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Class News: 1963:

The Association of Graduates recently learned of the death of Colonel(Retired) Danny L. **Eckles** on 20 June 2013. Burial was in the Willamette National Cemetery. The family suggested that donations be made to the following charities: Albany Veteran's Association – American Legion Post 10; 1215 Pacific Blvd SE; Albany, OR 97321. Please mark “Attn: Danny Eckles Memorial Fund” or the Albany Safe Haven Animal Shelter, 33071 Highway 34 SE; Albany, OR 97322. Condolences may be sent to his family in care of his wife, Waconda Eckles; 3406 Lauren Ave N; Albany, OR 97321-7392.

From **Diff**: “By now you have made plans for the 50th. Your planning team has a great one lined up; this will be the best ever. If you have been putting off your gift or pledge to the 50th Gift to the Academy, there’s still time to become a part of our lasting endowment benefiting the CCLD and COH projects that will directly affect the cadet experience. And, the class history interview process continues; again, it’s not too late to do your recording [editor’s note: cameras will be at the reunion].” To make a video, contact Lou **Matjasko** at usafa63historian@msn.com to work out a plan. If you have a digital camera consider recording your own. Lou and/or Gil **Merkle** (merkleg@texas.net.) can provide guidance.

Class Gift Status: according to Les **Denend** we are just over 40% participation in Class Gift amounting to three quarters of a million dollars. How about 100% participation? Give what you can but at least give.

Denny **King** and Bill **Ball** provided a reunion committee report: "The search for relatives of our 18 classmates killed in war has been concluded with great success. Thanks to the efforts of many classmates, contact has been made with relatives of each classmate and now we await the attendance numbers. More than a third of the next of kin have already booked hotel rooms and others have indicated that they will attend the tribute on Thursday of the reunion. Some are, of course, still weighing their desire to attend against the counter influences of schedules and cost."

Breaking News: Twice as many classmates have booked hotel rooms as have registered for the reunion with the AOG. Thanks to the hotels we now know you’re coming, which is great, but it would really help to know the events you’ll be attending because much of our planning depends on attendance numbers. If you remember a story that will make your classmates laugh or shake their heads please share that fun fact with the Reunion Committee by sending it to denny63@sbcglobal.net (anonymity guaranteed, almost)." Finally, On Thursday, October 24th, in the Academy Chapel, the Men of The Class of '63, organized by Seagrams Seventh, will present a 45-minute musical "Tribute to The Wives" who have cheerfully anchored the family throughout our careers. Championed by Dr. Joseph Galema, Chapel organist for 30 years, the Cadet Chorale, The Aspen Strings, and additional performers will present. Don't miss it."

Pauline “Peeps” **Bogaert** sent the following photo of she and Jim celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary (June 6th), by taking a trip to Australia and New Zealand. Peeps said they hiked for two weeks on New Zealand’s South Island. The photo is on the second day of their hike on Queen Charlotte Track going to Mistletoe Bay.



Jim and Peeps

I would like to congratulate all our classmates and their wives who may be celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary this year. When asked how you made it happen, our answer was “we didn’t think about it.”

The Class of 2013 Commissioning Ceremonies went off with lots of emotion: joy, sadness, exhilaration, sighs of relief and, of course, considerable congratulations. Each ceremony recognized every new graduate on stage to receive their new shoulder boards along with many handshakes and hugs from parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, fiancés and classmates. Both Bud **Gilligan** and I were very impressed with the graduates from the 15th Cadet Squadron with numerous pilot slots and many post-graduate studies to include medical school and law school.



Many of the ‘63 participants at the 2013 Graduation Parade.
Gazing off into the sun is none other than Wetterhahn.

The week's events got started Monday evening, May 27th, with a get together and dinner at the Eisenhower Golf Course. Tuesday morning we enjoyed special seating at the Graduation Parade followed with lunch. The Commissioning Ceremonies started at 1630 for twenty Cadet Squadrons with a second round at 1900. When the evening was over, some of us found our way to PF Changs for snacks and reflection. Wednesday morning was an early start at the Superintendent's Brunch—what a layout!--and then the Graduation Ceremony at 1000 hrs. The fly over by the War Birds was sensational as we all tried to recognize the many aircraft in the formations. The AAF contingent included B-17, B-25, P-40, P-47, and P-51(2) aircraft and the USN contingent included one each FM-2, F6F, and a TBM. For us history buffs the fly-by was wondrous. That evening we gathered for a nostalgic, farewell event at the Villa in Palmer Lake (site of the old Roman Villa from our time). Thirty-nine classmates participated and as you can see in the photograph many wives were also there. See more photos on the Class Website version of this article.

Classmates who gave their all during the Southeast Asian War are highlighted below. Again, my thanks to Jimmie **Butler** for the photographs.



Captain Clarence J. **Hemmel** was reported missing on 21 October 1967 while on an operational mission near the coast of South Vietnam. Shortly after the F-100 aircraft he was piloting pulled off the target the FAC reported seeing a fireball on the water surface. Attempts at radio contact with him were unsuccessful and no parachute was seen nor was a beeper heard. KIA status was confirmed on 28 Oct. Joe was a member of the 37th TFW, 612th TFS, Phu Cat RVN.

On December 20, 1965, 1LT David J. **Wax** was co-pilot of a C130E aircraft attempting to land at Tuy Hoa AB under a very low cloud base when it was hit by ground fire five miles south of the base and crashed killing all the crew. The Hercules (the first C-130E model lost in the war) was based at Nha Trang and was bringing in a load of 13 tons of aviation fuel. David was assigned to the 345th TCS, Nha Trang AB, RVN.

On 5 June 1967 Captain Doug **Butterfield**, Rash FAC, was flying a visual reconnaissance mission in an O1-G Bird Dog when shot down by enemy ground fire 5 NM northeast of An Khe. Doug was assigned to the 21st TASS, Nha Trang AB RVN. He was detached to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) at An Khe.

That's it for this time. Remember to set the reunion dates on your calendars, upload your bio to the UCH while thinking about a video topic and consider making a pledge. See you in October!