

Buddy Line



Newsletter of Fraternal Order of Underwater Swim School, Key West, Florida

May 2005

President's Corner by Don Stone

A Return To Our Roots

Time flies! Reunion 2006 is less than a year away and we are already busy checking facilities and planning events. We hope you will start making plans for a trip to Key West and be part of a great reunion May 11 to 14, 2006. Be there!

CMC Mike Driscoll, who together with Pappy Hewitt set up our first reunion in 1998, is also working on Reunion 2006. He was able to get 40 rooms blocked for us at the CBQ/BOQ. Located at the NAS Trumbo Point Annex, it is centrally located in Key West. Mike is still on active duty as the Command Master Chief in Japan. He is retiring shortly and will be returning to Key West. Bernie Campoli has also been busy talking with friends in Special Forces to set up a visit and cookout with the guys at their Swimmers School on Fleming Key.

Mike, Bernie, Art and I are coordinating efforts and ideas to give our members a truly memorable reunion and we would like some input from the membership for scheduling the icebreaker.

1. The reunion will officially begin on Thursday, May 11. The CBQ rooms are blocked from Thursday night through Sunday night for those who can be there that long.
2. We are planning a cookout Friday afternoon with Special Forces Swim School.
3. Saturday will have the business meeting in the morning and the banquet in the evening.
4. QUESTION: Would you arrive in time to participate in an ice breaker Thursday evening, or would you prefer the ice breaker on Friday evening? If the majority prefer Friday, we will have a relaxed get-together Thursday evening for those who have arrived.

IMPORTANT – WE NEED YOUR INPUT ASAP

We ask you to cast your vote by phone at 561-391-6727, or by email at buddyline@uwss.org, or by snail mail at 1440 SW 5th Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33432



1998 Reunion in Key West



Najaf Chronicles

By Rick LaRoche

UWSS member, Rick LaRoche, who works for the US State Department as Action Officer for Najaf, continues to share short narratives of his life and feelings as he carries out his sometimes dangerous duties in Iraq.

3/27/2004 As our C-130 approached Baghdad we got ready for a "combat approach," which is basically a series of evasive maneuvers designed to make it hard for the bad guys to shoot down the plane. The plane began a series of turns and dives that made a few people reach for their air-sickness bags and fill them up. As we landed, I realized that despite my many previous flights on C-130s, this was my first landing! All the other times, I parachuted from the aircraft.

At the Baghdad airport at Camp whatever it was called, we had to sit and wait for a few more hours until an armored convoy could be put together. Finally, geared up in helmets and body armor (issued to us in Kuwait and worn for the flight up to Baghdad) we set off in a large armored vehicle escorted by several highly armed Humvees to negotiate what is largely recognized as the most "dangerous stretch of highway in Baghdad." About 45 minutes later, we entered the Green Zone and finally reached the Embassy, which used to be Saddam's primary palace. What a place! This was a truly magnificent building with (Continued on page 3)

UWSS LOGO ITEMS

The following logo items are available, so send in your orders and they will be shipped pronto. Prices include shipping. Availability is subject to change. We can obtain other items if there are enough requests.

White Beefy-T shirts..... 13.00 ea, 2 for 23.00
Logo front and back (pocket or no pocket – your choice)
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL
Childs 6/8, 10/12 (no pocket)

Ash gray Beefy-T shirts..... 14.00 ea, 2 for 25.00
Large logo on back, small logo on pocket
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL
Childs 14/16 (no pocket)

White Polo shirt 18.00 ea, 2 for 33.00
Small logo on pocket, 50/50 cotton/poly
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL

Ash Polo shirt 19.00 ea, 2 for 35.00
Small logo on pocket, 50/50 cotton/poly
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL

Coffee mug with logo 12.00 ea
Cap – natural with logo 12.00 ea
8.00 ea if ordered with shirt

UWSS logo decal
Transparent background 2.00 ea
White background 2.00 ea

UWSS logo lapel/tie pin 4.00 ea

UWSS plaques
Bright brass logo on blue 45.00 ea
Standard brass logo on blue 25.00 ea
Plaque price reduced \$5.00 if ordered with shirt.

