFE AS A MIDSHIPMAN COMPARED TO LIFE AS A COLLEGE STUDENT
MIDN 2/C Marley Fisher

As a midshipman in the Naval ROTC program, I am given the honor to partake in many learning opportunities to develop as a successful Naval Officer while also being a college student. I have been able to hold leadership roles within the battalion, attend one month long summer cruises and also take a naval science course each semester. All of which, helping me to become more disciplined and appreciative as a person while also gaining useful knowledge that I am able to apply in my career.

As a midshipman, it is a given that we all have high expectations for ourselves mentally, academically, and physically. Where we hope to become aviators, submariners, surface warfare officers, marines or doctors… we all aspire to serve our country and be part of the long prestigious history of our countries military. I believe some of the most highly motivated individuals can be found in ROTC because their career goals involve being part of something much bigger than themselves.

One of the many privileges to being a midshipman on scholarship, is having full tuition paid for. This prevents me from having a lot less financial stress that many other normal college students may have. As a college student though, I have also been able to enjoy all the perks of being a Jayhawk. I have been able to play intramural sports, join other clubs outside of ROTC, volunteer in my free time and enjoy all of what Lawrence has to offer. Having the chance to remain well-rounded has helped me to be stress free and enjoy my experience as a college student.

Every student hoping to develop as a future officer in ROTC should always be finding ways to strengthen skills that will contribute to their success as an officer. I have considered it my duty to take full advantage of any possible opportunity that can help make me a better leader and I am thankful for all the opportunities I have been able to have while here at KU. My experience has given me inspiration to continue to challenge myself and face new obstacles with an open mind and enthusiasm. I hope to influence others to try to go above and beyond the normal expectations and try to make a difference each and every day.
LIFE AS AN OFFICER CANDIDATE
OC Kaplan, Kyle

There are a great many similarities between life as an Officer Candidate (OC) and life as a Midshipman (MIDN). There are several key differences as well, however, and there are numerous differences from life as a regular civilian college student. As an OC, the primary difference between myself and any given MIDN in the battalion is that I am currently an active duty Sailor, and moreover that I am paid as such. My orders were to report to KU to obtain a technical degree in just three years in order to be commissioned as a Nuclear Propulsion Officer; going to school is both my job and my lawful duty.

The remainder of the differences between OC life and MIDN life are a result of this primary difference. As an active duty sailor, the other OCs and I are several years older than your standard fresh-from-high-school MIDN (I am the oldest at 28 – a full ten years older than our youngest MIDN). Due to our active duty pay and greater depth of life experience, OC’s obtain housing on our own immediately upon arrival to the command, whereas most MIDN spend their first year in one of the dorms on campus.

The most significant of these secondary differences are that OC’s take summer courses all three years, and thus never go on cruise, and that OC’s go to work for the command staff during most break periods for the school – specifically winter break and the gaps between the spring/summer semesters and the summer/fall semesters.

While the notion of sending an active duty Sailor on cruise may sound silly, none of the OC’s presently here at KU have ever actually served in the fleet; we were all picked up somewhere in the gaps between the spring/summer semesters and the summer/fall semesters.

The fact that OC’s work over the longer breaks is significant because in order to enjoy this time off, we have to utilize our leave time, which of course is itself limited to thirty days earned a year. While not on leave, our workdays are typically less than six hours long. We perform a variety of general maintenance items and what I call grunt work – simple tasks which Officers shouldn’t have to perform while enlisted folk (enter the OC’s) are around.

Overall, the life of an OC is typically very busy. We have crowded semesters, we roll through every semester the school is in session until we graduate and commission, and we almost always have battalion responsibilities as well – I served as the Battalion and Staff Information Systems Officer (ISO) for the last two years, and will be a Company Commander this upcoming fall semester.

2015 NOTRE DAME ROTC BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT
MIDN 2/C Bryan Neely


After not being able to go the year before due to a lack of preparation, MIDN Neely jumped all over the planning as soon as the academic year began. He quickly formed his team and held practices to input defensive schemes. Next, MIDN Neely created a list of everything he had to get done in order to make it very hard for the active duty staff to disapprove the team from travelling for the weekend. He held a Game Night fundraiser and reached out to the community for financial support so he could purchase the team jerseys, hotel rooms in South Bend, register for the tournament, and pay for transportation. The only thing left at this point was to prepare for the upcoming games.

