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Class News: 1963:

Earlier this month, the Association of Graduates informed us of the death of two of our classmates, Lt Col (Ret) **Thomas C. Meier**, CS-21 and Lt Col (Ret) **Howard M. "Mike" Tomme, Sr**, CS-01. Both Tom and Mike were remembered during our Class Reunion and their cups were turned over at the Friday evening Memorial Ceremony.

Tom passed away on 3 Aug 2013 in Oregon. Services were held on 10 Aug 2013 in Salem, OR at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The family suggested that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Marion Polk Food Share; 1660 Salem Industrial Dr NE; Salem, OR 97301. Condolences may be sent to his family in care of his wife, Mrs. Kathy Meier; 13271 Woodland Ln SE; Turner, OR 97392-9378.

Mike passed away on 2 Oct 2013 in Las Vegas, NV after a brief illness. Funeral services are pending for the springtime at USAFA. Condolences may be sent to his family in care of his son, Mr. Howard M. "Mike" Tomme, Jr.; 13000 N Parkwood Dr, Gulfport, MS 39503.

**Class of 1963 50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion:** What a great Reunion! The 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion couldn't have been better. Great weather, unforgettable events and an incredible turnout. First, Thanks, Kudos, Appreciation et al to our classmates who made this event such an "over the top" success. **Bill Ball** and **Denny King** were the committee co-chairs and they did a fabulous job along with a small army of volunteers. There just is not enough room in this article to name those who contributed to the Reunion. Over 260 of our classmates attended the Reunion. What's more, many of the next of kin of our 18 classmates who gave their all in the Southeast Asia conflict were there. As well, many family members and special guests attended. Of particular note Colonel Dick Cole was a very special guest. Dick is one of the four living Doolittle Raiders.



**Dick Cole and Norm Wells**

There were many wonderful moments at the Reunion one of which was the presentation of the Class Gift. The Class Gift was presented to the Academy at Falcon Stadium during the first quarter of the football game. Representing the class at the presentation were Class President Jim **Diffendorfer**, Class Secretary Pres **Davis**, Class **Historian** Lou Matjasko, 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Co-chairman Bill **Ball**, and Gift Committee members John **Borling** and Les **Denend**. A Pledge Check for \$9.67 million from the Class of 1963 was presented to the Air Force Academy Endowment President and CEO, General Steve Lorenz and Air Force Academy Superintendent, Lt Gen Michelle Johnson. The class has given in excess of \$11 million since graduation in 1963—more than any other Class. *The class has also established an \$844,000 endowment fund whose distributions will complement the Center for Character and Leadership Development and the Department of History's Center for Oral History project.* Over 61% of the Class contributed to the Class Gift Fund.



Left to Right are Les Dened, Pres Davis, Bill Ball, LGen Johnson, General (Ret) Steve Lorenz, Jim Diffendorfer, Lou Matjasko and John Borling

If you still want to contribute to the Class Gift go to the Air Force Academy Endowment Web Site: <http://www.usafa.org/Endowment>. Under “Donors” you will find “Areas of Giving”. Click on that and go to “Class Gifts” and click on the Class of 1963. Easy!

As a part of the Air Force Notre Dame Football game the Class of 1963 members of the USAFA Football Team participated in the opening coin toss. The coin used for the toss was the Class Challenge Coin given to each classmate attending the Reunion. The coin was designed by our classmate Dick **Shutack**.



Classmates at the Coin Toss were L to R: Russ Teising, Gerry Ahmann, Skinner Simpson, DeVere Henderson, Willie Parma, John Heimburger, Jim Lang, Dick Brown, Bruce Kohl, Bill Hentges, and Dean Hess.

**Squadron Rejoins** took place on Wednesday evening and Saturday evening after the game. I have pictures from of two of these events. On Wednesday evening Dave and Carol Nuss hosted a catered dinner at their home for 15<sup>th</sup> Squadron. Included, was a squadron special guest for the Reunion: Colonel Dave Fitton one of the “War Eagles” Squadron AOC’s.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Squadron’s Rejoin took place on Saturday evening after the football game. Lou Matjasko sent me this story from their gathering: “A 50<sup>th</sup> reunion story of the 1963 brotherhood - late Saturday in a 11<sup>th</sup> Squadron rejoin, Kent Ransom mentioned the loss of his class ring. Lou Jean McKnight (widow of Milt, 11<sup>th</sup>, and Kent’s Doolie roommate) heard about Kent’s loss, which touched her heart. She had Milt’s ring with her and offered it to Kent, who graciously accepted.” How’s that for “Over the Top”?





