

1 Qtr 09 Update

Contributed by RANGITSCH Joseph Francis
 Friday, 12 June 2009
 Last Updated Wednesday, 17 June 2009

Dear Proud to Be SlSm going to try to get an update to the class on a quarterly basis on class events and initiatives (depending on progress). The Assembly continues to be an excellent publication to keep up with Academy events and Mark and Cheryl Connors do an outstanding job keeping up with Classmates. If you donSt subscribe, please reconsider.

Class Gift (2013)Once again, the class gift for presentation at our 30th Reunion is to the Global Leadership Center. I ask now that we all rally behind the selected gift and support its success. AOG has an easy online donation signup where you can pledge an affordable monthly donation to be put on a credit card for a specified period of time (ie. 60 months) - <https://www.westpointaog.org/NetCommunity/SSLPage.aspx?pid=859> . In any case, Harry Shablom is honchoing the greatest task ever contemplated…contacting every alumni of the Class of 1983. Expect a call from one of your former company mates in the future. Set up your pledge now to avoid a last minute donation around reunion time. We currently have three classmates who have pledged \$50K to the cause! The Class Coins are in and we have decided they will be used to reward those classmates who pledge to the class gift. Harry Shablom will send me a monthly report of pledges and I will mail the coins to classmates.

Wounded Warrior ProjectThe class intends to make a donation in the near future to the Wounded Warrior Project in honor of our classmates on Active Duty – either RA, IRR, or Reserves. I will report completion of this in the next update.

Proud to Be S Cadet Spirit Award (March or April)The Class of 1983 is continuing to move forward to established an Endowed Cadet Award to recognize the highest ranking cadet involved in Cadet Spirit. We are awaiting approval from the Superintendent and planning to make the first presentation of the Award in the Spring of 2009 during the cadet spirit dinner to the Brigade Cadet Spirit MWR Officer. The Proud to Be S Cadet Spirit Award recognizes the cadetSs efforts to inculcate spirit in the Corps, while honoring the spirit and fun loving nature of our class. The first presenter will be one of our class members still on Active Duty. The Award will be an M9 Bayonet. Those looking to attend the award ceremony please contact COL Jeanette McMahon at Jeanette.McMahon@usma.edu to find out particulars about getting on the guest list.

Golfing Grads of USMA (April)For the past eight years a gaggle of “Proud to beSers” have been reserving a long weekend a year to play golf and enjoy company. The first four years we held the event at USMA during the Alumni Golf Weekend in June. For the past four years we have joined a group of Grads predominately from the early 1960s in Florida and Alabama as their “Youngest Grads.” There are several RTOs from our era that are part of the crowd and the observation of how crazy we were from their perspective makes for some great “Corps Has” declarations. Anyway, this year we are going to be in Prattville, Alabama from 15-19 April at the Marriott Hotel & Conf Center at Capitol Hill. We wonSt be hard to find so if you are in the area come find us in the Presidential Suite!

Class Offspring Presentation (Graduation Week)The Class has procured three 2009 Lincoln Silver Proof Dollars for presentation to our three graduating offspring – COL Laureen BaroneSs son and daughter, Joseph and Kathleen Leforte, as well as Gregory GongawareSs daughter Andrea. These Class Gifts will be presented by COLs Tim Trainor and Donna Brazil during Graduation Week. Last year, Tim and Donna presented six 2008 Silver Eagles to our classmates children at the Honor Monument. If anyone knows of a son or daughter graduating from USMA this year that is not listed above, let us know immediately. Also, please make sure we are aware of anyone joining future classes. The class leadership wants to make sure our classmatesS sons and daughters know we all are proud of their accomplishments.

Army/ Navy Game FYI - The Game has now moved to the second weekend in December. PassingsAs many of you have already heard, Danny Kellas passed away on 9 December in Charlotte, NC due to complications from surgery. Johnny Thomas and Joel Johnson attended a Memorial Service in Winchester, Va. in January representing the class and DannySs Company mates. Here are their observations from the service:

From Johnny Thomas:Bandits,

I want to give you an update on DannySs Memorial Service.