The team was guaranteed three games in attempt to make the tournament, which was single elimination. We played Michigan State (Army) in our first basketball game and won a hard fought battle by nine points. The following day we defeated Saint Thomas (Air Force) by a 30 point margin followed by a five point loss to Notre Dame (Navy). During the Notre Dame game, some members on the team started bickering with each other, so MIDN 2/C Neely and OC Reid stepped up and set the tone! They specifically said, “We came here as a team and we are going to leave as a team, so knock it off and let’s play ball!” Because of the previous game, MIDN Neely reminded his team to approach the playoffs as a team and just have fun! Because
we won our division, we had a higher seed and faced Michigan in the first game. We played our best game as a team of the tournament; however, Michigan was shooting lights out from the 3-point line. With the great play from MIDN 3/C McMahon and MIDN 2/C Neely, we hung with them for most of the game, but they pulled away with the win in the end.

The next morning (01MAR2015) we departed South Bend to get back for classes on Monday to share our wonderful experiences with the battalion and place our hard earned trophy in the battalion trophy case! Overall, this trip was a ton of fun and a great way to build camaraderie among our battalion!

WORDS FROM THE BCO
MIDN 1/C Benjamin Allman

As the semester draws to an end here at KU Naval ROTC, I look back on these past few months for our Battalion and consider them a smashing success for the Unit as a whole and for the individuals within our organization. Through all the busyness and stresses of life, the individuals in our Battalion have not only succeeded in meeting every task that they have faced, but have likewise thrived and grown as they move towards their commissioning in the United States Marine Corps or United States Navy. Thus, as our semester comes to an end, I look back with unabashed pride in the accomplishments, character, and dedication of the members of KU Naval ROTC, and would like you to know how proud I am in each one of them.

This semester has seen an increased focus on empowering the individuals within our Unit in order to prepare them for the duties and jobs they will find waiting for them in the Fleet. Specifically, we have changed our Battalion structure around in regards to the Chain of Command in a way that has empowered our Company-level Staff more than we have seen in quite some time. On that same note, we have removed the long-standing billets of Company Executive Officer and the Physical Training Instructor from our Battalion Chain of Command and have consolidated these billet’s tasks within the billet of Company Chief Petty Officer. Finally, we have worked more and more to empower and turn over more responsibilities to our Line Staff, that being the S-Shops and the Assistants underneath them. Such a change and continued focused has paid dividends as our S-Shop billet-holders and their assistants have played a crucial role in planning and carrying out the majority of our Unit’s events in a successful and efficient manner.

On top of the organizational changes that we have made to empower and prepare the individuals within our Unit this semester, we have likewise focused on attempting to increase an overall “family” feel and sense of belonging within our Battalion for our people. Everyone at KU Naval ROTC believes that any Unit thrives when all individuals feel like they belong to something greater than themselves. I say with confidence that such can best be carried out with a more relational, family-feel in an organization, and I believe we have done this well this semester. Specifically, we’ve introduced new traditions and expanded upon old traditions to accomplishment this goal: the singing of “Happy Birthday” to Midshipman and Officer Candidates at Lab or at PT; Company Commanders holding free dinners out on town for their people; group discussions at Lab over topics that each one of us will have to deal with in the future; and older Midshipman and Officer Candidates mentoring and studying with younger Midshipman. I say with pride that seeking a more family-focus and method of operation within this Unit has been accomplished this semester, and will be expanded upon into the future under the next Chain of Command.

As this year moves towards its conclusion, I’m most excited to turn over command to our next Battalion Commanding Officer, MIDN Marley Fisher. She and her staff will no doubt do a magnificent job in carrying on the fine tradition of excellence within this Battalion while leading this Unit to new and exciting places over the coming year. Likewise, I speak for my fellow commissioning seniors when I say that we are all most excited to soon graduate and commission this coming May and begin our active-duty careers. True, we will miss this community of dedicated people that we have all come to know and love here at KU. Yet we know that we are well prepared because of the training and guidance our advisors and those who came before us have bestowed upon us. We look forward to making you proud in the Fleet and Operating Forces, and thank you all for the support you have given us throughout the years.

