

Buddy Line



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

February 2003



They'll swim here no more ...

(From the Key West Citizen – September 1973)

In a brief ceremony held Sept. 17 in front of the Underwater Swimmers School, Naval Station, the school was officially disestablished after nearly 20 years of continuous active service in Key West.

Lt. Cmdr. Richard Anderson, Commanding Officer of UWSS, spoke to his staff of officers and men stating "On this last day of the school, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank each of you, and to express my appreciation for your efforts this past year. It's the people that make the difference, and I feel both proud and fortunate to have had each one of you with me this past year"

The school has trained over 6000 divers during its many years in Key West. All branches of services of the United States plus those of allied countries and a great number of civilians have graduated from the training activity.

A message from Rear Adm. A. M. Sackett, Commander of the Technical Training Center, Memphis, Tennessee, congratulated the local group and stated, "Underwater Swimmers School has, through the years, consistently produced high caliber graduates. This was made possible because of the exceedingly high professionalism and diving expertise existent within the staff. The dedication and devotion to the task of training has been extremely gratifying"

At the close of the ceremony, Lt. Cmdr. Anderson handed the keys of the UWSS building to Capt. H. D. Murphree, Commanding Officer of the Naval Station which has acted as host activity to the school.

Capt. Murphree accepted the keys saying, "I accept these with a degree of sadness at the thought of losing such a fine activity. The Underwater Swimmers School has set an excellent record for itself during its many years here, a record it can be justly proud of."

Remembering the End of Underwater Swimmers School

By: Andy Anderson

In the Fall of 1972 the rumor that the Naval Base and the UWSS might be closing was circulating as I arrived in Key West to relieve Pat Badger as the CO. The next Monday, morning after the change of command, I was on the phone to the Naval Technical Training Center to find out what the official word was. The only thing they would say was that nothing was finalized and that nothing had been decided. So, we all hoped for the best and pressed on trying to make the UWSS the best school for dive training in the Navy. In hindsight, I think the decision had already been made, and they didn't want the information made public.

In the mean time the Navy had awarded a contract to build and erect a 50-foot training tower immediately behind the main building next to the re-compression chamber. We were all hoping that maybe the money the Navy put into the tower might change things for the future of the school. The tower was finished before we closed the school, but was never used "officially" for training because it never was certified by the time the UWSS closed. But, since it was filled with water for testing, I'm sure it was used for unofficial events that I never knew about. We did use it to do a number of re-enlistments on the walkway on the top of the tower. One in particular I remember was for instructor Jerry Sweezy. I don't know when the tower was eventually certified for training, but probably not long afterwards because the Army eventually used it in conjunction with their dive school on Fleming Key. (Continued on page 5)

UWSS LOGO ITEMS



The following logo items are still available, so send in your orders and they will be shipped pronto. Prices include shipping. Availability subject to change. We can obtain other items, such as sweat shirts, 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 L, XL, XXL, Childs 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 M, L, XL, XXL, Childs 10/12 (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 mugs with logo..... 11.00 ea
7.00 if ordered with shirt
- NEW! UWSS logo decal** 2.00 ea

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

Sonar search with the semi-closed circuit



Secretary/Treasurer's Report

Membership 2/1/2003
97 regular members
70 associate members

Account Balance 11/1/2002	2,555.42
Interest	+ 7.90
Dues	+ 275.00
Logo items sold	+ 492.00
Buddy Line expense	- 105.64
Logo decals purchased	- 235.53
Plaque expense	- 38.46
Holiday mailout	- 66.73
Account Balance 2/1/2003	2,883.96

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 associates of UWSS students and staff who share an interest in the goals and activities of the FO/UWSS. Associate members will not have voting privileges.

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..... Chris Seger
- Secretary/Treasurer A. Dee Clark
- Historian Erasmo Riojas

The Buddy Line newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. Buddy Line editors are Don and Art Stone. e-mail: stonefish7@cs.com or uwssbuddyline@cs.com snail mail: 1440 S.W. 5th Ave., Boca Raton, FL 33432 phone: (561) 391-6727 fax: (509) 472-6492

Historical Information Requested
Specific information is needed on schedules, training events, testing, content of classes, etc. at UWSS for inclusion in a history of Navy Diving being written by Tom Hawkins for the Office of Naval Research. Please contact Doc Rio, UWSS Historian, by phone at (281) 485-0177 or e-mail at elticitl@mi-vida-loca.com.

President's Corner by Don Stone

We are getting FO/UWSS notices in more publications and on line, the latest being the MOAA Locator, thanks to the continuing efforts of Berny Diggs.

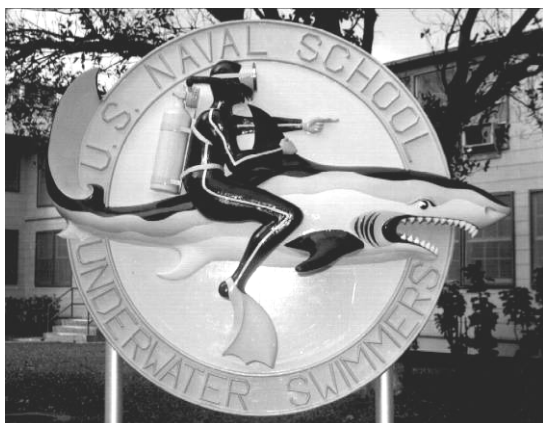
A notice in the Marine Corps Times brought us a letter from Robert B. MacKenzie, a 1957 UWSS graduate in the same class with Capt. Bill Rice. Robert, retired after 30 years service in the Marine Corps, still has a diary he kept of his days as a UWSS student. He agreed to share this with us and it arrived via e-mail, all fourteen pages of it! What a gold mine.

