

# Buddy Line



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

August 2014

## Memories Documented

We received an email last May from Rio (Erasmus 'Doc' Riojas) that said: "We, Pete Peterson, Tom Mc Cutchan, and Erasmo 'Doc' Riojas to go to Spicewood TX and Austin TX for more filming on the ongoing documentary about Minh Nguyen who was our brave VN interpreter back in the 'nam war games in and around MyTho Vietnam, IV corps region, 1967, 1968, 1970."

A request to Rio for more information brought a wealth of pictures, links to web sites, videos, and documents that reveal the bond between the SEALs and Minh Nguyen. They tell how Minh was located after 40 years, they tell of his rescue from poverty by the SEAL community, and they tell of his visit to the U.S. for a reunion with his old friends.

The filming at Spicewood and Austin was for a documentary called "A Bond Unbroken, The Why of Minh" being produced by Mary Ann Koenig. They filmed interviews of Pete, Tom and 'Doc' talking about Minh and their Vietnam experiences in the picturesque setting of the Peterson home on the Pedernales River and at the Vietnam Memorial in Austin.



Rio tells us "the documentary is about Minh's history in 'nam and how Mr. Peterson and Robert "Eagle"

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**FO/UWSS Reunion 2015**  
**Panama City, Florida**  
**May 14-17, 2015**



Gallagher and Mr. John Donovan introduced us to Minh. We had NAVFORV approve Minh to work with US Navy SEALs as an "in the bush" interpreter. We equipped Minh and gave him a SEAL crash course in how we operated. He did the walk and was wounded twice."

This film has been in the making since July 2013 when Minh's U.S. visit began at the SEAL Museum in Ft. Pierce, continuing to the annual SEAL reunion at Little Creek where he was guest of honor. Mary Ann Koenig plans to film a visit with Minh in his home in Vietnam this fall and hopes to finish the documentary later this year. Meanwhile she is searching for funding and Executive Producers.

On page 3 you will find "A Bond Unbroken, The Why of Minh" which describes the film's treatment of the story, and some links to photos and to videos about the film.

**UWSS LOGO ITEMS**



**All prices include shipping.**

- Beefy-T t-shirt..... 19.00 ea  
white or ash gray, large logo back, small logo pocket  
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL\*
- Long sleeved t-shirt.....21.00 ea  
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.....22.00 ea  
white or ash gray, small logo on pocket.  
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL\*
- Pique polo all cotton.....24.00 ea  
birch gray, embroidered logo left front ,(no pocket)  
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL\*
- Blue denim shirt, short sleeves ..... 31.00 ea  
embroidered logo above pocket  
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL\*
- \*All shirts size XXL add \$2.00 ea**
- Cap – natural with logo ..... 15.00 ea
- Baseball cap – blue, embroidered logo.....21.00 ea  
**Cap 3.00 less if ordered with shirt**
- All service mug – old logo front, new logo back.. 15.00 ea
- Mug – old logo front, UWSS back ..... 10.00 ea
- Embroidered Patch .....7.00 ea
- UWSS logo decal – transparent or white .....2.00 ea
- UWSS Plaque – bright brass on blue .....45.00 ea
- UWSS commemorative coin .....7.00 ea  
enameled brass, raised design, 1 5/8 inch diameter
- UWSS all-service commemorative coin.....10.00 ea  
enameled brass, raised design, 2 inch diameter
- Bright LED pocket flashlight, shark rider logo .....7.00 ea
- Key Chain with enameled logo medallion .....7.00 ea

**Make check to FO/UWSS  
Send with order to Don Stone  
1440 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Boca Raton, FL 33432**

*All logo items are pictured on the web site*

**Secretary/Treasurer’s Report**

Membership August 2014	246 members	
Account Balance May 2014		15,603.79
Dues		+150.00
Logo gear sales		+178.00
Buddy Line printing		-107.67
Postage		-49.00
Web site expense		-37.68
Account Balance August 2014		15,737.44

**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 to1973. Family, friends, and others who share an interest in the goals and activities of FO/UWSS are welcomed as associate members.

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.

