

26 June 2013

Mr. James Niehus
President, U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1968
1422 Pennington Lane South
Annapolis, MD 21409

Dear Mr Niehus,

I am writing on behalf of myself and the four Midshipmen who were able to accompany me on the Language Proficiency, Regional Expertise, Cultural Awareness (LREC) trip to Vietnam and Cambodia as a result of the generosity of the Class of 2003. I wanted to extend my deepest gratitude for the Class of 2003's generosity and to tell you a little about the impact their gift had.

I designed this 23-day trip to expose the Midshipmen to all aspects of Vietnam and Cambodia, including culture, economy, history, and politics with an explicit professional military focus. Accordingly I added trips to historically significant areas and briefings with U.S. government officials. This included a hike up to the peak of Hill 770 which overlooks Hill 937, also known as Hamburger Hill, an special excursion to the former site of the bridge in Dong Ha destroyed by Col Ripley in 1975, and briefings at the Embassies in Hanoi and Phnom Penh, the Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City, and the Joint Personnel Accounting Command Detachment in Hanoi (the office responsible for the recovery of US servicemen missing in action.) This last briefing was especially significant as the Midshipmen and myself had the honor of meeting with Mrs. Karen Laws Engelke, the widow of LT Richard Laws, USNA '62 before our departure. LT Laws was shot down over North Vietnam in 1966 but his remains were not recovered. His remains were recently identified by JPAC in February 2013 and LT Laws laid to rest here on the Yard on 10 May 2013. Mrs. Laws Engelke gave me a copy of the program from LT Laws' funeral and asked me to pass her gratitude to the JPAC personnel; both of which I gladly did.

We began our trip in the south of Vietnam visiting Ho Chi Minh City (which I was surprised to find out locals still call Saigon) and its surrounding regions, the Mekong Delta, before heading northward through the cities of Pleiku, Da Nang, Hue, Quang Tri, and Dong Ha. We then spent 3 days in Hanoi before heading to Siem Reap in Cambodia and finishing up in the capital city of Phnom Penh. In addition to this brief synopsis and the attached photos/descriptions, I kept an unofficial blog of the entire trip. If you or your classmates would like to review it, it can be found at <http://luglyamerican.blogspot.com>

On behalf of myself and the four Midshipmen who accompanied me, I again would like to thank the Class of 2003 for their generosity. Should you or any members of the Class of 2003 have questions for me or the Midshipmen who accompanied me, we would be very willing to answer them. I can be reached at chiodi@usna.edu or 410-293-6847.

Sincerely,

Jason Chiodi
LCDR USN