



"THE HELM"

Newsletter of the Connecticut Council (formerly Western CT Council)

Volume 2021 Issue 1

March 2021

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Upcoming dates of interest:

- **Zoom meeting with Vic Mercado:** May 19th 7pm
- **Brian Bill memorial golf event:** June 6th; page 5.



Jason Wathen at right with son Liam onboard USS Connecticut in 2017.

RADM Mercado at May Zoom meeting:

Our Council is pleased to announce a virtual meeting for Wednesday May 19th at 7:30 pm eastern time; featuring Vic Mercado, retired Rear Admiral and more recently former Assistant Secretary of Defense for strategy, plans, and capabilities.

Due to Covid pandemic restrictions, the meeting will be held online using the Zoom service. All members and interested friends are invited to attend. Specific sign-up procedures will be sent to our emailing list at a later date, closer to the meeting date. In the meantime, please mark your calendars. For those not familiar with Zoom meetings, please see the sidebar box on page 2.

In Vic Mercado's former Defense position he was responsible for advising the Secretary and Under Secretary for

(Continued on page 2)



Vic Mercado

President's Letter:

It is with great sadness that I inform you that our President, Jason Wathen, died suddenly in late December at the age of 49. Jason had served as our President for four years. He was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served our country as a submarine officer. Jason was also a local business executive.

Among Jason's achievements for you and our Council are: (1) the adoption of USS Connecticut (SSN 22); (2) the merger of less active Councils and consolidation into the one Connecticut Council; and (3) the active support of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Divisions, the NJROTC units, and the SEALs RDAC program.

We miss Jason and wish his family our sincerest condolences.

I was recently elected to succeed Jason. I hope to continue his good work and to ex-

pand our membership and services to all parts of Connecticut. To this end, we have begun getting more involvement from not only Dealey Division (Stamford), but Nautilus Division (New London), Barque Eagle Division (Plainville), and Edson Division (New Haven) as well. These Sea Cadet Divisions have been sending in regular reports and virtually attending our board meetings.

I have been with the Sea Cadet program since 1996 and am currently a LCDR on the Regional Staff. My son was a Sea Cadet from 1996 to 2004, reaching the rank of Chief Petty Officer. He then attended the Naval Academy graduating in 2008; and is currently a Naval Aviator LCDR, serving as a Department head in a Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron. I have been on the Board of the Council for over ten years.

Despite the restrictions of the COVID-19
(Continued on page 2)

RADM Mercado (continued):

(Continued from page 1)

Policy on national security and defense strategy; the forces, contingency plans, and associated posture necessary to implement defense strategy; nuclear deterrence and missile defense policy; and security cooperation plans and policies.

Prior to that position, he served in the Navy for 35 years retiring in late 2018. His service at sea as a surface warfare officer included command of USS Decatur (DDG 73), sister ship of our Council-adopted USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81). He is a graduate of the Naval Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School.

His full biography can be seen online at:

www.navyleaguewestct.org/VMbio.pdf

We anticipate Admiral Mercado will make a highly informative and topical presentation with questions and answers. Please plan to attend.



ZOOM?

For those who have not yet attended a Zoom meeting, it is not difficult. Many millions use it:

- Zoom is free and runs on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. A Zoom account is not needed.
- We will send a meeting link via email to all who make reservations. Clicking on the link a few minutes before the start time will result in you downloading the Zoom software. Or you can download it earlier by going to: <https://zoom.us/download>
- Once you have downloaded the software and joined the meeting, you will see and hear our speaker.

Council website:

See our Council's award-winning website for special features and updates that occur between the editions of this newsletter at:

www.navyleaguewestct.org



Web-site screen shot.

President's Letter (continued):

pandemic, your Council has been conducting our business virtually and are planning virtual events so that everyone from anywhere in Connecticut can participate. One such event will be Admiral Mercado's presentation on May 19th (see article on page 1).

When circumstances permit a return to a more normal existence, we hope to return to holding in-person programs.

I encourage all to maintain their memberships and become active in your Council's activities. If there is something you would like the Council to do, let us know! We are here to serve.

Joe Latwin



Incoming Council President
Joe Latwin.



Sea Cadet news:

Connecticut Sea Cadet units have safely adapted their training and activities despite the Covid pandemic restrictions. Here are photos from three CT units: Deale Division in Stamford, Nautilus Division in New London, and Barque Eagle Division in Plainville, showing a sampling of their recent activities.