Overall, this semester and the changes and renewed focuses we have placed upon the Battalion have been a magnificent success. Yet, it is not alone because of anything my Staff or I have done. Rather, it is because of the fine men and women within our organization that have made this semester a success and set this Unit up for more success and growth in the future. Please join me in congratulating all of them, and particularly the
commissioning seniors, on their accomplishments and success this semester, and share in the pride I feel for all of them.

JOINT COMMISSIONING
MIDN 1/C Andrew Stueckemann

Commissioning was the 18th of May and was held in the Union Auditorium. The ceremony was hosted by the Air Force, with Brigadier General Scott A. Dold as the guest speaker. His message was one filled with advice on how to excel in the military. One of his biggest points was that you have to have some type of reminder to keep a sense of humor; for him it was a Mickey Mouse watch. He also brought up a point that once commissioned there is no longer “I or me” for the Officers. Your success belongs to your men and women who work hard, putting in extra hours and every mistake is yours. As Naval and Marine Corps officers it is our job to make sure that our men and women are taken care of while still getting the mission done. Eight seniors took the Oath of Office and are the newly commissioned Ensign’s and 2nd Lieutenants of the Navy and Marine Corps. Ensign Jesi James is going to be a nurse and will be stationed at Camp Lejeune. Ensign Melissa Ryan, who also commissioned nurse; will be heading to Yokosuka, Japan. Ensign Jerimiah Karczewski has been assigned to the USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG108) where he will stay until he is pinned and then he will begin his nuclear career. Ensign Colleen Wilmington is a surface warfare officer aboard the USS Nimitz and then has surface oceanography after her warfare pinning. Ensign Andrew Stueckemann is headed Pensacola Florida for flight school sometime in the fall. 2nd Lieutenant Benjamin Allman, 2nd Lieutenant Corey Bredeson, and 2nd Lieutenant Austin Cataudella are all going to TBS in the fall. Mr. Bredeson hopes to then go off and fly attack helicopters in support of the ground troops. Mr. Cataudella is hoping to go Logistics after TBS and Mr. Allman wants to lead an AVV group. All of the newly commissioned officers are extremely excited to get their careers started and to help uphold the tradition of excellence that has come to be expected of those officers out of the University of Kansas.

YOUR CLASS OF 1976 SALUTES YOU

Ahoy KU Midshipmen. We are the ghosts from the Bicentennial Class of 1976 who have walked those same halls in the Military Science Building (MSB) as you, only some 40 years ago. Pearl of Wisdom #1: Try to stay in contact with each other throughout your military career because Jayhawks will help each other anywhere in the world. Forty years ago we were simply some newly commissioned Ensigns and Second Lieutenants ready to charge out into the world and set the military on its ear. Lucky for some of us, we ran into Chiefs who took us under their wings and taught us how the real Navy worked.

Pearl of Wisdom #2: Never ever believe you are better than the enlisted men and women who serve under you. Without their trust and respect you will be unable to complete your mission. One of our commissioned officers from 1976 did a full active duty career as a Supply Corps Officer. He’s not shy: “Despite how you think of yourselves as Sierra Hotel Midshipmen and as much as you are learning from college, get used to the idea that you know nothing when it comes to the Navy. LEARN how to get along with your Chief, to the point where you understand that sometimes you are going to have to have a conversation with the Chief to get what you want done...NOT by giving an order. Respect the Chief’s years of knowledge of how things work and how he gets the most from HIS sailors.” So let us first set the stage for you; a little history lesson to let you know where we came from. We are, in essence, your military genealogy. And you, dear middies, are our “Commanding Officers in Training.”

Many of us first stepped foot on the KU campus in 1972. Neil Armstrong first stepped foot on the moon three years earlier. Our KU computer classes were in COBOL and FORTRAN and we used punch cards – no PCs, no Internet, no cell phones, iPads, etc. A gallon of gas was 55 cents although few of us had cars. Midshipmen were allowed to have facial hair, some wearing it better than others! We were also the first class to publish a KU NROTC Yearbook.

