

USNA Bonds of Gold Ceremony Remarks  
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I am here to present 5 rings from the Pickett and Lewis families representing 100 years of service to our Nation, our Navy, and the Naval Academy. You can read their individual bios in the book that the Class of 1968 has prepared. I'd like to tell you a few personal stories about them.

I first met my best friend Lud Pickett in 1961 as a boarding student at Severn School, just up the road from here in Severna Park, Maryland. Lud's parents were stationed overseas in Europe and my family had just returned from duty in Yokosuka, Japan. We were both Navy juniors who aspired to a nomination to the Naval Academy and we shared a common interest in racing sailboats.

When Lud became a Plebe, he was my guide to all things Annapolis. For 25 cents on Saturday, I could catch the bus down to Church Circle or to the West Street station and spend the day with Lud attending sporting events or concerts in the yard, and church at the Chapel on Sunday. Lud got me my first Army-Navy game ticket, and that was fun because Navy had superb team with a quarterback named Roger Staubach. On more than one Saturday night, Lud got me a set of Navy sweatgear and we chopped up the stairs into Bancroft Hall. Fortunately, no one noticed how poorly I squared corners.

Lud told me the greatest secret to Plebe life: "You know that if you come join my crew on the ocean racing sailing team you will never march in a Parade again and we'll be away from Mother Bancroft most weekends."

And I was able to reciprocate. More than a few members of the Class of 1968 got their cars early and parked them in front of

our house in Arnold, just up Route 2. I know the Class of 2018 would never think to do this!

Jump ahead to 1970. I got a collect call at AM from Lud who was taking his destroyer through a major refit in San Francisco. "Ralph, I met a wonderful young woman in Coronado. I owe her Mother more for collect calls than my car payment. I'm going to marry her as soon as the ship gets back!" And that's how I met Martha Kurtz Pickett.

Martha was the daughter of a decorated Marine Corps sergeant who served in both world wars. After the wedding, there was to be no time for a honeymoon because Lud was getting ready to deploy to WestPac and Vietnam. To make the most of their first days together as a married couple, Martha decided that she needed to perfect some breakfasts and dinners for him and so, for the three days before the wedding, I was her willing guinea pig. Lud was living proof that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach! And that worked for their entire 41-year marriage. Her ring was a cherished first anniversary gift.

But happy as that marriage was through a combined total of 60 years of Navy and government service, they had no children. When Lud died in 2011, Martha entrusted me to make decisions about his personal effects, especially his Naval Academy ring. It is an emotional tribute for Martha to be able to donate Lud's ring and her miniature ring to this Bonds of Gold ceremony, and with the enthusiastic support of the Class of 1968, her commitment led other members of the Pickett-Lewis family to locate other rings and make donations.

I first met Lud's Father, RADM Ben Pickett, Class of 1938, and Katherine, his wife of 50 years, as a Plebe during Christmas leave in 1965. Ben had two other brothers who also graduated

from the Naval Academy and Kay was a Navy junior herself. Kay's miniature ring was a wartime wedding gift in 1942. Ben was commanding a cruiser-destroyer flotilla in Norfolk and hosted several of us with his family for dinner aboard his flagship. It was the very first time I felt I was seeing the real Navy outside Annapolis. Kay Pickett introduced me to something California kids knew well - - avocados and artichokes - - neither of those were ever in any chow call I heard in Bancroft Hall!

In 1970 I came to Washington, DC to stay with the Picketts during my interview for the nuclear power program with Admiral Rickover. It did not go well. After being thrown out of the Admiral's office three times and spending 4 hours in the penalty box - - a chair facing the wall between filing cabinets - - I was told the Admiral had left and to come back the next day. When I told Ben Pickett about my experiences, he got really angry and said loudly, "I'm going to call my boss, the CNO, and complain about this." Did I tell you that his nickname was "Blazin' Ben"? But after a couple of beers and a look at the plans for their retirement home, "Ringfield", in Gloucester, Virginia, we agreed that his call to the CNO would do little to change Ben's opinion of Admiral Rickover and it surely would do no good for the career of Ensign Stoll.

In 1987 I reported to Newport News, Virginia to take command of the new construction submarine USS ALBANY. Ben had been the commissioning CO of the USS ALBANY in 1962 when she was converted into the Navy's first guided missile cruiser. You should Google Ben's ship and see the iconic photo launching multiple missiles simultaneously off the Virginia Capes. And picture what it was like to stand watch on the bridge 100 feet high in a seaway rolling 15 degrees or greater. Together we found the other nine living Captains of his ALBANY and I was able to honor them with invitations to the christening of my

ALBANY. Later he and I walked on the quarterdeck of the decommissioned ALBANY in Norfolk during a reenlistment ceremony for several of my sailors. ALBANY was our bond. You never forget your commands and the people who served with you.

And finally, we come to Rear Admiral Mays Lewis, Class of 1918. He was born into a Louisiana family of 21 children; two younger brothers also graduated from the Naval Academy. And he was Kay Pickett's Father. The Lucky Bag says his nickname was "Lefty", but it is a life-long mystery to his family because he was right-handed. Remember that the sea stories written by your roommate for your Lucky Bag photo will live forever!

His 30-year career spanned two world wars and the Navy's transition from his first assignment on a coal-burning battleship.

A thread running through the family history is Pearl Harbor. Ben was there on December 7<sup>th</sup> aboard the light cruiser ST LOUIS as that ship became the very first to get underway during the attack and head out to sea. Martha's Dad was at the Marine Corps Air Station at Ewa on the western side of Oahu where the very first Japanese bombs fell.

Mays Lewis was supposed to be in Pearl Harbor that day too. After over 20 years of service and command of two ships, he had orders in hand in early 1941 to be the Executive Officer of the USS ARIZONA. But he was hospitalized with appendicitis and complications after the surgery kept him on limited duty for several months. When the war began, he was the commodore of a 6-ship squadron of transports conducting convoys up and down the East Coast and to Panama, and this led to his experiences during amphibious operations in the European and North African theaters.

After developing new tactics and planning for amphibious landings for Operation Torch in North Africa, Mays got the responsibility as Port Captain of Mers-el-Kebir to clear all the sabotaged vessels and equipment that had been sunk when the French refused to come out and either join or fight the Allies. One of his tasks was to arrest the French Commander in charge of the port. In time they became good friends and often talked about what life might be like for their families when the war ended. Mays remained in touch with the Commander's wife after he died at the end of the war and as a result their son came to live with the Lewis family in the US for two years.

One other small footnote. Have you seen the movie "The Big Short" or perhaps "Moneyball"? They are based on books by the noted author, Michael Lewis. He's part of Mays Lewis's and Katherine Lewis Pickett's family tree also.

On behalf of Elizabeth Lewis of Charlottesville, Virginia, and Mays Lewis Jr. of Mount Vernon, Ohio, and especially Martha Pickett of Coronado, California, I am pleased to present these 3 Naval Academy rings and 2 miniature rings to the Class of 2018 in this Bonds of Gold ceremony.