

I met Brian Estes my freshman year at UMaine and we quickly became friends. Bright fellow that he was, Brian had skipped a year of schooling and was thus one of the youngest members of our class. Young though he was, he impressed me as unusually mature, very self-reliant, and someone you could count on unconditionally. I later came to appreciate that Brian had known considerable adversity at a very young age, which certainly was crucial in building his character.

His father died when he was only one year old and his mother brought him from upstate New York to East Millinocket, Maine. She had to work as a cleaner and caregiver at local farms simply to put food on the table, and Brian had to contribute too – and contribute significantly he did. He worked throughout his years of schooling in demanding jobs. Case in point: when 14 years old he went to work for a hardware store and began driving a flatbed cement truck, on the 270-mile round trip between East Millinocket and Thomaston, ME., returning heavy laden with bags of cement. Again, he was just 14 years old. Fortunately, the town policeman, an Andy Griffith-like character, looked the other way. Brian never had an option to be anything other than mature and self-reliant. He also lost his mother while a student at UMaine.

Brian was a very good student, who quickly settled on civil engineering, distinguished himself in that program and, among many things, became president of the student chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). He and his close friend, Fred Stoddard, both decided to seek commissions in the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps (CEC), and in December 1962, in his senior year at UMaine, he enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

Having been raised as an only child and having worked throughout his school years, Brian valued opportunities to develop close friends at UMaine and especially in his fraternity,

Sigma Phi Epsilon. The brothers he found there meant a great deal to him. Brian actually seemed to make other people better. As a close friend and a fraternity brother, I learned from him and was a better person for it.

But Brian's most important relationship began in the fourth grade when he met Roberta Montgomery. They became close friends in high school and began dating during his sophomore year at UMaine. From that point on neither of them had any doubts. When Brian had his diploma in hand, they waited no longer and were married seven days after graduation, shortly before he reported for active duty.

Brian served for over 30 years in the Navy Civil Engineer Corps. After being commissioned as an ensign in November 1963, he served in positions of steadily increasing responsibility in the CEC in Point Hueneme, CA; Great Lakes, IL; and Washington Navy Yard, DC; before going to Vietnam in 1967 with the Seabees. In early 1968, Lt. Estes was Battalion Nine Assistant Operations Officer and Charlie Company Commander during the Tet Offensive. The company was deployed to an isolated area 30 miles north of Danang to establish a quarry and rock-crushing facility, where they came under repeated Viet Cong mortar and sniper fire, killing six Seabees. He was awarded a Combat Action Ribbon.

After returning to the U.S., Brian earned an M.S. in civil engineering from the University of Illinois. Brian and Roberta, with their children, Julie and Shawn, traveled the world. He next served in Puerto Rico, Florida, Guam (twice - they loved it there), Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Spain.

Brian then embarked on the project in which he took the greatest pride. Captain Estes was assigned as Officer in Charge of Construction Trident, Kings Bay, GA. That is, he led construction of the home base of Trident missile submarines in the Atlantic Ocean, a project

of the greatest importance to our national security. It was the largest peacetime construction program ever undertaken by the U.S. Navy.

Brian was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1991 and one year later, he assumed command of the Pacific Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems command in Hawaii. That somehow seemed a particularly fitting culmination to his naval career. Brian was born on December 6, 1941, the day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor — and his final posting was Pearl Harbor with responsibility for construction in the Pacific region.

Brian had a wonderful, droll, tongue-in-cheek, and thoroughly irreverent sense of humor — so he loved to tell Maine stories in an impeccable Maine accent. At his Navy retirement dinner, Admiral Estes, by then well-known for his Maine stories, told the Tim Sample story about excessively flatulent fishermen in Moody's Diner. I was told that Estes embellished the tale with salty additional details and it brought the house down, including the band, which did not have the breath to play for several minutes.

Among Brian's numerous service awards, in addition to the Combat Action Ribbon, were two Legion of Merit Awards, four Meritorious Service Medals, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, and several Unit awards.

After retiring from active-duty military service, Brian applied his knowledge at the Hanford nuclear project site in Richland, WA. He served on the National Research Council of the National Science Foundation, on several committees of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and in numerous community service organizations. Brian passed away on January 26, 2022 of pancreatic cancer.