

Buddy Line



Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School, Key West, Florida

CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS



Hawk Missiles in Key West - 1962

**Fraternal Order of
Underwater Swimmers
School Officers**



PRESIDENT:

Dave Byers

dabyers@uwss.org
386-295-9050

VICE PRESIDENT:

Dave Gholson

goatlocker@msn.com
(270) 945-0719

**SECRETARY/
TREASURER:**

Ken Recoy

kenrecoy@aol.com
(620) 305-9900
25810 East 330 Road
Chelsea, OK 74016-5262

*The BuddyLine newsletter
is published quarterly in
February, May, August & November.*

EDITORS:

Ray Hogle

Raelyn Webster

buddyline@uwss.org
(385) 222-9824
PO Box 593
Provo, UT 84603

WEBSITE:

www.uwss.org

PRESIDENT'S CORNER:



by Dave Byers

I hope your summer has been full with family and friends. It was great to see those of you who were at the reunion in Key West back in May. The trip brought back a flood of fond memories of my wonder years. Both my wife Cheryl and my son Chris accompanied me. I got to show them where I went to school, Sigsbee Elementary (now a charter school), Horace O'Bryant Junior High, and Key West High Schools (Go Conchs!) and other points of interest. Sadly, the places I lived were torn down long ago.

Key West has had such a profound impact on me starting from the day we arrived. We just finished a coast-to-coast trip from San Diego with the last 100 miles down US 1 following an army convoy. I guess we really didn't think anything of it until we arrived at my parents' friends' house on Sigsbee Park where we'd stay until our housing opened up. It was Friday, September 15, 1962.

After some pleasantries, our hosts invited us to get back in the car and take a short ride to the other side of the island. In front of Key West International





Airport, Hawk missile batteries, barbed wire machine gun nests, and other military accouterments had been set up for what our friends said was to be a possible military action against Cuba and the Russians. We had entered into the preliminary buildup of what would become known as the Cuban missile crisis. Little did we know that within a few short weeks, the world would hold its breath in what could've easily become the next world war, this time with nuclear consequences in both directions. I was 10 years old.

What a start to what was to end up as a five-year shore duty assignment for my father! As a Navy family, you just didn't stay put that long – anywhere. Two years perhaps stretched to three and off you went to your next duty station.

By the way, they actually made a movie with the story line about a new Navy kid showing up just as the missile crisis is about to flare up. It's called "Matinee",

stars John Goodman, and actually has file footage of the missiles set up along the boulevard. It occurred to me that whoever wrote the story had to be there at that time and at that age. He would have been older than me but it turns out his younger brother was a classmate.

So right from the beginning, the Keys have a special place in my heart. A lot has changed there over the years but I still felt like it was a home for me. I can't say Cheryl felt the same way. In fact, she was rather disappointed because over the years of hearing my stories, she had a completely different mental picture of what Key West would be like. To her, it was small (2 miles by 4 miles), hot, and it was an island – something she just doesn't like the idea of (and one of the reasons we haven't visited Hawaii yet).

Anyway, we have started planning for next reunion in 2020 and looking at other ideas to create value for the membership of the group. So stay tuned and stay well.

Dave

Tell Us Your Story!

*You got your orders for UWSS, Naval Station,
Key West, Florida.*

*How did you get there? Boat? Plane? Car? Thumb?
What were your first impressions as you reported for duty?*

Send them to buddyline@uwss.org



from Tom Large

I enjoyed the night swims and have a clear memory of them. What stands out in my mind to me most was the phosphorus in the water. Being in training for para rescue was a welcome challenge every step of the way of my training weather in key west or with the Rangers in DeLona Georgia it was truly an Adventure training with the best of the best and getting paid for it. Serving my country in Waze only if you would experience and achieve the final glory of completing what we call superman school. Having instructors who knew the ropes and were melted by the fires of World War II and Korea. It was an honor to be in the presence such great men. Realizing that you were part of great brotherhood that would last into waning days of your life.

from Robert Shouse Jr

Probably the coolest adventure was my first night dive. I was very apprehensive.. after all there were big things in the water that could eat me! Dad was very reassuring, telling me that big things give off phosphorescence... and I would be able to see it coming at me! Well, that sure made me feel better, NOT! But I survived and still love night diving to this day.

from Bernie Diggs

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.

Night Swims?

Don't recall such . . . seems a bit risky. What did we use for light to keep from losing guys?

*Mike Armstrong, Sgt
Force Recon Co USMC*

A small buoy with a survival light on each buddy line is what I recall.

