

December 14, 2009

To the Class of 1969

Dear Classmates:

Please join me in extending heartfelt congratulations to Navy Football for another remarkable regular season and a great win over Army. We just returned from Philadelphia where the energy and patriotism made the entire event a unique experience for all participants, players and fans alike. A win in the Texas bowl would be just the right Christmas present. Go Navy!

I am writing to you at the request of our new President Steve Comiskey.

After six years in the Navy and chasing business opportunities all over the world, Miss Gill and I have settled in Norfolk, the city in which we met 35 years ago. Last year we made several trips to Annapolis to cheer the Blue and Gold, enjoy the '69 tailgate tent and renew friendships. One conversation led to another and I soon discovered that many of us still want to unite to do something big and meaningful while continuing to work or living an active retirement. I became enthusiastic on the subject. Word got to previous Class President Mike Michaelis who asked me to head up the 50th Reunion Legacy Project. Significant work has been done and I remain inspired by the possibility for the Class to do something truly meaningful ... to make a difference. I believe the ideas we are proposing will do just that, as well as give rise to a true legacy for the Class of 1969.

We formed a working group and developed a list of ideas to consider. The Class Officers reviewed where we were headed, helped us refine the list and encouraged us to test the ideas with Classmates, Midshipmen, Naval Officers, other Alumni, the Alumni Association and the USNA Foundation. We did all that and then presented the current *draft* Class of 1969 – 50th Reunion Legacy Gift Project concepts to about 120 Classmates following the formal Class meeting in Annapolis on Saturday morning of Reunion weekend. Steve asked that I prepare a condensed summary of that presentation for your consideration and that is the purpose of this letter.

The goal for our 50th Legacy project is to have in place, by 2019, a fully operational “gift” that will add materially to the fulfillment of the Academy’s Mission by having more Alumni ready and willing to **“assume the highest responsibilities of command, citizenship and government.”** This project is *Alumni* focused. It goes beyond supporting Midshipmen; it’s about supporting the extended Brigade and the entire Alumni family

Here is a recap of the three broad programs we are proposing

1. To *Support our Warriors* we seek to create a **Veterans’ Educational Support and Scholarship Program (VESS)** to help families of disabled/KIA *Alumni* identify and secure benefits from other charities, the New GI Bill and government programs. It’s a maze out there ... and we intend to provide appropriate navigation. When the need cannot be met from other organizations, we will step in.

2. *To Prepare our Leaders we seek to create an **USNA Alumni Master Degree Program (AMD)** making available to our *Alumni* an accessible Leadership and Public Service curriculum that will enable Academy graduates to further differentiate themselves from their peers. It's a jungle out there ... and we intend to establish this fully accredited distant learning program available anytime/anywhere to equip our *Alumni* with knowledge and skills to be markedly more effective in any role in any career. Where funds from the New GI Bill and other organizations fall short, we will provide the scholarship help.*
3. *To Share our Experience we seek to implement an **Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP)** providing the protocols, infrastructure, and processes as well as the expectation for *Alumni* to advise, nurture and support up-and-coming *Alumni* through their military and civilian careers ... as though they were your shipmates. It's treacherous out there ... and we intend to make available a mentoring system and certified volunteer mentors who can provide the appropriate career/family/personal advice for *Alumni* to set higher goals and achieve more. You'd be surprised what you know that can help a shipmate avoid a serious mistake or gain a life-changing advantage.*

The ideas we are proposing are ambitious in scope but not complex. All of the elements to put these programs in place already exist in one form or another so we do not need to create anything new... just knit the parts together. We have done lots of groundwork and think we are on to something that will truly benefit the *Extended Brigade*. Further, by starting now and using the next ten years, we can systematically test our ideas, build the organization, processes and infrastructure and secure the funding to create world class capabilities of unparalleled excellence.