**Send payment with order to Don Stone,
1440 SW 5th Ave
Boca Raton, FL 33432**

**Photos of all logo gear items
are on the web site!
www.uwss.org**

Secretary/Treasurer's Report

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Membership- May 2005 | |
| | 153 regular members |
| | 11 paid associate members |
| Account Balance February 2005 | 4425.62 |
| Dues | 150.00 |
| Logo item sales | 200.59 |
| Account Balance May 2005 | 4776.21 |

FO/UWSS Mission

The Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School was formed in order to keep lines of communication open between personnel of the armed forces who were staff or students at the Navy Underwater Swimmers School Key West, Florida. Associate membership is open to family, friends, and others who share an interest in the goals and activities of FO/UWSS. Associate members do not have voting privileges, but are encouraged to participate in all other activities..

One of the most important reasons for our existence as an organized group is to plan for and participate in biannual reunions, which will be held at various locations to be selected by members' votes.

FO/UWSS Officers

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| President | Don Stone |
| Vice President..... | A. Dee Clark |
| Secretary/Treasurer | Roger Lynch |

The Buddy Line newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. Buddy Line editors are Don and Art Stone.

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phone: (561) 391-6727 fax: (509) 472-6492

WEBSITE: www.uwss.org

Buddy Line by email

If you use email you may prefer receiving the email version of the Buddy Line newsletter. It is delivered to your inbox as a .pdf file for Adobe Acrobat Reader.

The benefits to you are faster delivery and **color** photos (when originals are color).

The benefits to the FO/UWSS are the savings on printing and postage for the Buddy Line mailout.

To receive the Buddy Line by email, send your request to buddyline@uwss.org.

Najaf Chronicles – continued from page 1

incredibly stunning architecture. I was assigned to Tent #1 and pointed in the direction of the shower trailer and bathrooms. I only spent 2 days in Baghdad but did eventually get to shower and eat in the palace.

When the word arrived that I was to head south, things had flared up badly in Najaf, so I was told we would stop in Hillah, about 1 hr north of Najaf and wait for better conditions. Again, on with helmet and body armor and into an armored SUV for a 3-car convoy on the main route south (ironically called route Tampa!). I was accompanied by 8 Blackwater security highly armed "shooters," as many ambushes and kidnappings had taken place along this route. All of these guys are former SEALs and looked as if they had stepped out of a Rambo movie. Pretty comforting for me though. Our 3-car motorcade (I was in the middle car) traveled at 100 mpg the entire time, weaving like a snake from one lane to the next every 20-30 seconds the entire time. The cars were no more than 2 meters apart throughout the trip. Did I mention that these guys really know how to drive?

After a couple of hours, we rolled into the "Hotel California" in Hillah, where I have been hunkered down waiting for the situation to get better in Najaf. The Hotel California (not its real name) is a funky place populated by funky people from all over the world. Believe me when I say that there are a lot of people from other countries, which publicly state that they don't support war but send people nonetheless. There are all kinds of security teams, support groups, bodyguards, OGAs (Other "Government Agencies") and even a few State Department people.

This is the closest to civilization I will get, except for my

R&Rs during the year I am here. There's a great gym, a good dining facility and a "sports bar" on the third floor. Great to sit around and swap war stories in. Iraq seems to attract a special type of person - even the women here have that "Angelina Jolie/Laura Croft" look about them (not nearly as cute, of course). Everyone carries a weapon 24 hrs a day, so I rushed to get my Glock and have spent some time practicing on the small range here.

Yesterday, I went for a run around the perimeter of the compound (about 1 km) at 1700 before hitting the gym. The temperature was "only" 114 at the time, so it felt kind of "nippy." After eating, everyone gathered in the Sports Bar to watch the US women capture the gold in soccer. We are all a little "tired" today. Just got the word that they are trying to get a chopper to take me the final 60 Km to Najaf tomorrow. If they can't, we will have to "mount up" and convoy down again. At least this time, I will have my own firepower. This is really a different world - about as far away from the cocktail circuit and a Diplomat recruiting ad as you can get. We wear jeans and t-shirts out here in the provinces and basically look like a gang of "bikers." These people and diplomats are "my kind of people."

