

## 86/87 CLASS NEWS



Dave and his paddler



Dave at work in the USNA Museum

Finally, from noted author **J. Eric Smith**:

✉ **Jim McNeal** and I have another book coming out in June, which involves a retelling/remembering of our Plebe Year experiences, and features interviews with several classmates and other Navy alums.

Here's the link for information about it:

<https://jericsmith.com/2025/03/11/the-crucibles-pre-order-campaign-is-now-on/>

Thanks for all the great material this issue - please keep it coming!

***Audemus Esse Magnos***

# '87

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Hello Classmates,

Welcome to Finals Season and June Week 2025! We have a big column this month thanks to our contributors, though regrettably, not all the news is good.

Starting off with good news, it was fantastic seeing **Suni Williams** and Butch Wilmore return from the International Space Station



'87: L to R; Marc Ruggiano, Shelley Ruggiano, Kathy Gaffney, Mike Gaffney, Rob Shepherd, Mary Beth Shepherd, JT Hall, Pati Hall, Mike Fields, and Denese Fields

in March after 286 days in space. Reuters' copyrighted photos and videos of their journey home can be seen at <https://www.reuters.com/technology/space/nasa-astronauts-head-home-spacex-capsule-after-drawn-out-space-station-stay-2025-03-18/>.

**Mike Gaffney** and a few '87 heavyweight crew jocks along with their better halves met up for a weekend in Annapolis and to enjoy the annual "Pull for Navy" Banquet, which kicks off the spring racing season. Mike shared, "The banquet also honors the graduating firsties of the boathouse, including men's lightweight, men's heavyweight, and ladies crew. Good food, wine, friends, and stories were shared. I included a "way back machine" photo proving we haven't aged a day!" ~ Mike Gaffney



L to R Mike Gaffney, JT Hall, Mike Fields, Rob Shepherd, and Marc Ruggiano at the 2025 "Pull for Navy" Banquet



L to R Mike Gaffney, Marc Ruggiano, Mike Fields, and JT Hall back in the day

**John Walters** has exciting news about his younger son, **Justice Walters, USNA Class of 2025**, whose Service Selection John was able to attend. Justice landed his first choice, USS CARNEY (DDG 64), an Arleigh Burke class destroyer with a stellar combat record. In fifty-one combat engagements starting 17 Oct, 2023, USS CARNEY destroyed inbound missiles and drones launched by Houthi rebels successfully defending our allies, freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, US Navy assets, and itself. Upon returning to their homeport in May 2024, the CARNEY's crew was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon (CAR, the first time a Navy crew has received the decoration since 1991 in the Gulf War.



ENS Justice Walters, USNA Class of 2025 and son of John Walters, proudly displaying his new sword after landing USS CARNEY (DDG 64) at Service Selection. How about that great leather jacket my fellow SWOs!



L to R ENS Justice Walters, USNA Class of 2025, VCNO ADM Jim Kilby, John Walters and CNO ADM Lisa Franchetti. Quite the star-studded service selection photo including John's classmates from Department Head School Class 131!

Sadly, **Margie Trott Binder** has passed away and send our deepest condolences to her family and friends. **Shelley (Laurilla) O'Malley** forwarded her reflections along with this beautiful obituary from Margie's family.

“Margie was a remarkable teammate and friend to me, and I was blessed to have been able to see her last month before her passing. She was ready for whatever this horrible disease would take, showing amazing grace and strength. It was exactly who she was. She definitely changed my life for the better and always reminded me to stay curious, laugh, give life my best, and show kindness to others. A pretty great legacy to be sure.” ~ **Shelley (Laurilla) O'Malley**

“Marjorie “Margie” Trott Binder, 59, of Shoreview, MN, passed away on 2 February 2025 after a short but intense war on cancer and a too short but intense love of life.

Margie was born on 8 July 1965 to Joe and Dale Trott in Baltimore. After Margie graduated from Towson High School in 1983, she was nominated to the United States Naval Academy where she played basketball and studied history. She was an incredibly talented athlete and record-breaking point guard. With her statuesque 5'2" height, she was a fierce competitor and still holds the Academy record for assists during her 4 years with 500. She has been described by teammates as the most elegant definition of competitor and friend.