Positive momentum is building right now. We believe this affirms we are proceeding in the right direction with the right ideas and is a call to action for us to press forward. Here are a few of the reasons we think we should press on:

- Favorable response from most Classmates who attended the October 31 presentation.
- "Keep going" from the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Alumni Association and Foundation who invited us to invoke his name to obtain meetings with whomever we deemed appropriate
- "We can do it" from the Head of a potential host institution who has indicated his staff could work with us to develop the master degree facility we are contemplating.

- “You’re on to something valuable” from a number of active and post active duty Alumni who have expressed enthusiastic interest in the offerings we are proposing.
- “How can I help make this happen?” from a former CNO and former Chairman of the Board of Trustees after a mid-November briefing.

Ten years ago, what we are proposing was at least problematic and probably impossible. With today’s technology, we can do all these things; including creating and mobilizing a sophisticated network of highly trained volunteers to make this happen.

And then of course, these ideas could be all wrong. A few Classmates have said so. YOU may know exactly what we should be working on. Several terrific suggestions were made at the meeting. For example one Classmate thought our Mentor Program should model what is done at VMI. Another thought we could develop the resources to purchase buildings and land in and around the Academy to control the environment and appearance of our neighborhoods. Please think seriously about these concepts and the opportunity and share your observations and conclusions. We hope you will come to the same conclusion we and others have: That we are on the right course with the right ideas. However, if there is a better idea out there, we need to know about it ASAP. As it stands, we are underway and building speed; if we are going to change course, we need to figure it out quickly.

No matter what our eventual project(s) may be, to do them well, we will need substantial human resources. Initially, we are seeking 100 volunteers to evaluate options, drive specific project elements and/or to become Subject Matter Experts (SME’s), mentors, etc. We seek commitments from volunteers for at least 10 hours a month beginning in January 2010 through June 2010. This will give us the critical brainpower to organize our thoughts and begin making progress. Our short term objective is to deliver services for a pilot in one project area by May of 2010. We will assess our progress toward that goal in March and realign accordingly.

We have established a website (<http://usnaproject50.org/>) that will allow you to express your interests and preferences, and tell us the amount of time you would be willing to commit to this effort. We will need to collect some more specific and personal information concerning your expertise and experiences too, so we can best leverage your skills while working on the project.

I realize you may be asking “What effort and project are we talking about?” The truth is we’re not certain right now but it is likely to be at least one of the three outlined above ... and possibly something we have not considered yet. When you sign up and express your interest, we will begin to lock and load. We will be in contact in January to work with you in deciding what specifically we would like you to tackle.

So what about the money? Some Classmates’ hearts skipped a beat when we revealed our financial goals. It’s important to remember we intend to educate our volunteer Classmates to become funding experts in the scholarship/educational arena. We will “count” the value of every scholarship we find for a qualified candidate against our ten year goal. As an example, the

New GI Bill is an extraordinary benefit package (thanks to Senator Jim Webb '68) and produces over \$100,000 in scholarship and expense funding over four years for anyone who qualifies at the 100% level. (Generally, an Academy grad who does eight years of active duty qualifies at the 100% level.) Shouldn't more people know about this? In addition, many well established wounded warrior programs are out there with available funding and we will help those in need find them.

Over the 10 year start-up of our program we intend to deliver benefits to the *Extended Brigade* and raise funds totaling \$100 million including creating a fully funded endowment of \$55 million to carry on our work after 2019. The endowment will reach its goals by contributions from corporations, education foundations, significant individual donors and our own Class efforts. To see more about how you can help and to volunteer, please go to (<http://usnaproject50.org/>). There are a series of Q&A's there too. A key point to remember is that all three of the core ideas we have proposed are totally scalable meaning that they each can be ratcheted up or down depending on how much money is actually raised. I am excited about our 50th Reunion Legacy initiative and I invite you to support our efforts however you can. The process at (<http://usnaproject50.org/>) should take no more than 15 minutes.

I plan to provide periodic updates on our progress to the Class. Your comments and suggestions are critical to our success. Please put your comments on the website or shoot an email to me, any officer or another member of the 50th Legacy Team.

Thanks for your support and Best Wishes for a great Holiday Season,

Stephen

Stephen J. Leaman

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