Last night at sunset I climbed to the top of the hotel and saw some large mounds a few miles off in the distance. I asked one of the Iraqi translators what they were and he said they were the last of the original hills/mounds (not sure of his translation) of Babylon. Saddam had been in the process of destroying them so that each of his now-deceased sons could have his own palace on top of them. Thank God someone stopped him and preserved these sites for future generations of Iraqis. 🗿

The material in the Najaf Chronicles is not for public use and may not be re-printed or used in any other context.

Class Photo
From
Bill Garnett



F Row: SMITH, SUTHERLAND, JONES, MCQUEEN, WARTA, NEIL
 2 Row: NASWORTHY, EDWARDS, ROWELL, GARNETT, HENTZ, PORTER, PANAS, ALBOWICH.
 3 Row: GARRETT, GIBSON, GRANT, MANDELKORN, WARREN, DERIAS, TAMOSUNAS, JOHNSON, KOCKEY, FAUTH, INSTURCTOR NEALY.
 4 Row: BURKLEY, VANHOY, REMLEY WASCOVISH, FENTON, TIMONE, NORRIS, ROSSI, FRECH, LE'MOYNE, MATHIS, BURKLEY.



EOD CLASS #5-59, LEWIS, PH1, 22 JUNE - 24 JULY 1959:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. WO BERNARD DIGGS | 10. GSGT SCAUBACH USMC |
| 2. THOMAS, BM2 | 11. BEARD, BM2 |
| 3. JACK ELLEDGE, EN2 | 12. PVT. FLETCHER, USMC |
| 4. HERNDON, D. LT.USMC | 13. PETE WILSON |
| 5. EDWARDS, G. 1LT. USMC | 14. SN LONG |
| 6. BRAZELL, PH2 USCG | 15. RHIEL, BM3 |
| 7. SGT GUERTMAN USMC | 16. PVT. COLLINS USMC |
| 8. LEWIS, PH1 | 17. MORRIS, PR2 |
| 9. SWALES, BM2 | |

Recollections of a UWSS Student

By Bernie Diggs

As my class picture shows, I was a skinny 31 year old WO-1, and could barely swim when I arrived at UWSS in June 1959. I had been around BM1 "FINS" FOLEY (UDT/EOD) and an EOD type, one MN1 MASON on the USS Bennington for at least a year. When I look back on it FOLEY and MASON must have talked me into going to UWSS and EOD School.

At UWSS school I was the oldest except for a GSGT SCAUBACH, USMC, who I believe was 34. He was a Marine Corps Recon type, as were all the Marines there, and a tough bird in a quiet sort of way. Shortly before the school, Gunny Scaubach had made a parachute jump where the wind came up unexpectedly causing him to land in a very rough area and badly injuring (open wound) his leg. He should have been somewhere else recovering, but didn't know the word "quit" existed.

When I arrived, about five days before the class was to convene, the XO, LCDR HAMILTON paired me with a big strapping Ensign. I can't remember his name, but he was to be in the same class and then go to EOD School with me. LCDR HAMILTON said to start PT and running right away or I might not make it to graduation. The instructors came to this conclusion after watching me on a short swim. The Ensign really helped me, but, unfortunately, he had ruptured his eardrum previously and was dropped by the doctor's order before the class started.

Except for the MARINES, PH2 BRAZELL, USCG and

PETE WILSON, all the Navy types were probably 2nd Class Divers or headed that way. I was the only one going to EOD School. Pete Wilson (civilian) was my swim buddy. I always thought he was employed at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, but no one there now remembers him. He came to UWSS with another civilian from the same place, MIKE RUGGERIO who stayed the course until we had our first night swim. The fluorescent plankton attacked him and he went off the deep end a bit thinking they were sea nettles or worse, so the instructors got him out of the water and into a boat. I'm sure he thought they would sting him. The next day he packed his bag and left for points north.

RUDY ENDERS was the Training Officer. I recall he could swim like a fish, just undulating his body in the water, (Look Ma, no arms!). They told the story that he reached into a coral head for a grouper and a moray eel tried to make lunch out of his hand/arm. TAPPY - a big huge barreled-chested dude. They said he could sit and hold his breath until he lost consciousness. The corpsman, HMC DON STONE, at UWSS was into collecting saltwater fish. He had a large tank with all types of pretty ones in it.