Barque Eagle Division held a flag retirement ceremony at the Wolcott Lions club in January.



The Barque Eagle Division helped seat and serve veterans from all branches on Veterans Day 2020 at Mission BBQ in Southington.



Nautilus Division Recruit Training using "weekend model" in late 2020.



On December 19th, Deale Division participated in Wreaths Across America at Bedford NY Union Cemetery. Cadets raised money to buy 200 wreaths and assisted the Bedford American Legion in laying those wreaths on veterans' graves.



Deale Div. cadet Matthew Griffin is advanced to Petty Officer Third Class. Matthew has also received an appointment the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for the next academic year.



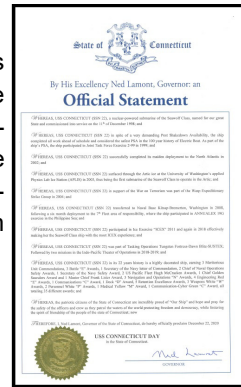
Nautilus Division dual pinning ceremony for two new cadet Chief Petty Officers in August.

Adopted ship news:

USS Connecticut (SSN 22):

We were very pleased recently to hear from Captain Aljihani, as his submarine completed its latest Pacific deployment in December. The sub, whose unofficial title is "Double Deuce" in a nod to its hull number, was also recently recognized for 22 years of outstanding service since commissioning. At right is a reduced copy of Governor Lamont's proclamation. See it full size and also a related article from The Day (New London newspaper) at these links:

- Governor: www.navyleaguewestct.org/Gov.pdf
- The Day: www.navyleaguewestct.org/Day.pdf



SSN 22 underway.

Our Council "adopted" this Seawolf class nuclear fast attack submarine in 2016. The sub's motto is "Arsenal of the Nation" in recognition of our state's history, and is based in Bremerton. Even after 22 years, the sub remains one of the quietest, fastest, and most lethal in the world.

USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81):

Churchill completed a deployment to the Mediterranean and middle east that lasted almost 9 months and covered over 60,000 miles, on March 19th. See this link for a local Virginia newspaper article providing details on the deployment and homecoming:

- www.navyleaguewestct.org/Return.pdf

Our Council adopted this Arleigh Burke class guided missile destroyer, following her port visit to Stamford, CT in August 2003. The ship is based in Norfolk.

To both these vessels, completing strenuous deployments, we say Bravo Zulu and welcome home! And we send our best wishes to Captain Aljihani on Connecticut and Captain Shanley on Churchill, and to their officers and crews as they continue operating in defense of our nation.

DDG 81 at the pier March 19th.



Major new donation:

Our Council was recently the grateful recipient of a \$50,000 grant in support of our youth programs. The donor is the Karin Bain and John Kukral Foundation of Old Greenwich, CT. We send them our best Council "thank you" for this generous donation! It will definitely be put to good use.

This grant came during a year when we were not able to conduct our normal fund raising activities, most notably our annual dinner, due to the Covid pandemic.

Our Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and thus donations are tax-deductible under the Internal Revenue Code. Donations may be made by contacting any Council Board member (see list on page 5) or via our Council website at: <https://www.navyleaguewestct.org/donate.html> Thank you.



Dealey Division at annual Training Presentation event.

NJROTC news:

We are proud to support four Navy Junior ROTC units in CT high schools: Bethel High School, Bridgeport Military Academy, Brian McMahon High School (Norwalk), and New London High School. Many in-person activities at these schools have been restricted by the Covid 19 virus; but we look forward to them going back fully to business as usual. We send them our best wishes.

Bethel NJROTC.