The Vietnam War was still ongoing, the KU Student Union had been recently torched by students protesting the Vietnam War. The original Pegleg Jayhawk mascot was created by middle Bruce Gardner, Class of 1977.
The Kansas Governor activated the National Guard in response to that fire although some 4 dozen other fires had been set around campus and in town. One fire destroyed an elementary school in North Lawrence. The same day the KU Union was torched someone threw a fire bomb at the MSB; another fire started in the steam tunnel connected to the MSB and a KU maintenance man started a fire in an MSB cloak room using gasoline, wood and rags. That fire did damage to the firing range in the basement. Protesters again attacked the MSB, smashing the model of the USS TOPEKA, which was soon repaired and put back on display.

As late as May 1972, a protest march of between 500 and 1,000 people walked past the MSB and broke several of its windows. It was in this atmosphere that we began as 4th/class midshipmen. Every Wednesday we wore our military uniforms as we walked across campus to attend classes. We had fellow KU students throwing snowballs at us and yelling that we were baby-killers. We even had KU teachers voicing their disapproval at seeing military uniforms in their classrooms. Paul Sherbo, Class of ’76, remembers this time: “When I first got in, there were quite a few people who avoided me when they found out I was in ROTC, wouldn’t even respond when I greeted them. By the time late senior year rolled around, people were a little more interested in where I was headed and where I had been (like the 1st-class cruise to Japan). Not exactly friendly but less hostile.”

For some midshipmen it was too much and they dropped out; for others we rallied around each other and grew stronger. We were 18 or 19 years old and could not have succeeded in staying together as a Unit without the help of the NROTC Staff – from the clerk typist to the Commanding Officer.

Our Commanding Officer was CAPT Ray P. Jones, USN. He began his naval career in the NROTC Program at Tulane University, graduating and receiving his commission in 1951. He served on board USS COLAHAN (DD-658). He transferred to diesel submarines, served as Weapons Officer on board USS BARBEL (SS-580) and became Commanding Officer of USS BLUEBACK (SS-581). He loved his NROTC midshipmen. He would regale us for hours with his sea stories during the many times he had us over his house for barbeque. He once told us that while submerged in BLUEBACK he would take out his putter and golf ball and after putting down the passageway would claim he needed one or two points up or down bubble! His favorite saying was “If you’re not having fun, you’re not doing it right!” He instilled in us a sense of camaraderie that got us through some difficult days on campus. We stuck with him – we continued with our schooling and our military duties, our Honor Guard continued presenting the American flag at KU football games, our Rifle, Pistol and Drill Teams traveled to other NROTC Units and won competitions, and we had our Captain’s Reception, Dining In, Spring Review, Field Days and Ring Dance every year. The Big Jayhawk mascot at the basketball games was even one of our middies – Dave Palenshus.

Doug Campbell with date Susan Calbeck at the formal Ring Dance, 26 April 1975.

One Saturday a group of us went up on the roof of the MSB, inflated a large Navy weather balloon, spray-painted GO NAVY on it and released it over the KU-Missouri football game.

We remember our Midshipmen cruises as if they were yesterday. Many of the ships we sailed on have since been reduced to scrap metal and even some of the military bases we were stationed on have since closed. For the most part we received our orders and stayed together in small groups where we helped each other out. Some of our KU midshipmen had never even been out of their home State of Kansas, never seen the ocean, never heard waves crashing on a beach, never tasted the saltiness of the water or gotten it in their eyes. Others were “Navy Brats” who had already traveled around the globe as military dependents and grew up alongside the oceans of the world. Yet here we were together in tight-knit groups on board destroyers, frigates, supply ships, nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and others. Some even went to ships of foreign nations.
Dave Palenshus on a 3”/50-cal gun mount aboard the USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) on 3rd/Class cruise, off San Francisco and heading to Anchorage, AK. MONTICELLO was eventually sunk as a target on 14 July 2010, 70 miles off Kauai, HI, by aircraft from VP-4 and VP-40.

We would spend the summer sailing the Atlantic, Pacific, South China Sea, the Mediterranean or other oceans; visiting the Philippines, Japan, Spain, Italy, Alaska and other ports of call. Our Marine-option midshipmen would spend their summers at Little Creek, VA or Camp Pendleton, CA. Between our Third- and First-class Midshipmen cruises was our Second-Class cruise period that for most of us included three weeks at NAS Corpus Christi, TX, in Aviation Indoctrination and three weeks at SEAL School in Coronado, CA. A few also attended Amphibious Warfare Indoctrination at Little Creek, Nuclear Surface Indoctrination at Norfolk, VA and/or Nuclear Submarine Indoctrination at Charleston, SC.