*Robert J. "Bob" Bureker
CWO USN Ret.*



*phytoplankton
photo by Adam Plezer*



from Larry Hill

What I vividly remember was another night navigation open-ocean swim test. One of our ex-SEAL instructors grinned and reminded our boat on the way out of the harbor, that “sharks like to troll the coast for dinner at night.” I was uptight as my buddy and I left the boat and dropped into sea. We took a long careful surface compass reading in hope that it would take us to the truck headlights on the beach a very long way off. Nodding each other we dove for the bottom.

It was a full moon/no cloud night and the water seemed warm but the dim light was very eerie. The moonlight filtered to the sea floor below us and gave rippling shadows. We leveled off, took a compass reading and struck off into the shadows.

Onward for what seemed like endless minutes. On this evolution the challenge was to swim (1,000yds?) to the surf... emerging within a set distance of the truck lights. I don't remember the current being a factor. I was relieved that each

team trailed a line with a small flashlight bobbing on the surface for tracking. You weren't allowed to come to the surface to check your progress. You had to rely totally on your compass.

While the ocean floor was gradually rising we had no clue how close we were or how accurate we were. As doubts began to turn into “...Crap, something must be wrong. This is taking too long. And I'm about out of steam!...”

Suddenly, two dark shadows passed toward us and then over us! SHARKS?!!!

NOPE. Another student team “booking it.... I mean moving!!!” I recognized them but then. . . they were GONE! And gone swimming strongly in the direction of the black open ocean!

I thought, they must have been too close to the surface to see the ocean floor and the fact that it was dropping away and moon beams were disappearing into the deep.

My swim mate looked down our 6' buddyline at me and shook his head in disbelief. I checked the compass

Sharks

I especially remember some of the night swims with Frank Marshall he did not like that training and always wondered if those flashes in the dark were from several small fish or one really big one!

*Robert J. “Bob” Bureker
CWO USN Ret.*

Wrong Way

On a Night Scuba Swim Jack and his swim buddy took a 180 wrong compass heading as soon as they left the boat...A boat stayed with them as they headed for Cuba.. They swam til they ran out of air....When they came up they were told to turn around and swim all the way back to the beach with tanks on the surface....He wouldn't quit..That wasn't his style We graduated together...

*from “Farewell Jack Bennett”
BuddyLine 0908*



bearing again and pointed to the route it read. He gave me a thumbs up and we started off again. Finally, we surfaced in the light surf maybe 30 yards from the truck lights. Exhausted we stood and walked toward dry sand talking about 'what the hell was up with those guys'?!!!

I remember turning and looking out to sea. The LCPR landing craft instructors had spotted them and were hauling seaward to reel them in.

The lesson: trust your compass, watch for clues, finally 'Love many, trust few. Always paddle your own canoe!' (Burma Shave).

The whole class laughed about that pair, and their apparent desire to swim to Vietnam. They joined in the laughter all the way through training and ultimately through our very proud "SCUBA Diver Qualified" Graduation day at Key West's U.S. Navy Under Water Swimmer's School.

from August 2003 BuddyLine

Portuguese Man-O-War jellyfish were a hazard to the surface swimmer and even hit scuba divers when surfacing. They could be avoided if you looked where you were going, but at night in choppy conditions almost impossible to avoid. Their

stings caused intense pain and sometimes a shock-like condition that required quick medical intervention. This unfortunate student, his swim buddy, and several others were stung during a one mile night surface swim. As you can see in the photograph, many Man-O-War tentacles were wrapped around his arm and body.



His rescuers were also stung getting him out of the water.

from Pete Wells (class 5/61)

I can remember a 3-mile swim one night (you only got one re-surface to figure out where the hell you were) when a foreign student, from South America as I recall, came up with a Portuguese man-o' war on top of his head. Having

re-surfaced at the same time (or close to it), I'd never seen a UWSS student come out of the water up to his waist!

from Guy Dove:

When I arrived at swim school in late April or early May in 1962, I had just graduated from OCS and was wearing my white uniform with the short sleeve shirt for the first time. A Marine LT (RECON) walked up to me and grabbed a button that was loose and ripped it off and handed it to me with a few nasty comments. I briefly consid-



ered smacking him but decided not to for two reasons. The first was that I would get to know the commanding officer very quickly win or lose. The second was that he was a big dude.

One month later, we had our first night swim. We were all gathered in a landing craft about a mile offshore. The front was opened and we all prepared to jump in two by two with our buddy with a line attached with a light. Right in front of me was the offending Marine, so I turned off his air just before he and his buddy got the nod to jump in. I followed with my buddy and swam to shore. The next morning I looked around when we as-

sembled to have my "gotcha" moment but he was not there. I asked a fellow student who informed me that the fellow had panicked and his buddy had to pop his vest. He was on his way back to Camp Lejeune.

