

How to Write a *Shipmate* Obituary

by Timothy Elizabeth Woodbury

At the top is the full name and class year. If you're uncertain of the graduating class, we can easily look it up for you.

Then, name, including rank (only if active duty or retired) and date of death. Whether to include a location or cause is up to the family. Not necessary, but not discouraged.

Next comes date and place of birth and names of parents. If they attended NAPS or another college, include that here. Notable Midshipman sports and activities may be listed, along with the Company they graduated with.

You may include marriages as they happen chronologically, or spouses may be listed later with survivors. If there are multiple marriages, details are not necessary, but if you mention one marriage and then another, it makes sense to briefly acknowledge the circumstances (death/divorce).

When describing military careers, we walk a fine line of not using too many acronyms but being concise. Highlights and duty stations of interest are most important. Note that our style removes "the USS" and puts the names of ships in small caps. If you know the hull number, it will help readers know the type of ship without having to spell it out. Date of retirement and individual military decorations can be included here. If they did not retire, you may wish to include their highest rank.

Civilian careers can then be described, again, showcasing favorite or noteworthy positions or locations.

Advanced degrees may be grouped where they make sense or included as they occurred.

Listing hobbies, charities, civic honors and interesting activities or things they are known for are encouraged.

For survivors, the usual order is parents (if still living), spouse, children, grandchildren, siblings and more distant relatives. The extent of this list depends on how much space you have. If you have room, include relation (their spouse) and where they live for children, but as you go down the line, first names or numbers of great-grandchildren are appropriate. Deceased close relatives may also be listed here. Double check your list – we won't know if you've forgotten someone or if a name has been misspelled. If you have a unique situation and need help, feel free to ask and don't forget to include class years for any family members who also attended USNA.

Most likely, this will appear in print after services have taken place. Include date and place where services/interment happened. If the date is still undetermined, you can say something like "*services will be held at PLACE at a date to be determined.*" If you happen to get that date, send it in and we'll include it if timing/space allows.

If the family wishes (and there is room), certainly include where to direct memorial donations.

Whether to include author credit or not also depends on the word count. It is preferred to list "The Smith Family" rather than an individual family member.

We have a limit of 400 words & final family approval is required.

Here is a fictionalized example, but look through back issues of *Shipmate* to see previous obituaries.

William Dahlgren Goat 'XX

Captain "Bill" D. Goat, USN (Ret.), passed away on 1 January 2023 in Annapolis, MD. He was 91 years old.

Born in Newport, RI, he was the son of Billy and Nanny Goat. In high school, he was captain of the wrestling team and editor of the school paper. He attended NAPS for a year and reported to USNA in YEAR. At Annapolis, he thrived as a cheerleader and as mascot for the football team. While he was a bright student, he is notorious for being the anchor of the class, due to his numerous hijinks.

Upon graduation with the Class of XX, he was commissioned as a Navy ensign and married his Academy OAO, MaryLou Smith. Bill excelled as a Surface Warfare Officer, using his enthusiasm to inspire his sailors. Over his 20-year career, he served on and commanded a number of ships, his favorite being PHILO T. MCGIFFIN.

After the Navy, Bill served as a motivational speaker, speaking at venues throughout the U.S.

Upon retirement in DATE, Bill and MaryLou returned to Annapolis, where he was president of the local USNA Alumni Association Chapter and a fixture at home football games. He never missed a parade on Worden Field and sponsored many Midshipmen members of the Drum & Bugle Corps. He shared his love of the Naval Academy with everyone he met and was known for his extensive blue and gold wardrobe.

Predeceased by his parents, Bill is survived by his wife, MaryLou; their children (and spouses), Billy (Jane), Kidd (Susie) and Taylor (Chris); grandchildren, Billie, Charlie and Jordan; his sister, Nan; and brother, Bob. He was also predeceased by his maternal grandfather, W.T. Door '47, who encouraged him to pursue a military career.

Services were held at the Naval Academy Chapel on DATE, followed by interment at the USNA Columbarium.

Memorial donations may be directed to the Naval Academy Foundation (www.usna.com/give), the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (www.nmcrrs.org), Wounded Warrior Project (www.woundedwarriorproject.org) or his personal favorite, Goats of Anarchy (www.goatsofanarchy.org).

The Goat Family

Please send submissions to (obits@usna.com) or via USPS to *Shipmate* obituaries, 247 King George Street, Annapolis, MD 21402.

If you have any questions, please contact Timothy Elizabeth Woodbury at 410-295-4064.