



NASSOON NOTES

The Newsletter of the Princeton Nassoons Alumni Association
Volume 66, Winter 2019

Semper Fraternitas Cantusque

'Soons by the Sea Jim Crawford '61

A large group of senior 'Soons, many with spouses and partners, gathered last October in California's sunny Carmel-By-The-Sea for another wonderful mini-reunion. It was the group's 22nd consecutive annual get together, a tradition started in the aftermath of the 1996 all-comers Nassoon Reunion in Princeton. Carmel offered a balmy contrast to 1997's original "Frostbite Follies." Back then, we figured that if '50s and early '60s Soon alums would show up in the dead of a Chicago winter, they'd show up anywhere. Sure enough, we did then...and have ever since.



Brodsky, Graff, Goldberg, and spouses

The Carmel event reunited Jerry Ford '54, Steve Blakeslee, Bob Brodsky, Erich Everbach and Lew Ross, '58; Dunc Dempster and JD Helms, '59; Peter Graff, Dick Grieves and Rich McGlynn, '60; Jim Crawford and Don LeWin, '61; Buzz Kelsey '62; and Tim Callard, Barry Schuman and Chuck Sethness, '63. Contributing their fine voices and good company were "freshmen" Rick Eisenhart '66, Roger Bates '67, Jim Schenkel '68 and Chuck Goldberg, '71, who together comprise the Nassoon alumni quartet, Coast to Coast.

Beyond the pleasure of Carmel's laid-back atmosphere, its many fine galleries and restaurants in the village, and its splendid beach just down the hill, the 'Soons and their ladies enjoyed a number of diversions arranged by Dick and Carol Grieves, our indefatigable (three-time!) reunion planners.

One was a memorable van-trip hurtling along Big Sur's precipice-clinging blacktop to lunch at Nepenthe Restaurant, perched atop a fog-shrouded shoreline pinnacle. There also were excursions to the great Monterey
continued on page 2

PNAA Annual Dinner Courtesy Scott Watson '74

The PNAA will host our 2019 Annual Meeting and Dinner at the Orpheus Club, 254 South Van Pelt Street, Philadelphia, on Saturday, April 6. We will start with cocktails at 6:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 7:30. There will be a brief Annual Meeting during dessert, followed by our annual performance by the Nassoons at about 9:15. The Annual Dinner is a great way for alumni to renew old friendships and meet the undergraduate Nassoons. You will be impressed by their newest arrangements and vocal excellence, and you may be surprised by how many of our old songs they currently sing when we all sing together as a delightful afterglow to end the evening.

Pricing for alumni from the classes of '09-'18 and their guests will be \$80 per person. Pricing for all other alumni and their guests will be \$95 per person. There will be a very reasonably-priced cash bar during the cocktail hour.

We can *not* accommodate walk-ins for dinner, so be sure to register and pay in advance, online, using the following link: <https://www.perfids.com/upcoming-events>. Those who are not comfortable paying online should still register online, and they may mail a check to our treasurer, Marlo McGriff, per the instructions on the registration page.

We look forward to seeing you. We can only accommodate 65 alumni and guests, so please don't wait to register - this event has sold out the last two times we have held it in Philly. For more information, please contact Zach Augustine, PNAA Board member and Annual Dinner Chairman, at zaugustine@gmail.com.

'Soons by the Sea cont.

Bay Aquarium, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, and, just beyond Pebble Beach, the Inn at Spanish Bay where the group gathered for a convivial time around firepits at dusk.



Instituting what will hopefully become a new annual tradition, the group gathered late one afternoon at our Pine Inn headquarters to share champagne and memories of special moments — as undergraduates in the 'Soon Room, under resonant campus arches, during over-the-top spring break trips — and to reminisce about esteemed Nassoons no longer with us.

return to what has become over time an extended family of men, their wives and partners...the sheer pleasure of renewing old bonds, of breaking bread and singing together, of convulsing in laughter as our consummate raconteur, Rich McGlynn, artfully spins yarns we want to hear again and again.