JIM HAZELWOOD was there and had something to do with pool training and a water polo team. Years later as a rep from NAVEODTECHCTR, I saw him with DAVE SCHIABLE and a UDT team from Little Creek sinking a ship in the Chesapeake Bay for a bombing target. They were testing various shape charges, their effect on ship hulls and rudders. NOL White Oak was involved.

PH1 LEWIS (class proctor) wasn't UDT, so we had a tall,
(Continued on page 5)

Recollections of a UWSS Student *(continued)*

slender, dark hair UDT type put us through PT out on the field and the morning runs. There may have been other instructors involved for PT at various times. More runs in the surf along with push-ups to get you really wet and clothes full of sand. He could run backwards better than the class could go forward! Then, there was always the fun of going back to pick up those who lagged back on the runs; there was no such thing as a person dropping out. Those one or two runs through the town of Key West were great; we always wanted to do more of them. And, who can forget the instructors yanking off your mask in the pool or pulling out mouthpieces!

On a compass swim, Pete Wilson lost one swim fin when we first hit the water. We didn't want to make the swim up on Saturday, which was required if we came to the surface. I motioned for him to swim with one fin, I had the compass and we headed for the beach. I pulled him every bit of the way; of course he was helping as much as possible. In the mean time, the instructors were in a panic because a fin was on the surface and they didn't know where it came from. They thought one swim pair should be on the surface or someone was in trouble on the bottom. Pete and I were no where near the fin of course, but instead stroking for the beach with everyone else. If I recall right, we placed pretty well in the group in spite of the lost fin.

I know we got hell from PH1 Lewis and all of the instructors involved and it was up to see the XO. There was talk of dropping us back to the next class, making us do the swim over or kicking us out. Maybe it was all to put the fear of God in us, which they did. Finally, the next day we found out they would let it pass. PH1 Lewis said any more dumb tricks and we were history. Its not nice when you think you're on thin ice.

During the early weeks of the course I asked myself a

few times why I was there, instead of some place where life was a lot easier. I watched other young, strong looking sailors quit and leave. Ones that looked like the course should have been a cake walk for them. I finally decided the whole thing was attitude; they just lacked the b---s to stick it out. Never could do push-ups though, so I stayed out of trouble to keep the instructors from saying, "Drop and give me 25".

We had the usual trip in the LCU out to a reef, Sand Key. I believe it was the same day we were required to free dive down to the anchor/bottom and bring up a handful of sand, don't remember the depth. I do remember barracudas giving us the once over during that day.

I still recall the thrill of being in a line of swimmers in the water and that sharked-tooth LCPR with the rubber boat alongside bearing down on you at full bore. Lord, you just knew it was going to run you over! It sure was a quick way to get everyone out of the pool! It felt so exciting, I wanted to do it again, but never got the chance.

Then there was that big length of hawser that you and your swim buddy received if you made a mistake. Pete and I stayed away from that; it was one hell of a buddy line!

We had two foreign navy officers in the class for a while. I want to say they were from Thailand, if not, at least from that part of the world. Word was the older one couldn't hack it and so they both left, in the middle of the night so to speak. Some comment about a loss of face and he would be in trouble when he returned home.

All said and done, the course was great and I was in the best shape of my life at the end of it. I also ended up as one of the top five graduates of the class; in fact I was number five. 🐢



First Special Operations Tech Class
for Corpsmen 1968
Photo from Manny Perez (in Marine uniform)



Dow Byers conducting tour of the lung locker
Nice work if you can get it

Membership Application

Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School

Full Name: _____

Wife's Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Branch of Service: _____ Dates of Service: _____

Dates & Class # at UWSS: _____ or Associate Membership: _____

Send copy of class picture if you have one. 2 Year Membership \$25.00

Make check to Roger Lynch, Treasurer and mail to FO/UWSS, 1440 SW 5th Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33432

The Way It Was

In this photo from 1962, Dow Byers is mustering a class for a scuba swim. Notice the huge heavy twin aluminum 90's on their backs. Today it might be hard enough for one of them to pick that rig up, let alone carry it a half mile down to the pier.



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