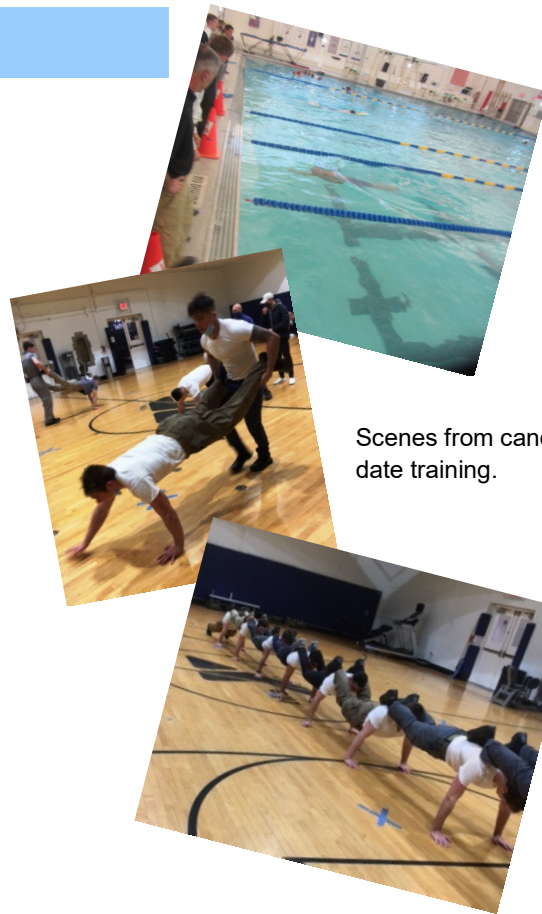


RDAC/SEAL candidate news:

The local Navy SEAL Recruiting District Assistance Council (RDAC) candidate mentoring program, led by Council Board member and retired Navy Capt. Drew Bisset, continues to maintain its in-person training momentum, particularly swimming, despite the challenges of COVID-19. Due to the patriotic spirit and generosity of the Greenwich YMCA and Greenwich Catholic School, the RDAC has been able to use their pools for weekly training sessions.

Our local RDAC has compiled an impressive record this past year, having a record number of SEAL Officer Candidates selected for SEAL Officer billets. Out of 15 such available nationwide billets, the RDAC had 5 of its candidates selected, who will be attending Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Newport this spring. In addition, 1 RDAC Navy ROTC Midshipman from RPI will report to BUD/S basic SEAL training in Coronado, CA in May, and 1 NROTC Midshipman from Columbia was selected as an Alternate. On the Enlisted side, the RDAC shipped 4 candidates in February and another 4 in March to Great Lakes, IL, where they will spend 9 weeks in Boot Camp and then 8-12 weeks in Naval Special Warfare Prep School before reporting to BUD/S in Coronado.

Finally, on 7 June 2021, Norwich University is sponsoring the Brian R. Bill Memorial Golf Tournament & Dinner, at the Woodway Country Club, to honor the memory of Special Warfare Operator Bill, a Norwich and local RDAC alumni, who was killed in action on 6 August 2011 when the helicopter he was on was shot down in Afghanistan. This year the special guest speaker at the event is Christopher J. Cassidy, USN Captain (SEAL) and NASA Astronaut. Anyone interested in attending should go to <https://alumni.norwich.edu/brianbillgolf> to sign up. This is a very popular event, so please sign up as soon as possible if you wish to attend!



Scenes from candidate training.

Help recruit new League members:

The Navy League was founded in 1902 with a clear mission: to support the members of the sea services; to educate the American people and their elected leaders on the critical importance of sea power; and to help build America's future through successful youth programs. Over 200 Councils around the world continue to carry out this mission. Membership is open to all interested citizens, whether they ever served in uniform or not. There is strength in numbers.

Please renew your membership and help recruit new members. Renewal is online at our Council website, www.navyleaguewestct.org then click "join/renew" at the top. Thank you.

Our Connecticut Council has 239 members.

There is an optional \$25 reduced annual NL dues rate, that substitutes online SeaPower magazine in place of the mailed paper copy. All other benefits are the same.

2021 Council Board

OFFICERS

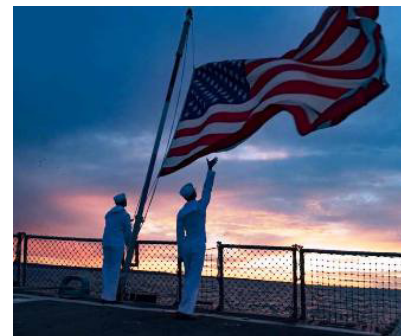
President..... Joseph Latwin
Treasurer.....Richard Koch
VP Sea Services.....Andrew Bisset
VP Membership.....R. (Pete) Kenyon III
VP Youth Programs...Stephen Gravereaux
Secretary.....Tara Louise Edwards
Communications.....Edward Fitzgerald
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Gerard Tighe John Weigold

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Colin Bernard, CO Edson Division New Haven
Stephanie Hyland, CO Nautilus Div. New London
Stephen Smith, CO Barque Eagle Div. Plainville





Connecticut Council
Navy League of the United States
www.navyleaguewestct.org

**USS Connecticut
(SSN 22) “Double
Deuce” is 22 years
old; on building ways
in Groton.**



**Homebound: USS
Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81)
passing Gibraltar
in March 2021.**

