

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY  
Annapolis, Maryland

24 August 1962

Dear Class of 1963:

I suppose it is somewhat unusual, if not unprecedented, for the Commandant to write a letter to each member of the First Class, and yet I feel that the things I want to say to you are of sufficient mutual interest that this means of informing you is appropriate. I purposely refrained from writing sooner primarily because: (a) There was insufficient information available sooner on some of the items to be covered herein, and (b) I wanted the letter to reach you near enough to the time of your return to the Academy that the contents herein would be fresh in your mind at the beginning of the new academic year.

First, allow me to congratulate you on having achieved your position as a First Classman at the Naval Academy. Your class will very shortly be assuming the responsibility for running the Brigade and I can assure you that I intend for you to have my fullest support in exercising your responsibilities, and I am extremely optimistic about the possibilities of this being in all respects the best year that you have ever known at the Naval Academy. For reasons that I will touch upon in more detail later in this letter, I am also highly optimistic about this year representing something in the nature of a turning-point in improved Brigade morale. In this regard, I have been sincerely impressed with the enthusiastic and energetic approach that your class has already exhibited towards the assumption of your responsibilities. I feel that your Class Policy is indicative of this, and I feel also that your Class Improvement Committee, which has submitted a number of sound suggestions for improvement, reflects a dynamic approach on the part of the Class of 1963. I might at this time mention just two items on which favorable action has already been taken:

a. The hop schedule for this year will reflect the desires of the class and the Brigade that additional semi-formal hops be added and the total number of formal hops be reduced. Ten semi-formals are now in the schedule and essentially the formal hops will be held on occasions when it is considered that formality should be the order of the day, i.e., major holidays or special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.

b. Two Saturday night basketball games have been scheduled on nights when other major entertainment is not available at the Naval Academy.

There are a number of other items which I am sure will be of interest to you and which will be made known to you through appropriate means after your return. These two that I have enumerated here are merely indicative of the fact that your Class Improvement Committee's recommendations are receiving serious consideration and will continue to so long as they are reasonable and their accomplishment can be achieved without a sacrifice in our standards.

A number of things have happened locally since you departed in June on your cruises or on leave, and I think you would be interested in some of them. Construction has now been completed on the 6th and the 4th Wings of Bancroft Hall and they will be occupied at the beginning of the academic year. Construction is now fully underway in the 5th Wing which will be completed early next year. Sick Bay and Dental Quarters have been moved from their temporary locations of last year into their permanent locations in the basement of the 6th Wing, and they are so fully equipped and so beautifully appointed that I think you may find it a pleasure to be ill in the future. Moving of Sick Bay and Dental Quarters to their permanent location makes the spaces previously occupied available for midshipmen extracurricular activities for such organizations as the Lucky Bag, Log, Trident, etc.

#### Class of 1966 and Plebe Indoctrination

I would like to at this time devote some space to comments about the Class of 1966, with whom you will be working immediately upon your return. As you probably know, this summer we established a different routine for the entering Plebe class. Essentially, we doubled the number of Second Classmen available to work with the Plebe Detail to approximately 140, we increased the number of newly graduated officers available for working with the Detail, and we started bracing-up the Plebes the first week they were here. We further attempted to make our summer routine more closely approximate the academic year routine and, all in all, Plebe Summer has been a much more rigorous and a much faster paced routine than has been the case in the past. The whole objective of this approach was to ensure a Plebe class better prepared to face its responsibilities in the Brigade than has been the case previously. I am firmly convinced that this objective has been achieved, and I am sure you will find '66 to be a spirited, hard-charging group. Because the pace was considerably faster this summer than before, a higher percentage of resignations has been realized and this was not unanticipated. Frankly, we feel that a large number of Plebes who should never have come to the Academy in the first place and who would surely have left the first week or so of academic year have gone during this summer period.

In other words, this class has been pretty well shaken down and all of us who have been working with them this summer believe that you will now have a truly fine group of Plebes to work with. I am sure that you will agree when you have the opportunity to observe them at first-hand, and I hasten to solicit your individual and collective support in nurturing and further developing the fine spirit in this class and assisting them through the First Class-Plebe relationship to become better qualified to be midshipmen.

One other major change that was instituted with the Class of 1966 this summer was their assignment to platoons which would move as units into their academic year companies. Thus, the Plebes coming into your company will have worked together as a unit during the summer and will have been supervised by the Second Classmen in your company, and I feel that this procedure will serve the dual purpose of providing for a smoother transition into the academic year routine for the Plebes and also will provide for a carry-over of their company spirit into your organization. I should like to make particular reference at this point to the outstanding job done by the Class of 1964 in working with the Plebes this summer. With very few exceptions, '64 has taken charge and has been a major factor in the development of this class. I think you will find those members of 1964 who were in the Summer Detail to be of major assistance to you once the academic year starts, since they will have an exceptionally complete knowledge of the capabilities and the shortcomings of the Plebes coming into your company.

The final change in the indoctrination procedure for this year is one that I discussed with your class previously and which I would like to mention again at this time. It is my desire that come-arounds for Plebes between the time of the return of the Brigade and the 1st of October be only to the Plebe's own First Classman. The purpose of this procedure is to: (a) Make certain that you are personally responsible for getting your Plebe started in the indoctrination program for the academic year and are thoroughly knowledgeable about his capacity and the areas in which he may experience difficulty, and (b) To give the Plebes a little better foundation and a better start on the academic year. There will be ample time after the 1st of October for you to authorize other upperclassmen to assist in the indoctrination of the Plebes, and I believe with your support and assistance we can do a far better job than we have done before in keeping up the enthusiasm and motivation which is nearly always built up during Plebe Summer, but which I think is particularly characteristic of this Plebe class.

