

**2013 PARENTS WEEKEND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND
21-23 OCTOBER 2011**

Admiral Miller, Captain Clark, and distinguished parents, family and friends of the Naval Academy Class of 2013.

My name is Spencer Johnson. I have the great honor and privilege to be the president of the Class of 1963, the senior class partner in the Link in the Chain program along with your sons or daughters in the Class of 2013. My classmates and I met many of you at the local Alumni Chapter and Parents Club send off dinners and festivities in 2009 as your sons and daughters prepared to embark for Annapolis and Plebe Summer, again on I-Day here in Annapolis and at various events where we have gathered with you to cheer on your members of the Class of 2013. Similarly, we will be seeing you at events during the next two years, culminating at graduation in 2013.

Two years ago, I was honored, along with several of my classmates, to receive an invitation from the Superintendent to attend the Class of 2013 formal dress parade that marked the end of their Plebe Summer training. The parade showcased their readiness to be integrated into the soon to be reconstituted Brigade of Midshipmen returning from their summer cruises and other training experiences. The Class of 2013 marched on to the parade field in perfect order—proudly erect, in perfect step, “eyes in the boat”, rifles aligned. Each company and battalion made its turn and came to a halt across the breadth of the parade ground, perfectly spaced, each rank aligned and “covered down”. They looked as if they had been marching on parade all their lives. They exhibited professionalism, pride, confidence, and teamwork. They were a class, beginning to forge their link in the chain of classes and graduates that are the strength of the U.S. Naval Academy and the naval service.

Sitting behind me was a classmate and company mate who is a much decorated combat pilot. Captain Phil Rooney flew A-4's and A-7's over the lethal skies of North Vietnam. He commanded a carrier based attack squadron and a carrier air wing. He was the comptroller for the US Atlantic Fleet, responsible for billions of dollars in operating funds and resources before retiring in the rank of Captain with over thirty years of naval service. I turned when I heard gasping sounds of what might be major distress. I asked Phil if he was OK? Tears were rolling down his cheeks and he was choked up. He told me that he was having an “out of body experience”. He said, “I am looking across that field, a space of fifty years, and what I see is me.” He spoke for all of us.

Over the past two years we have watched your sons and daughters meet every challenge—physical, mental, academic, spiritual, moral and ethical—with courage and success at every turn. The standards have been high and not easily met. Those who are the members of the class of 2013 are tested and proven. They are ready to take on whatever comes next. You have every right to be proud of your midshipman. A pride that we share in equal measure knowing the difficulty of what they have achieved and will achieve in future years here at the Naval Academy and in the service of our country, to which they have pledged their commitment.

Our two classes are linked together despite the years that separate us, and the strength of that bond grows every day. We, the Class of 1963, are the heritage of the Class of 2013. They are our legacy. They will tell you that they are proud to follow in our footsteps. As our stride shortens and our pace slows, we are already proud, knowing that we will be able to follow in their footsteps, with every hope and confidence for the future of our country that they so clearly demonstrate today.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank another person familiar to you, Mr. Ron Klemick, our class coordinator for all Link in the Chain activities. He does the organizing and heavy lifting in making this program so meaningful for us. He is also one of only three, soon to be four, living Navy quarterbacks who can claim victory over Notre Dame. Thank you, Class of 2013. Thank you families and friends of the Class of 2013. We are all, indeed, increasingly aware that we are one family.