

Shipmate
Upper Midwest Chapter
May-June 2015 Issue

Monthly All Service Academy breakfasts:

- West side - first Friday - Kip's Authentic Irish Pub, Marriott West, I-394 & US 169, 9960 Wayzata Boulevard, Golden Valley. Recent attendees include Carl Gronemann '45, Ray Witter '64, Jim Conn '67, Mark Salmen '73, Alex Plechash '75, Chris Bentley '79, Dave Priddy '80, Dan Secor '80, Dave Bruns '88, J. R. Olson '90, Craig Benson '91, Ernie Lietzan '01
- East side - second Friday - The Machine Shed, I-94 & Inwood Ave., Lake Elmo. Recent attendees include John Langeford '52, Ray Witter '64, Mark Salmen '73, Alex Plechash '75, Bob Christensen '80, Dave Ratte '84, Ernie Lietzan '01

Col. Robert Cabana '71, Director of the Kennedy Space Center, returned home to Minneapolis on April 22nd as the featured speaker at the Founding Flyers reception for the AirSpaceMN (www.airspacemn.org), hosted by our Upper Midwest Chapter. The event honored Robert Gilruth, a space pioneer who also hails from Minnesota. Bob Cabana's overview of the changes at Kennedy and the future of American space flight were highly regarded by all in attendance. The reception kicked off a number of events attended by Cabana during his visit to the Twin Cities.



Founding Flyers Reception (from left to right) Mark Salmen '74, Ken Liss '81, Alex Plechash '75, Bob Cabana '71, Craig Benson '91, Ray Witter '64, John Langford '52, Al Erdelen '67, Chris Bentley '79, Jon Olson '90, John Closs '71.

Admiral James Stavridis '76, USN (Retired), former Supreme Allied Commander, NATO, and former U.S. European Commander, recently visited the Twin Cities to speak at the Hendrickson Forum, sponsored by Saint Mary's University Institute for Ethical Leadership. Stavridis, now the dean of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, delivered his keynote speech on the Ethics of Cyber Security to over 400 business and community leaders. Our USNAAA Upper Midwest Chapter sponsored the President's Reception following the luncheon,

where Stavridis signed copies of his most recent book, *The Accidental Admiral*, and posed for photos.



Our Upper Midwest Chapter at ADM Stavridis event.

Top Row (L-R): David Bruns '88, Michael Seeberger '93, John Closs '71, Neil Tollefsrud '75, Craig Benson '91, Jim Roche '55, John Griffith '61, Jeff Steiner '78. 2nd Row: Jerry Witowski '69, Alex Plechash '75, ADM Stavridis '76, Chris Bentley '79, Bob Christensen '81. Kneeling: Dave Lancaster '80, Jon Olson '90, Chip Sharratt '74, Mark Salmen '73, Peter Nickitas '82

Supporting the Twin Cities Navy League Chapter, our Upper Midwest Chapter provided financial support and volunteer time for the Minneapolis Public Schools' STEM Expo on February 11th, 2015. Hundreds 7th and 8th graders were introduced to different organizations representing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The students were given insight into the kinds of careers they might pursue after high school and college, and were afforded a "hands-on" opportunity to learn about many technologies. Also in attendance were the Naval ROTC Unit from the University of Minnesota and the local Navy Recruiting District

The following are excerpts from a message published by LtCol. Alex Plechash, President of our Upper Midwest Chapter.

To my fellow alumni in the Upper Midwest Chapter,

2014 marked a very successful year for the Chapter, but 2015 is shaping up to be a truly banner year. Let me start by mentioning that last year the Chapter achieved a significant milestone at the end of what was a multi-year initiative beginning back in 2008. That achievement was the attainment of becoming one of the nine largest Chapters within the 100+ Chapters worldwide. We began by being tied for dead last (along with about 50 other Chapters) but steadily moved up until last year when we actually came in as the 7th largest Chapter in the Association. It took us a while, but by breaking into the top nine the Chapter now has a

standing board seat on the national Board of Trustees. RADM Ray Witter '64 is our Chapter Trustee.

Growing Chapter membership has been the key and it's a momentum we need to maintain. If you are not yet a member, or if your membership has lapsed, please take that extra step to join or renew today. It is vitally important to the Chapter but it's also a value-added proposition for all our local alumni.

Our Chapter has achieved many other milestones including the formalization of a Chapter Board, active support of USNA-related initiatives like the Blue & Gold program, etc. and many noteworthy speakers and events of the past five years.

There are many other events already on the Chapter calendar, including our 1st Annual Chapter Alumni Family Picnic on Saturday, June 20 at Lake Ann Park in Chanhassen.

Let me end by giving kudos to our current Chapter board. They are very talented and energetic group of alumni. I am truly excited to see their passion and to hear their ideas for future Chapter development. If you have not yet attended any of our Chapter events, or if you have not yet officially joined the Chapter, I strongly encourage you to do so. Maintaining a connection with your classmates is great, but the real impact and energy of Naval Academy alumni is where we live and that is a very Chapter-centric perspective.