There are two other aspects of the indoctrination program which I have also discussed with your class but which I wish to re-emphasize in this letter. The first of these relates to the matter of professional questions. My belief is that in the past professional questions have been overemphasized to the extent that Plebes on many occasions have had a justifiable complaint that they were so burdened down with time-consuming and unnecessarily large numbers of professional questions that their academic work suffered as a consequence. I can't emphasize too strongly my belief that the number and scope of professional questions must be very carefully screened to make certain that, instead of serving the useful purpose of increasing professional knowledge, they actually serve as a means of wasting precious time and further serve as a device for frustrating instead of motivating an otherwise well-qualified Plebe. As leaders in the Brigade you must keep uppermost in your mind the thought that the Plebe Indoctrination System is a positive, as opposed to a negative, procedure. This is one further reason why I believe that the first three weeks of the academic year come-arounds by the Plebes should be to his individual First Classman so that you will be in a position to monitor completely the professional questions that are being given to your Plebe and will be able to exercise the necessary judgment in determining whether he is, in fact, being completely overburdened by requirements to amass sizeable quantities of meaningless information.

The second aspect of the indoctrination system that I feel is most frequently subject to abuse, and can be most readily challenged by those who oppose the system in toto, relates to procedures that are frequently employed in the messhall during meals. I think the most objectionable single feature to this phase of the indoctrination relates to the "shoving out" and "locking on" which, though not authorized, appear to be employed rather frequently. There are several reasons why such procedures are objectionable, but I think the main ones are, first, that it gives rise to the frequently heard complaint that Plebes are denied an opportunity to get a full meal in the messhall when such actions are permitted, and, secondly, the possibility of injury to an individual. This has occurred on occasions in the past. A further and significant drawback is the fact that the meal period should serve as an opportunity to develop the social graces, and it is a little difficult to understand how this practice has any place in such a program. An additional point is that the Plebes know this is unauthorized and consequently many of them lose their respect for upperclassmen who take advantage of a situation in an effort to force the Plebes to do things which they know to be wrong. There is ample opportunity for physical exercise to be utilized in the

indoctrination program, but I do not believe that this should ever extend to the meal period and I request the Class of 1963 to take the lead in seeing to it that this practice is not permitted in the messhall.

I would not want you, by any stretch of the imagination, to conclude from the foregoing remarks that I am endeavoring to establish a "soft" Plebe year. The objectives of the Plebe Indoctrination Program are the same as they've always been, but I think you would have to agree that many times in the past we have fallen far short of achieving these objectives because the approach of the upper class has been negative rather than positive. I believe that there is an unparalleled opportunity for the Class of 1963 to change the procedure and to prove conclusively that the Plebe Indoctrination Program can be run in a positive manner that cannot be challenged successfully by anyone. I believe that the procedures that have been employed this summer, combined with the recommendations that I have made to you for your procedures during the academic year, will result in an overall improvement in the Plebe program and specifically in the Class of 1966; and I feel that this cannot help but be reflected in improved Brigade morale. I think you must agree that a system which relies heavily on frustration as a means of achieving its goal must be basically wrong, and I request that you give serious thought to this matter in an effort to support your own Class Policy in this regard. Plebe indoctrination is bound to suffer if it gets to be a chore for the upper class to administer and for the Plebes to receive. There must be humor on both sides, and I have every confidence that your class will be able to approach the problems involved in a positive and fully acceptable manner.

I would like to mention just a few words about conduct. I have the feeling that, by and large, the Form 2 is utilized to far too great an extent. Here again, I feel that your Class Policy expresses a positive approach to this problem, and I hope that implementation of your expressed intent to exercise proper leadership will be fully realized. There will obviously be many occasions when the Form 2 is the only solution in an effort to maintain proper discipline, but I would suggest to you that there are many occasions when on-the-spot correction can be much more effective a tool than the report slip. In this connection, I have discussed this matter also with all officers of the Executive Department, and I feel that you will find at least a new awareness of the problem in the Executive Department and I am confident that we can develop an effective system for Brigade discipline which does not have to be based on fear of punishment.

This is the first of a series of policy letters with which I expect to communicate my thoughts to the First Class in order to:

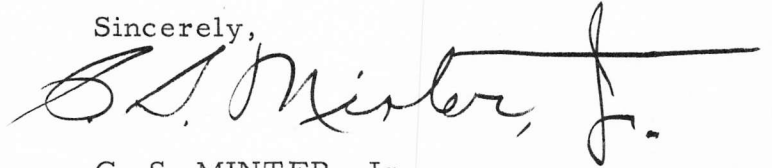
a. Keep you better informed on the objectives of the Naval Academy and

b. Stimulate your contributions to a better and improved Brigade of Midshipmen.

As we progress through the year and events develop which make it desirable, I expect to use this method of transmitting my ideas to you.

Finally, Rear Admiral C. C. Kirkpatrick relieved Rear Admiral Davidson on 18 August as Superintendent. I am sure you all know the very deep and sincere interest and regard Admiral Davidson felt for the Brigade, and I am equally certain that you will soon discover the enthusiastic dedication Admiral Kirkpatrick has for his new assignment. His primary interest and concern is to make our Naval Academy better than ever, and I know that you will find him supporting the Brigade in every way possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. S. Minter, Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

C. S. MINTER, Jr.  
Captain, U. S. Navy  
Commandant of Midshipmen