

David Christian Kehl

Died: February 9, 2013

Dave died in Napa, California, on Saturday, February 9, 2013, after a period of declining health. He was 73 years old.

Born in Watertown, New York, Dave grew up on Cutts Island, Kittery Point, Maine, northeast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. His high school years were divided between two years at nearby R.W. Traip Academy in Kittery, and two years at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, about 20 miles away from his home.

At Exeter, Dave was the class vice-president, in the glee club, and on the debating and track teams. He also rowed crew. He graduated in 1957.

At Dartmouth, Dave majored in history and was a member of Theta Delta Chi. He rowed crew all four years, and was its captain his freshman year. He also sang in the glee club his first year. He was in the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (N.R.O.T.C.) all four years. (Dave's father, George W. Kehl, was a retired Navy Captain.)

Upon graduating in 1961, Dave was commissioned in the U.S. Navy, married shortly thereafter, attended submarine school in New London, Connecticut, and then left for a six-month cruise with the Navy. Within a week of his return, he wrote in our 25th reunion yearbook, he became a father.

For both our 25th and 50th reunions, Dave wrote about his eight years in the Navy during the sixties, most of it spent in submarines. Those were the years of our greatest involvement in the War in Vietnam.

He commented about his duty experiences during those years. "Time at sea increased significantly," he recalled when he wrote in 1986 for our 25th reunion. "The Navy became less attractive from a career standpoint, a family standpoint, and as a result of my growing feeling that we as a country needed to escalate the war or get out."

He harkened back to his Navy years again when writing for our 50th reunion. His submarine duties over the years, he said, included his involvement in "mapping the bottom of the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the Soviet Union."

About another later stint in Asian waters, Dave wrote that the submarine on which he was stationed lurked at "the bottom of a Soviet harbor for half a summer to observe a submarine missile launch, that was duly recorded on TV tape, after which we escaped intact." This was "not a small feat" he wrote, considering that the submarine on which he was stationed was a conventional submarine, and had to leave the harbor and "go outside the three-mile limit to charge batteries every night, and sneak back into the harbor early each morning."

Sea duty ended for Dave as a result of a family emergency shortly after this incident. He was helicoptered from his submarine in the Tonkin Gulf to an aircraft carrier, then taken to the Philippines, then flown back to Kittery Point to attend the death of his mother, who passed away the night he arrived home.

He never returned to his submarine, spending the next two years as a submarine instructor in San Diego. In December 1969, Dave was selected for promotion to Lieutenant Commander, but chose instead to resign from the Navy. In January 1970, he accepted a job with Ross Perot's Electronic Data Systems (EDS), and at the time of our 25th reunion in 1986 was working with that company in San Francisco and living in San Rafael.

Except for a brush with cancer in about 1984, he wrote for our 25th reunion in 1986, he had been blessed with good health, had stopped smoking in the early 1980's, battled weight gain, and enjoyed racquet ball, tennis, sailing, gardening, and water and snow skiing.

By the time of our 50th reunion in 2011, Dave had been long retired from EDS after 28 years with the company, and had moved to the Napa Valley. After a respite of two years there, he had begun working with Groth Winery in about 2000. He and his wife Bunny divorced, "a tragic, earthshaking time that was strictly my fault. I will never get over it but have had to live with it."

He worked at the winery for eight years, until "declining health led to his final retirement," said his obituary in the online newspaper (seacoastonline.com) for Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Dave concluded his reflection for our 50th reunion with these words. "Two thoughts I have after 71 years. First, let old politicians also fight the wars they start, and two, if you ever find the girl of your dreams, never, ever, let her go."

Dave had four children: Jean, Christian, Cynthia, and Jonathan. Six of his relatives (including his son Jonathan) attended Dartmouth.