We all still talk about those cruises and when we get together share photos that have been turning yellow with age. Pearl of Wisdom #3 from Dave Palenshus: “VOLUNTEER FOR EVERYTHING when on summer cruises. Stand out. GET RICH in experiences while on your summer cruises. You will never look back on those days with regret if you put your whole body, mind and soul into absorbing six weeks or so of the real Navy or Marine Corps. Try everything, from new foods to shadowing Naval Officers while on board ship. Hold your head high. We used to joke that the Navy was 200 years tradition unmarred by progress. Yet now it is clear that we followed in 200 years’ worth of the footsteps of others as you now follow in our footsteps and that this progress is as important as keeping the traditions alive.” Which is why we won’t tell you about the bat-box on the ship’s bridge or where to find the left-handed monkey wrench, bucket of steam, the Golden Rivet (the last rivet installed on a ship and located in the shaft alley) and standing the mail buoy watch!

Each of us had our own reasons for joining the KU NROTC Program. For some it was simply a 4-year scholarship that paid for tuition, books, lab fees and threw in $100 a month to live on - a perfectly valid reason – for which you paid it back with 4 years of active duty. For others it was expected of them to follow in their father’s and grandfather’s footsteps because they too had made the Navy a career. For still others, the military served its purpose like the French Foreign Legion - a way for a person who grew up in a land-locked State to simply get away and see the world. In fact, a good majority of people in the Navy spent their early years growing up in the Midwest States before signing on “to see the world.”

We were possibly the last all-male KU NROTC class to be commissioned. One female midshipman was in the class behind us and one was in the class just behind her. Today one can look at the NROTC stats and see that some 25% of the midshipmen are now female. NROTC was opened to women in 1972, the year we stepped foot on campus, and the first woman was commissioned from a ROTC program in 1973. Yes, she joined as a junior. It would take a little research but we believe KU commissioned their first female midshipman in 1977.

Meanwhile, other events were taking place around us which you may take for granted 40 years later, but it was an evolutionary step which we were witnessing. The Women Officer School (WOS), Newport, RI was disestablished in 1973, and Officer Candidate School (OCS) training was integrated to support men and women. The United States Naval Academy, along with the other military academies, first accepted women in 1976 and commissioned its first female graduates in 1980. Women also began attending Aviation Officer Candidate School (AOCS) in 1976. In 1972 the pilot program for assignment of officers and enlisted women to ships was initiated onboard USS SANCTUARY (AH-17). By 1978 the Navy was assigning women to fill sea duty billets on support and noncombatant ships. The Surface Warfare community opened to women. In 1979 the first woman obtained her Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) qualification. In 1973 the Secretary of the Navy announced the authorization of naval aviation training for women. LTJG Judith Neuffer was the first woman selected for flight training. In 1974, the Navy became the first service to graduate a woman pilot, LT Barbara Allen Rainey. In 1979 the
Naval Flight Officer (NFO) program opened to women and in that same year LT Lynn Spruill became the first woman Naval Aviator to obtain carrier qualification. Today, female midshipmen have been allowed to take their Summer Cruises on board submarines.

Navigation Class – paper and pencil, dividers, and then out to the parking lot to shoot the sun. Do you know the trick for finding the horizon when you can’t see it?

So how did the Bicentennial Class of 1976 turn out? Well, very few of us made an active duty career of the military, some of us only serving the mandatory four years to pay back our full scholarships. Dave Palenshus did his 20 years active duty; Tom Sherman, Bob McBride and Herb Bland did their four. But for the majority of us we resigned our commissions from active duty anywhere between 4 and 10 years and were sworn into the Inactive Ready Reserves (one weekend a month, 2 weeks a year active duty assignments) where we then completed at least 20 years of service. Paul Sherbo retired as a Captain, Doug Campbell as a Lieutenant Commander.