JJ and I attended the Memorial Service for Danny at the Braddock Street United Methodist Church in his home town of Winchester, VA. It was a very moving service. The church was filled and JJ remarked that it was fortunate that we arrived early. It was truly standing room only. There was no sermon given by a minister but as you can see from the program DannySs Aunt, two best friends from high school and sisters gave very moving tributes to Danny. Some were funny and some were serious but they all had a similar theme in that Danny never met a stranger.

After the service JJ and I attended a reception at the home of DannySs sister Beth. At the reception JJ and I had a chance to meet all of DannySs family including his son and daughter.

I know some of you may want to contact the family and DannySs wife and parents definitely would like to hear from you. I can tell you that DannySs parents were very happy to see JJ and I at the Memorial Service. Below are mailing and e-mail addresses:

DannySs Parents
 Mr. & Mrs. Carter Kellas

353 Sheridan Ave
Winchester, VA 22601
(540)667-0299
ctkellas@verizon.net

Danny's Wife
Mrs. Barbara Kellas
7605 Summerwood Lane
Charlotte, NC 28270-2175
(704)874-1216
kellas1@windstream.net

Additionally, the family has requested that contributions are made to the Danny Kellas Children's Education Fund at Summit Bank, 100 W. Jubal Early Drive, Winchester, VA 22601 to the attention of Steven Tavenner. If we want to contribute as a class I am more than happy to collect and send to the fund. If we want to give individually you have the address.

From Joel Johnson:JTGreat summary. I'll admit I shed a couple of tears during the very moving service. If I may I'd like to add a couple things...

All (Danny's parents, sisters, family and friends) were extremely happy that Johnny and I could attend and represent USMA and, specifically, his classmates and company mates. We passed on to everyone we talked to that we were representing all of his friends from '83 and B-3 who were not able to attend. We relayed that word of Danny's passing was slow to get out to the general West Point community as it was such a shock but we were helping to spread the news to all his many friends and they would most likely hear from others. Danny's mom told us she received a call from our classmate Chuck McGould, who was married to Danny's sister Beth for a while, and thanked us repeatedly for attending and representing West Point. His West Point years and accomplishments were repeatedly mentioned during the ceremony remembrances.

There weren't a lot of additional details provided around the cause of Danny's death. Pretty much still a mystery - acute abdominal pains which drove him to go to the hospital, some quick surgery (thought he had an aneurysm in his torso) to address the issue, was awake and sitting up after surgery, then suddenly lapsed into a coma from which he never responded.

Danny was truly a star in the small town of Winchester as attested to the number of people attending yesterday. Recently (think in September or October of this year) he was inducted into his high school's athletic Hall of Fame - captain of his tennis team, after only picking up a tennis racket for the first time his freshman year and without any formal tennis instruction, that won state titles his junior and senior year. We heard it was one of the highlights of his life in recent years and no one smiled brighter during the ceremonies. Johnny provided the program in his earlier message which includes a picture of Danny and his two best friends from high school during the Hall of Fame ceremonies. Both friends, Boots and Steve, gave very moving tributes to Danny yesterday.

Johnny and I are tentatively planning on attending the Winchester Apple Blossom Festival during the first week in May. I remember Danny fondly talking about it and saying you have to attend some time. Pretty big deal for Winchester when the year 'round 20K population swells to 250K that week. Danny's parents and sisters asked that we contact them if we were going to attend so we could get together again. As we get closer we'll reach out to everyone, particularly those who are in the DC area at the time (Winchester is about an hour and 15 minutes or so from the VA side of the Beltway) to see who'd like to attend and meet Danny's family.

All the best to everyone in 2009.

JJSorry for the length, but I wanted you to read JTs and JJs emails. That is it for now, make those Class Gift Pledges and Go Army. Pete aka Fizzer