I felt quite guilty that my prank had caused this reaction so I went over and told the chief what I had done. He looked at me and told me that he saw me do it. He went on to say that I would be diving for the next 3 years at a minimum and if I never jumped in with my air off it would be unusual. He said that he was a good Marine but not cut out for diving as you need someone watching your back.



*Do you have any memories of
nights swims at UWSS?*

Send them to buddyline@uwss.org

**JOHN G. SANDERSON**

*25 May 1952 to 24 October 2013
UWSS Class of 7106 of White Lake, MI*



Denford Stevens

DENFORD MILTON STEVENS

26 June 1938 to 8 March 2018

A native of Erwin, NC, he began his Military career in the U.S. Navy, and while there, he joined EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal). Denford was in the Navy for 8 years. He then went into the U.S. Army, as a marine engineer and went to Vietnam during the War. He stayed in the Army until he retired in 1978, as a CW3 Warrant Officer. Denford then went to work for Folger's Coffee and was there for 18 years until he retired in 1996.

by Ray Hoglund

Our mission statement says

"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 U.S. Naval Underwater Swimmers School Key West, Florida from 1954 to 1973."

As editors of the BuddyLine, we wonder how we can help the flow of communication. Would you share with us your thoughts on what we can do more of, what we can do less of, what we can start doing and what we can stop doing to improve communication to better fulfill our mission statement?

Send ideas to buddyline@uwss.org

2020 Reunion

We are looking for volunteers to help plan our next reunion. Please contact Ken at kenrecoy@aol.com or 620-305-9900 if you are interested in helping out.

WEBSITE:

by Bob Bureker



TREASURER'S REPORT:

by Ken Recoy

When you go to our www.uwss.org you should notice that the site shows <https://uwss.org/> in the browser address window "upper left part of your browser window". The "s" on the end of the "http" means that means we are a secure site.

What is an SSL site?

SSL Certificates provide secure, encrypted communications between a website and an internet browser. SSL stands for Secure Sockets Layer, the protocol which provides the encryption. SSL Certificates are typically installed on pages that require end-users to submit sensitive information over the internet like credit card details or passwords. Example pages include payment pages, online forms and login pages.

Be well and stay safe,
Robert J. "Bob" Bureker
CWO USN Ret.
Webmaster/Past President

www.uwss.org

MEMBERSHIP AUGUST 2018

Members in database = 278

Members in good standing = 221

TREASURER'S REPORT

Account Balance:

June 1, 2018 \$18,557.56

Dues Income + \$1,952.12

Label Fees Income + \$200.00

Logo Gear Sales Income + \$709.74

Other (Donations) Income + \$110.00

Reunion Expenses - \$488.52

Logo Gear Expenses - \$1,908.73

BuddyLine Expenses - \$76.08

Business Expenses - \$521.56

Account Balance:

August 31, 2018 \$18,534.53

We are working on a membership directory to share with you. If you don't want some or all of your contact information included please let Ken know at kenrecoy@aol.com or 620-305-9900.

Wonder if you are up to date on your dues? Contact Ken at kenrecoy@aol.com or 620-305-9900 and he will let you know.

UWSS LOGO ITEMS:



All prices include shipping.

Beefy-T t-shirt

\$25.00 each

white or ash gray, large logo back, small logo pocket
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL*

Long sleeved t-shirt

\$28.00 each

white or ash gray, large logo on back,
small logo on front (no pocket)
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL*

Polo shirt 50/50 cotton/poly

\$28.00 each

white or ash gray, small logo on pocket.
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL*

Pique polo all cotton

\$29.00 each

birch gray, embroidered logo left front (no pocket)
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL*

Blue denim shirt, short sleeves

\$38.00 each

embroidered logo above pocket
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL*

**All shirts size XXL add \$2.00 ea*

UWSS logo decal – transparent or white

\$3.00 each

UWSS commemorative coin

\$12.00 each

enameled brass, raised design,
1 5/8 inch diameter

UWSS all-service commemorative coin

\$15.00 each

enameled brass, raised design, 2 inch diameter

Key Chain with enameled logo medallion

\$10.00 each



Cap – natural with logo

\$20.00 each

Baseball cap – blue, embroidered logo

\$30.00 each

Cap \$3.00 less if ordered with shirt

Embroidered Patch

\$12.00 each

Make check to FO/UWSS

Send with order to Ken Recoy, Treasurer
25810 East 330 Road.
Chelsea, OK 74016-5262

Questions? e-mail: jhoule@me.com
or phone (352) 249-9140

*All logo items are pictured on the web site
www.uwss.org/LogoGear.html*



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 U.S. Naval Underwater Swimmers School Key West, Florida from 1954 to 1973.

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

Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School
Buddy Line Newsletter
25810 East 330 Road
Chelsea, OK 74016-5262