What draws us back together nearly every year? It's the

Tread Marks and Water Sports
Stephen Garrett '92

"Tank Towwnn!" So rang the rallying cry as Atlanta native, Thad Persons '92, led a clutch of Nassoon alums onto a mud-soaked battleground littered with junkyard sedans and decommissioned armored vehicles. As the self-declared "Number One Thing To Do In Blue Ridge, Georgia," the wreck-rec spot Tank Town - owned and operated by a certified arms dealer, no less - was irresistible. Chalk it up to yet another surreal life experience as a 'Soon.

Seven early-'90s alums invaded the northern end of the Peach State on a mid-October weekend to join Thad at his family's longtime vacation home on Lake Rabun (site of many Nassoon memories, including warm-up weeks in '90 and '91). Among the honored guests in our party were Jon Blazer '90, Jason Matthews '90, myself, and the entire class of '91: Tom Clay, Mike Yin, Peter Mullan, and Jason Mark (a true 1T-2T-Bari-Bass quartet affectionately known as the "Wheel of Fire.")



Half our party didn't arrive until Friday afternoon, which left the rest of us early birds to whet our appetite for destruction at nearby Tank Town. Birthday boy Mike, a day short of turning 49, was the designated driver on our tour of duty in a 60s-era decommissioned British ride, turret-less and stripped of weapons but conveniently sporting a molded plastic bucket-seat high chair welded to the machine to accommodate extra passengers. I quickly scrambled onto the sturdy perch.

"British tanks are more responsive," explained a white-haired older man just finishing up a solo spin paid for by his girlfriend, a former Israeli soldier and accordion player who felt he needed the

continued on page 3

Tread Marks and Water Sports cont.

experience. We all agreed that the tank did give a surprisingly smooth ride, although at 2 miles to the gallon none of us felt inclined to trade in our Pacifica rental for the 15-ton leviathan.

But we weren't there just for the joy ride. We came to crush cars. So, with a crate full of spray cans and work gloves, we first vandalized and then sledgehammered a gray 1993 Toyota Camry, tenderizing our target with some respectable damage: shattering the front and side windows, demolishing the side-view mirrors, smashing out headlights and taillights, ripping off the windshield wipers, and generously pockmarking the exterior with minor dings and major dents galore.

Then came the flattening. It only took three passes for Mike to demolish the derelict auto into a tread-marked, scrap-heap metal pancake. With our masculinity affirmed, we dutifully returned our earth-caked, calf-high rubber boots, bought souvenir t-shirts, and left with gung-ho smiles.

The weekend had just begun. While our gang hit the Rusty Bike Cafe and gobbled down a breakfast of eggs, grits, and biscuits (with a side of banana nut French toast), I stopped by Smitty's drive-thru liquor store for some Bulleit bourbon, a pumpkin-spiced cordial, and a dram of local moonshine. "What about Mad Dog?" the group cried, protesting my oversight purchase of our signature early-'90s road trip drink. I sheepishly returned. "Ladies, there's been a request for Mad Dog 20/20," I told the women behind the counter. "Why, that's the taste of ninth grade," one of them cackled.

Soon enough, the others arrived and the octet was complete. Thad's vacation abode includes a two-story boathouse with a pontoon party barge and a whip-fast speed boat. Insisting that it wasn't enough, our host had also borrowed a pair of jet skis - one cherry-red, the other pitch-black. They were a water-sports wild card (top speed: 70 mph), but we quickly straddled them, driving with adrenaline-fueled abandon until they tossed off both Mike and me like bucking broncos. "We've got all the toys!" yelled Thad as his full-throttle speed boat towed a monster "Wheel of Fire"-laden inflatable raft while being flanked by the aquatic motorbikes.

Our first night was a homestead dinner of grilled rib-eye steaks and fresh vegetables, all washed down with a few

bottles of red wine, followed by a midnight cruise on the lake with some impromptu (and admittedly rusty) harmonizing that riled up the locals. "Shut up!" one neighbor screamed. "Keep singing!" cried another. Mixed messages, indeed, but we erred on the side of a cappella bliss.