So we end this article with how we began it – talking about the Military Science Building. CAPT Dave Schweizer, USN, recently retired as the Commanding Officer of the KU NROTC. In his departing message in the Unit’s Pegleg Chronicle newsletter, he writes: “I depart with one concern which I feel threatens our unit. As you may be aware, the Military Science Building is approaching its 70th birthday, and like most 70 year-old things, it’s rightfully showing its age and has some issues. Based on the limited state money allocated to university building maintenance, it’s crystal clear to me that WE will need to raise the money to update the MSB windows and heating/air conditioning. If we don’t, the future of this last active historical military presence on campus will be at risk.” The University already said that they wanted to relocate all the ROTC Units and raze the MSB to make room for a new science building. The Commanders of each of the Units adamantly opposed the idea by convincing them of the historical and functional worth of the MSB as well as our unique mission. KU acquiesced but as CAPT Schweizer said: “I fear we only earned a temporary reprieve and I’m confident this issue will surface again.” So we now have a fundraising campaign with a goal of raising at least $1.5M (University estimate) to replace the windows and install central air conditioning. CAPT Schweizer continued: “For now, please think about the time you spent here during your formative years, the people you met, the friends you made, the value of your military education experience, how much you’ve previously given back (or not) to KU NROTC, and how well you’ve done financially in the intervening years. With those thoughts, PLEASE be generous and give until it hurts a little. I cannot imagine KU NROTC existing without the Military Science Building – I just can’t.” And neither can we. We will help however we can and hope others join our ranks.

The highest ranked member of our 1976 commissioning class gets the last word, CAPT Paul Sherbo. “About 100 years ago my classmates and I took our commissioning oaths there in the Commanding Officer’s office in the MSB, the same oath you will take and that generations before have taken. I remember thinking it was odd that we took an oath to defend not the people, not even the territory, but the Constitution of the United States. Why is this distinction important? Certainly, we would defend against an invasion of territory - it would be foolish not to. But we pledged to defend far more than that. What is this Constitution that we swore to defend? Why did our founding fathers draft an oath to defend it and not the people and territory? Because our founders wanted to tell us something that has withstood the test of time - that if we lose the territory, we still have a mission. We still have a promise to keep. The Constitution that you will be taking an oath to defend is more than words on paper. It is, indeed, a commitment. A commitment that was spelled out in its very first sentence. A commitment to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and, finally and most importantly, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity.

“And that is the real oath. This commitment, this pledge to defend liberty is an idea, a principle that is so much a part of you...
and I that it does not even occur to us to subjugate nations for tribute and plunder. Instead, even though scared half to death and plagued with doubt, Americans, including commissioned officers from KU, have offered their very lives for freedom and liberty - for ourselves, for our posterity, for others whose names we don’t even know. That is what has made us different. ‘To secure the blessings of liberty --- ‘Now there is a cause worth serving for and worth fighting for.

I envy your future and the adventures of your careers. I even envy you the dull times and the many annoyances. A lot of lives are like that, but the path you have chosen sets you apart. For one day when, inevitably, you lie on your deathbeds, each of you can look back and say, “I stood my watch on the ramparts, I spent my time in the crosshairs of the enemies of liberty.” You will make many sacrifices large and small, wishing for things other citizens take for granted and which you will not have. Yet you will have a quality that sets you apart from other citizens. You will have a special virtue that does not increase your fortune, something for which no university will ever certify you. It is something in which you and your family can take pride, something no creditor can claim and no enemy can destroy. That is your honor.”

It is a Navy tradition that the junior person always salutes first; a salute being a privileged gesture which shows a sign of trust and respect among military personnel. This time though, to our KU NROTC Midshipmen, it is our honor to render a salute to you first and wish you fair winds and following seas, and Semper Fi, on your most honorable career. And do not forget where you came from. Rock Chalk.

We believe our Midshipman Class of 1976 published the first KU NROTC Yearbook. It was 48 pages in length and is today extremely helpful remembering names and events! We highly recommend you continue this tradition because one day you will also want to look back and remember the good old days before you had any really good sea stories to pass on to your younger generation!
Interested in buying a new Unit polo? Get the current version of the polo in either Navy Blue or Marine Corps Red. Email our Supply Officer to order:

kunrotcsuppo@gmail.com

Checks can be made payable to “Hawk Watch Society”

We love to hear from our Alumni! Please contact us at nrotc@ku.edu for comments, questions or suggestions.

Donations can be made online at:

www.kuendowment.org/rotc_navalaward

Thank you for your continued support!