After graduation in 1987 Margie headed to flight school and earned her pilot wings in 1988. Her first duty station was HC-4 in Sigonella, Sicily where she flew the CH-53E Super Stallion. She flew in support of Operations Provide Comfort, Sharp Edge, and Desert Shield/Storm.

During her final years of active duty, Margie got a master's degree in teaching and moved to Minnesota to be near the three nieces she adored. It was there she began a new career teaching differently abled students, which took the special kind of patience she possessed. In keeping with her varied interests, she went on to work in the medical device industry, DoE contracting, and recently was working on her own business helping

parents and teenagers navigate the college admission process.

Margie always dreamed of raising good humans. She started by having three kids in three years and she was tremendously successful. She wanted them to read, learn, be curious, follow their own dreams, and have adventures. In 2014, she pulled the three of them out of school and they did a year of home/travel school. She entertained them by stopping at every random historical marker across the country, putting her history degree to good use. She cherished that experience with them.

In keeping with her “assist” records, she was all in for activities, volunteering for Girl Scouts, theater and much more. She had unyielding positivity and was everyone's cheerleader. Besides watching her children bloom, Margie loved Disney, funny movies, walking her dog Hope, books, the “right” backpack, sports of any sort, road trips, crabcakes, cutthroat card/domino games, keeping in touch with nieces/nephews/cousins, grilling on the first day of Spring, Jimmy Buffet, and planning for the next adventure.

Margie is joined in rest by her mother, Dale, and her father, Joe. She is survived by the lights of her life, her children Scott (wife Allie), Olivia, and Amy as well as two brothers, cousins, nieces, nephews, and many treasured friends. Her memory will continue to inspire strength, resilience, and generosity in those whose lives she touched.

To her son she leaves her obsession for books, passion for teaching, and the unwillingness to define “normal.” To her oldest daughter she leaves her kindness, work ethic, and quick wit. To her youngest daughter she leaves her athletic prowess, a USNA tradition, and fierce loyalty to those she loves. To the rest of us, she leaves love, unfathomable grace and the hope we will continue to share her stories and to support her children.

We owe special gratitude to Julie and Amanda, as well as the medical staff of Regions Hospital for their dedicated loving care through Margie's last challenges.



Margie Trott Binder and her children, Scott, Olivia and Amy

Parting on that sad note, I wish you all well and hope you are enjoying Spring.

Please send your news to [rpinataro87@gmail.com](mailto:rpinataro87@gmail.com) with “Shipmate” in the subject line.

# '88

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**Donor Participation: 3.43%**

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Zoom link posted on all platforms



The Class of 1988 thanks Jim Schwab for serving as our Class President from 2013 to 2025.

We will have elected a new class president by the time you're reading this, so I want to start this column right off the top with a big thank you to **Jim Schwab (28th co)** who served as our Class President from September 2013 to April 2025.

Please join me in expressing our sincere gratitude to Jim for his 12 years of dedicated service. I hope everyone will please take a second out of your day to send him a personal message of thanks via Facebook, LinkedIn, email, text, letter, or phone call.

The role of Class President is a significant volunteer commitment, demanding exceptional leadership, unwavering energy, and strong organization skills, particularly in the lead-up to milestone reunions. Above all, it requires a genuine affection for the Class of '88 and the Naval Academy.

Jim's leadership was instrumental in the successful execution of our 30th and 35th reunions, major fundraising initiatives, the establishment of our new bylaws, the creation of our memorial and Distinguished Graduate Award committees, and so much more that we don't have the space here to elaborate on, all while serving with distinction as the '80s Decade Representative on the USNAAA Board of Trustees.

Throughout his tenure, Jim adeptly navigated us through challenging times, including the pandemic, while simultaneously fighting his own health battles. He successfully kept us connected with a respect born out of our shared experiences and through our enduring friendships, networking, and social events.

Thank you, Jim! The class extends our deepest appreciation to you for your exceptional service and the countless hours you've