He and several other Gung Ho Force Recon Marines were sent from Camp Pendleton to Key West to go through the scuba class. Robert kept this diary faithfully and with great detail. It is really a trip down memory lane. You will find the first installment in Scuttlebut Corner

You've read about the bill regarding combat related special compensation and hazardous duty entitlement which authorizes certain veterans to draw both disability and retired pay. In early May, DOD will publish information and make applications available to potentially eligible veterans.

Now hear this! Additional information from the VA: Veterans may be entitled to free hearing aids from the VA if they meet any of these categories: service connected hearing loss, ear disease or Tinnitus; non service connected hearing loss with any medical problem at a rating of 10% or more; or former prisoner of war. The Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2002 established a presumption of service-connection for hearing loss associated with certain military skills (to be determined by the VA in consultation with the National Academy of Sciences) and authorized compensation for service members who have a rated hearing loss in both ears.

These rulings affect many of our members. (Contact your VA Regional Office) Don't be reluctant to apply for the benefits that you deserve.



From Lee Barber's photo album:



Dr. Aquadro aided by Jake and Don Stone



Jay Stanley and happy crew on 300 foot chamber run.



Russian Dance Group visits Key West.



Student using Jack Brown shallow water diving apparatus. This rig was used aboard many Navy vessels for hull maintenance and screw clearing.



Wait, I think I forgot to put on the non-return valve!

Class picture
of
Dave Robin
USMC

25 Aug 1961



Class picture
of
Larry Anderson

with
Captain Ploof

Remembering the End of Underwater Swimmers School

By: Andy Anderson (Continued from Page 1)

Later the tower was moved to Panama City, but in early 1977 it was still standing behind the empty UWSS building when I used it for SSN lockin/lockout training.

When we got the word that the UWSS would close, the first reaction was how could they do this. Key West is such a great place for training. I even considered calling the Congressman from South Florida to let him know what a bad thing was in the works. We had hoped the UWSS would stay open since the SONAR school was not closing. I assume the Navy didn't have an alternative school at the time for SONAR training, but for dive training they could send people to other schools in San Diego, Indian Head, or maybe New London. And at this time the basic UDT/SEAL trainees were no longer going to the UWSS for dive training.

Once the decommissioning in September 1973 was set, the obvious question was what do we do with all the "stuff" at the school. Besides admin stuff, there was a new Butler Building recently put up for the school on one of the base piers, spaces full of support equipment and SCUBA and 2nd Class dive gear, an LCU and other dive support boats, vehicles, and the UWSS diver and shark.



Pool Training



Night Swim

The short answer was that what didn't get signed over to the base would go to the Second Class dive school in San Diego. That turned out to be an awful lot of packing and crating and hard work for the staff. I personally decided to take down and keep all the graduating class pictures that were in the passageway behind the quarterdeck. I figured some day I would run into people who didn't have a copy of their class picture, and I could give them one. I kept the pictures for about fifteen years or so, and maybe gave away one or two pictures to people. I'm sorry to admit now that after keeping them for those years, and finding no interest from anybody, I trashed them.

After graduating the last class and beginning the shut down, somebody suggested that it would be a shame to send all this dive gear to San Diego where it would be most likely surveyed and some Civil Service civilian end up with it (enter rationalization). Why don't we survey it here someone suggested, and for an appropriate donation to the Navy Relief, a departing UWSS staff member could keep it. That seemed like a fair, reasonable, and fitting course of action. So it came to pass that not quite all of the UWSS dive gear was packed and sent to San Diego.

My thanks to Chuck Detmer for helping me remember some of the above events.



Morning Run



Break time on the "U"

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 A. Dee Clark, Treasurer and mail to 1315 Garner St., Nacogdoches, TX. 75961

Scuttlebut Corner

Excerpts from Robert Mackenzie's diary:

5/10/57: Landed Miami at 1530 to find our connecting hop to Key West left without us. The airline furnished two 1957 Fords for eight of us. Gunny Burke took one and I took the other, and off we flew through the country side – much better in the long run than flying, for we saw the entire south Florida coast and were able to observe closely the sights on the drive through the keys. Upon arriving at Key West Naval Station, we left our bags, checked in to the barracks and split up. Al Brown and I figured that as long as we couldn't turn the cars that night, we might just as well make the best of the available transportation.

We went out to look the town over and found such delightful havens as the Downtown and the Mardi Gras, the latter being a first class clip joint with a practically non-existent (as to amount of costume) floor show consisting of fifteen or twenty local beauties (90% Cuban) parading up and down the center of the bar clad and unclad in a variety of sporty clothes. This was too much for us, so after two hours we left, drove around a bit and returned to base for what might blithely be called a night's sleep – hot, humid.



Main Gate, Naval Station Key West

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