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President’s Letter

2014 marked a very successful year for the Chapter, but 2015 is shaping up to be a truly banner year.

Let me start by mentioning that last year the Chapter achieved a significant milestone at the end of what was a multi-year initiative beginning back in 2008. That achievement was the attainment of becoming one of the nine largest Chapters within the 100+ Chapters worldwide. We began by being tied for dead last (along with about 50 other Chapters) but steadily moved up until last year when we actually came in as the 7th largest Chapter in the Association. It took us a while, but by breaking into the top nine the Chapter now has a standing board seat on the national Board of Trustees. [RADM Ray Wiiter '64](#) is our Chapter Trustee.

Growing Chapter membership has been the key and it’s a momentum we need to maintain. If you are not yet a member, or if your membership has lapsed, please take that extra step to

join or renew today. It is vitally important to the Chapter, but it’s also a value-added proposition for all our local alumni.

Our Chapter has achieved many other milestones including the formalization of a Chapter Board along with the establishment of [Chapter Bylaws](#), a Chapter checking account, active support of USNA-related initiatives like the Blue & Gold program, and the many noteworthy speakers and events we’ve hosted over the past five years. For example, in April the Chapter was privileged to host ADM James Stavridis '76 at a briefing on “The Ethics of Cyber Security” at St. Mary’s University. Just two weeks later the Chapter hosted the Founding Flyers VIP reception for Air-Space Minnesota at which Astronaut Bob Cabana '71, Director of the Kennedy Space Center, was the keynote speaker. They were really terrific events.

One specific event I would like to point out is that the Chapter will be holding its [Ist-Ever Chapter Alumni Family &](#)



[Friends Picnic](#) on Saturday, June 20 at Lake Ann Park in Chanhassen. I hope to see you there.

Let me close by giving kudos to our current Chapter board of directors. They are very talented and energetic group of alumni. I am truly excited to see their passion and to hear their ideas for future Chapter development. If you have not yet attended any of our Chapter events, or if you have not yet officially joined the Chapter, I strongly encourage you to do so. Maintaining a connection with your classmates is great, but the real impact and energy of Naval Academy alumni is where we live and that is a very

Calling All Non-Members!

Based on Chapter size, the Upper Midwest Chapter made the “Top 10.” That’s a huge achievement given the shear number of chapters! So, what’s keeping your local Chapter from becoming a Top 5 Chapter? Maybe

YOU! If you currently reside in Iowa, the Dakotas, or Minnesota you are eligible for Chapter membership. The number one reason USNA alumni give for not joining their local Chapter is the misbelief that they are automatically a member, because they are a lifetime member through the

USNA Alumni Association in Annapolis. This is simply not the case. You need to join your local Chapter by clicking [here](#).

Have you let your membership lapse? What a great time to renew! Why not take care of

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Admiral James Stavridis ('76) Event

Admiral [James Stavridis](#), USN (Ret.), former Supreme Allied Commander, NATO, and former U.S. European Commander, recently visited the Twin Cities to speak at the Hendrickson Forum. [The Hendrickson Institute for Ethical Leadership](#) is a center for excellence at St. Mary's University for the formation of ethical leadership skills. Stavridis, now the dean of [The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy](#) at Tufts University, delivered his keynote speech on the Ethics of Cyber Security to over 400 business

and community leaders. "It was a riveting presentation and the subject matter was quite alarming, frankly," said Alex Plechash, Chapter President. "We are under attack every day, and we don't seem to be doing enough to prepare for future cyber warfare."

The Chapter sponsored the President's Reception following the luncheon where Stavridis signed copies of his most recent book, [The Accidental Admiral](#).



Alumni attending included: David Bruns, '88, Micheal Seeber '93, John Closs '71, Neil

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(cont.) Calling All Non-Members!

that right now by clicking [here](#)?

There is a lot of value in maintaining a current membership in our Chapter.

Preferred Pricing. All Chapter events have a non-member surcharge, so you will normally save \$5/event.

Alumni in Transition. Membership dues helped develop the [Tri-Service Academy Employment Hub](#) to assist local

alumni in job transition.

Alumni Events. We can support bigger and better events with more members. It's just math! Chapter members receive priority with limited-seating events.

Chapter On-Line Directory Access. Only Chapter members have access to the database of over 500 area alumni.

Blue & Gold Program & Parent's Association. Membership dues provide assistance to these groups, which are essential to USNA recruiting.

Classified Directory. Only Chapter members can list their business on the website.

So, when you meet a classmate or USNA Alum, please encourage them to join. We thank you in advance for your assistance!

"Members are the life-blood of our Chapter; we cannot support the Academy, the Association, and Alumni without them."

Robert D. Cabana ('71) Event

[Robert Cabana](#) '71 is the current (10th) Director of the John F. Kennedy Space Center. In his current role, Cabana manages all NASA facilities and activities at the spaceport, including the team of civil service and contractor employees who operate and support numerous space programs and projects.

Cabana returned home to Minneapolis on April 22nd to participate in a number of events, including the Founding Flyers

reception for AirSpaceMN held at the Swedish Institute. This event, which spanned two days and was co-hosted by the Upper Midwest Chapter, honored Robert Gilruth, a space pioneer who also hailed from Minnesota.

Cabana highlighted the many changes made at the spaceport over the past few years, and current projects with future completion dates. He used a film, as well, to underscore the

Center's international im-

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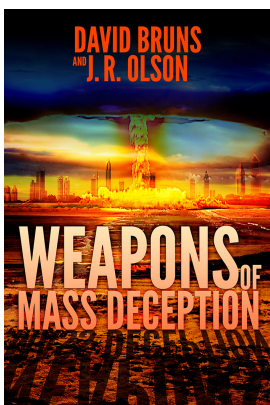


Alumni in the Spotlight

This issue highlights two local alumni who, as it turns out, joined forces to write a novel.