The 11th Squadron guys above are front row left to right, Ken Grizzle, Lou Matjasko, and Ralph Bacue, second row left to right Kent Ransom, Larry Thompson, Steve Savonen, George Frederick, Bill Hentges, and Mike Foley.

15<sup>th</sup> Squadron: front, Ray Fuller, Bud Gilligan, Dave Jackson, Col Dave Fitton, Matt Lee, Dick Guild, and Dave Nuss. Back: Dick Sula, Bill Flynn, Warren Nogaki, Dick Graham, Skip Lee and Ed Pickens

Please send me pictures and stories from your Squadron Rejoins and they will be posted here and at the Class Web Site.

At the Reunion Hotel Bob and Shirley **Hall** hosted a Class Memorabilia Room. There were oodles of items creating a *nostalgia tsunami*: among the displays were photographs, uniforms, copies of the Talon (June 1963 was one), a basket of DVDs containing 63 copies of the DODO publication from 1959 to 1963 that we could all take home with us. Bob and Shirley's efforts were truly appreciated—another “over the top” part of the reunion.

Thursday involved a Golf event—I have no results. That evening’s events included the Wives Tribute at the Chapel and the Vietnam Memorial Celebration in Arnold Hall honoring our 18 classmates who gave their all and the two classmates who endured nearly 7 years of captivity as POWs in North Vietnam. At the end of the Vietnam Memorial Pat Wynne’s Ring was formally presented to the Academy by Pat’s brother, Secretary of the Air Force Mike Wynne. An especially moving event. The entire Thursday evening was exceptionally well done and set the scene for the entire Reunion. There wasn’t a dry eye at the Memorial Celebration.

Friday began with a Lunch with select Cadets at Arnold Hall. The lunch preceded the USAFA Leadership Briefings. All was a great deal of fun. Talking with the Cadets let us know that much has changed and much has remained the same. The briefings were enlightening as well as thought provoking. The new Superintendent’s views of the challenges she is facing were likewise daunting. After the briefings we fell out to an area near the Chapel for a Class Photograph.

Friday evening brought the reunion banquet and an evening full of surprises and tall tales (stories) presented by Denny **King** and Drue **DeBerry**. The 9<sup>th</sup> Squadron afterhours escapades were the evening’s headliners. We were pleasantly surprised by a visit from the Cadet Cheerleaders who led us in a few of the cheers from our day. Three of our Cadet “Yell Leaders” joined in the fun leading the USAFA Pre-Game. They were Joe Lee **Burns**, Bob **Hall** and Mike **Ferguson**. My picture from that event is not printable.

Denny’s and Drue’s presentation was linked to an article written for the reunion by Drue: **A Selected Chronology of Our Rendezvous with Destiny, 1937 – 2013**, also known as the Chronology.

Drue asked me to let you know if you did not receive your pre-ordered copy of the Chronology at the AOG registration desk, please contact him at [303-470-1667](tel:303-470-1667). Classmates who wish to order a copy of the Chronology should send a check for \$19 to Drue at 2165 Thistle Ridge Circle, Highlands Ranch, CO 80126. Please add your desired shipping address.

You may recollect that during the Reunion a professional photographer and a professional videographer were recording, with sound, all of our Reunion major events (except the football game). They captured more than we could possibly see on our own, so it will be fun to watch what they recorded. The videos and photos will be posted on the Class Website ([www.usafa63.org](http://www.usafa63.org)) but I was told you can purchase your own DVD or CD. To do so contact the videographer, Rick Zahradnik, of Alpha Productions, [alpharick@comcast.net](mailto:alpharick@comcast.net) [719-591-7375](tel:719-591-7375). \$30 for each DVD ordered. The CD can be purchased from photographer Dave Vessey of David Vessey Photography. Dave can be reached at [Dave@VesseyPhotography.com](mailto:Dave@VesseyPhotography.com) [719-331-1282](tel:719-331-1282). Also \$30 for each CD. Shipping to the address you specify is included in the price for the DVD and/or the CD. The DVDs and CDs come in jeweled cases with printed Reunion labels. Events are organized by chapter.

That’s it for now. An expanded version of this column with more photos and class information will be posted on the Class Web by the time you read this issue. Thank you all for the kind remarks about this column. It has been a labor of love over these many years (43). Linda and I thoroughly enjoyed the reunion and visiting with all of you. Regretfully, time is short these days and there was not enough time available over the Reunion weekend to visit with quality conversations. Until next time we wish everyone an enjoyable and safe holiday season.