The next morning, we all drove to the Dillard House for their family-style breakfast feast of a dozen different

continued on page 4



**Remembering...
Jack Taylor '45**

John Cowdery Taylor (Jack), husband, father, grandfather, (and passionate peruser of periodicals) passed away August 2nd, 2018 after a long and interesting 94 years of life. Jack was born in 1923 in Shanghai to Walter and Anne Taylor during the two decades his father spent as a missionary chemistry professor in China, fondly remembering his early expatriate years throughout his life. He first arrived in America to attend Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia in 1938. Moving on to Princeton University in 1941, his college career was interrupted by WWII. Jack flew 35 combat missions over Germany with the 8th Air Force's 452nd Bomb Group, serving as a navigator on a B-17, before returning to graduate in 1947, as part of the Class of '45. Many of his closest lifelong friendships were formed after his return to Princeton, particularly singing in the university's a

continued on page 4

Remebering Jack Taylor cont.

cappella group, the Nassoons. Jack's first career as a sales representative in the steel business lasted 13 years, and led him to Buffalo, New York where he met Wende Bennett. After a sometimes long distance courtship, they married in 1958, and welcomed daughter Wende in 1960. Son Jonathan followed in 1964 during a brief residence in Chicago. With a young family in tow, Jack relocated to West Hartford, CT in 1966 to begin work at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft's commercial jet engine division. Over the next 26 years, he represented Pratt & Whitney to airline clients in the United Kingdom and Middle East, particularly relishing travel to call on clients in the British Isles. In West Hartford, Jack also became a mainstay at St. John's Episcopal Church, where he was a long-time lay reader, served on the Vestry, and had a long run as one of the Three Wise Men in the annual Christmas

pageant (always Balthazar). After arriving in Connecticut, Jack also began singing with 'The Spare Parts,' lending his distinctive bass vocals to the local a cappella group for nearly 30 years. Retiring in 1992, Jack stepped up his volunteering, working with Meals on Wheels, The American Red Cross, and CRIS, Connecticut Radio Information System, where he read newspapers for blind listeners across the state. Jack was predeceased by his wife, Wende, and his sister Anne Taylor. He is survived by his sisters Harriet Taylor of Gainesville, FL, and Wickham Henkels of Auburn, Alabama; daughter Wende Wheeler of Longmeadow, MA, son Jonathan Taylor and daughter-in-law Stefanie Taylor of Los Angeles, CA along with grandchildren Annie and Ben Wheeler, and Elby, Sadie and Xander Taylor.

NASSOON NOTES

c/o John Whelchel '15
46 E 1st St
Apt 4A
New York, NY, 10003

Tread Marks and Water Sports cont.

dishes automatically brought to the table (everything from pork tenderloin to cinnamon rolls). Still not enough food? Don't worry; on the drive back, the group made sure to stop in the mighty little town of Tiger (with a name like that, how could we not?) and pop into "Goats on the Roof" for their signature ice cream, flash-frozen on the spot with a massive dose of liquid nitrogen. *[Little does Steve know that "Goats on the Roof" is legendary among recent Nassoons, your editor and fellow Atlanta-native included!]* Those who didn't partake could buy feed pellets for the titular livestock above our heads, delivered via hand-cranked conveyor belt to the elevated herd.

That evening, we put on collared shirts and cruised the pontoon over to Halls Boathouse, docking and walking up a treacherous path to the historic and rustic Lake Rabun Hotel. After a scrumptious meal of mountain-flavored farm-to-table cuisine, followed by a deliciously cheap supermarket birthday sheet cake aptly festooned with toy tanks, we thanked our waitress with a boisterous rendition of "Teasin'," (featuring soloist Tom's signature "Joker" smile) before decamping back to the boat for a nocturnal performance of Nassoon standards ("I Cover the Waterfront," anyone?).

This time, our harmonies were in tune and the neighborhood reception more welcoming as we pattered from dock to dock, serenading silhouettes cast against glowing houses while lake mist swirled around us. The home theater beckoned upon our return, and on a 100-inch projection screen we watched old videos of our former glory days as an Ivy League boy band. Wiped out by all the middle-age antics, most of us hit the hay while a stalwart few strummed guitars and crooned into the wee hours. What more do you need from a reunion? In the bosom of Appalachia, these Princetonians found true Southern comfort.