JR Olson ('90) and David Bruns ('88) have co-authored a military thriller entitled, **WEAPONS OF MASS DECEPTION**, a story of modern-day nuclear terrorism that could be ripped from today's headlines. Bruns and Olson, both Twin Cities residents, even set some of the major scenes in Minneapolis.

The co-authors ran a successful Kickstarter campaign to publish



the book, released in late May.

Based on the premise that Saddam Hussein really did possess nuclear weapons--which he smuggled into Iran before the 2003 US invasion of Iraq--their story weaves historical fact and technical accuracy about military operations into an intriguing tale.

Bruns, a former US Navy submarine officer and corporate executive with a science fiction series to his name, provided much of the writing, publishing, and marketing expertise to their creative joint venture. Olson's 25-year career as a naval intelligence officer specializing in human intel or HUMINT, took him to war zones in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf, as well as a stint as the US Naval Attaché to Finland. His experiences helped to build the plot for *Weapons of Mass Deception* and ensured technical realism in their storytelling.

Bob Mayer, West Point graduate, former Green Beret, and New York Times bestselling



JR Olson & David Bruns

author, states: "These two Navy veterans have put together a ripping yarn about modern-day nuclear terrorism. I was hooked from the very first page."

Both Bruns and Olson are graduates of the United States Naval Academy and the idea for their partnership grew out of an April 2014 speaking engagement to the Minnesota chapter of the Naval Academy Parent's Association where they were invited to talk about their careers. At the conclusion of their respective stories, a member of the audience suggested the two collaborate on a novel. The rest is history!

WMD is now available in print and ebook at Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.

"Iranian nuclear program, rogue intelligence operatives, Navy SEALs – all with a Minnesota touch."

Class Reps Needed!

The Upper Midwest Chapter is now accepting volunteers for [Class Representatives](#). Each Class Rep receives one free ticket to the Army-Navy party each year, but that's not the reason you would step-up.

The Class Rep position will prove to be the cornerstone for building, and maintaining membership, which in turn strengthens our Chapter.

Serving as a Class Rep is a great way to stay connected with your local area classmates by encouraging their support of our Chapter as well as by keeping folks up to speed on Chapter events.

Each Class Rep volunteer will be provided with a list of his/her classmates in the Chapter. Your primary duties would include contacting your classmates on the list and confirm-

ing its accuracy and then each December to allow the VP of Membership to update the Chapter's database. It's critical for us to know who's leaving the area but, even more importantly, who's arriving! The Chapter can be of great value to alumni new to our area, so Class Reps play an important role in helping the Chapter meet its mission. Please contact [Chris Bentley](#) to volunteer.



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Chapter President
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(cont.) Admiral James Stavridis ('76) Event

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Tollefsrud '75, Craig Benson '91, Jerry Witowski '69, Alex Plechash '75, ADM Stavridis '76, Chris Bentley '79, John Griffith '61, Jeff Steiner '78, Bob Christensen '81, Dave Lancaster '80, Jon Olson '90, Chip Sharratt '74, Mark Salmen '73, Peter Nickitas '82.



(cont.) Robert Cabana ('71) Event



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portance. A veteran of four spaceflights, Cabana has logged 38 days in space, serving as the pilot on STS-41 and STS-53 and mission commander on STS-65 and STS-88. His fourth flight was the first assembly mission of the International Space Station in December of 1998. Perhaps one of the highlights of the night were a couple of his "close-call" sea stories while assembling the International Space Station. In September 2000, Cabana retired as a colonel from the Marine Corps.

Alumni attending included (from left to right) Mark Salmen '74, Ken Liss '81, Alex Plechash '75, Bob Cabana '71, Craig Benson '91, Ray Witter '64, John Langford '52, Al Erdelen '67, Chris Bentley '79, Jon Olson '90, and John Closs '71.

1st Ever Alumni Family & Friends Picnic

What's better than a summer picnic? A really big picnic with family and friends, live music, cold beer and pop, and the whole thing catered by Famous Dave's!

Join alumni and their families on **Saturday, June 20th** for our first-ever Alumni Picnic. We kick things off at 1100 and will roll to about 1600. Come for a visit or stay all day!

Our [1st-Ever Alumni Family & Friends Picnic](#) is more than just a picnic. Says Chris Bentley who is spearheading the event, "It's a turning point. It's a new era of coordination, cooperation, and support among alumni and, more importantly, our extended community. This larger community includes the USNA Parent's Association of MN (and the other Parent

Associations in the other states within the Upper Midwest Chapter), the Blue & Gold organization within our Chapter boundaries, Navy League Twin Cities Council, the Sea Cadets, NOSC, and other ancillary organizations. This picnic is a springboard for the folks in



these organizations to meet and mingle, to get to know one another, and to begin forming relationships that will strengthen our community."

Here's the best part: it's FREE. There is absolutely no cost to attend, but if you'd like to bring

an appetizer or a dessert to share that would be great. It is still necessary to register to help the Chapter order enough food. "We don't want anybody going hungry," says Bentley. "Famous Dave's has assured me there will be plenty of BBQ chicken and pork, baked beans and potato salad, and I'll make sure we have plenty of ice cold beer on hand."

The picnic is at beautiful Lake Ann Park in Chanhasen at the Klingelutz Pavilion.

Co-authors JR Olson and David Bruns will be on hand to sign copies of their new military thriller, Weapons of Mass Deception. "We expect representation from AirSpaceMN, Navy League, and the Parent's Association, so it should be a great day for our Alumni Picnic."