**FO/UWSS Officers**

- President..... Bob Holmes
- Vice President..... Gerry Flowers
- Secretary/Treasurer..... Don Stone

The Buddy Line newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. Buddy Line editors are Don and Art Stone.  
e-mail: [stonefish8@gmail.com](mailto:stonefish8@gmail.com) phone: (561) 391-6727  
snail mail: 1440 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., Boca Raton, FL 33432

**WEBSITE: [www.uwss.org](http://www.uwss.org)**

**Buddy Line by 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 mail out. To receive the Buddy Line by email, send your request to [stonefish8@gmail.com](mailto:stonefish8@gmail.com).

**Dues** (\$25.00 for 2 years) are payable in May of odd numbered years. Your paid thru date can be found on your label or in the Buddy Line delivery email. Send check same as for logo orders.

### *"A Bond Unbroken, The Why of Minh"*

This film by Mary Ann Koenig tells a never-revealed story of a bond of friendship forged in war between a Vietnamese combat interpreter and the Navy SEALs, and a reunion 45 years in the making.

A man is locked in a five-by-eight shipping container on a maintenance pier, a repository for garbage, human waste and a makeshift brig. It is 1966, the Mekong River, and the man is about to be reprieved.

Fred McDavitt, Officer-in-Charge of River Section 531, the first American Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam, is desperate for a translator. A Vietnamese official, Lieutenant Triet, slams his nightstick against the container. "Do you speak English?" he asks. The answer comes, trembling yet strong: "Yes." And the box is opened.

Nguyen Hoang Minh crawls out. Filthy, exhausted, mosquito riddled, wearing tattered shorts and in need of a shave, but still bearing a smile.

And so begins the odyssey of a bond of friendship forged in combat and spanning decades and continents.

The Navy SEAL Museum, SEAL Association and SEAL Foundation have reunited 74-year-old Nguyen Hoang Minh with the SEAL Teams and other Naval Officers with whom he worked during the Vietnam War. Many wondered about him and his fate since the day they pulled out of Vietnam in 1971. Most believed he had been killed or jailed after the war. But in 2008, nearly 40 years after losing touch with him, Brown Water Navy Officer John Donovan began searching for Minh. With the tenacity of a detective, Donovan followed a trail from

France to Texas and back to Vietnam, and with luck and perseverance he located their old friend, alive, but living a shattered life in abject poverty.

Donovan, who had worked with Minh before the SEAL Teams arrived, brought Minh's plight to the attention of the SEAL community. Their bond had been so strong, and they remembered him with such fondness, that they responded as they would with any SEAL in need; they pulled together, and with financial assistance they built him a home and set up a fund, out of which they sent monthly financial support.

Minh, who was wounded twice in battle, told Donovan he wanted to see his SEAL friends once again before he died. In July 2013 they made it happen. The SEALs brought Minh to the U.S. where they were reunited after a 45-year absence, and he was guest of honor of 5,000 SEALs at their annual reunion at the Little Creek Naval Base in Virginia.

How this bond was forged, the long-awaited reunion in the U.S., and the far-ranging effects on Vietnamese-American communities, are the focus of this documentary. It is a story of loss and recovery, and of the SEAL brotherhood. And it will answer a deeper question of why it matters.

Links to photos and videos:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-Bond-Unbroken-Navy-SEALs-Vietnam-Interpreter/247381582115511>

<http://www.sealtwo.org/minh.htm> (Rio's site)

<http://vimeo.com/71695909>

Control Click link or copy and paste in browser

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This photo, which was printed in the February Buddy Line as unidentified, has been identified by both Jim Sidel and Phil Mees. Here are the names supplied by Jim. **Class 27 July 1962**

**Back: L to R** Walder W. Griffin, Peter S. Swartwout, Harry A. Mattingly, Russell S. "Scott" Guginio, Stephen H. Dunthorn, Roy A. Lumala. Pedro Corro (Class 26), Richard A. Anderson, David H. Watts, James F. Finley, H.L. Brown Jr., Pierre P. Birtz, James L. Scott, Richard J. "Hook" Tuure, William G. Painter, Leonardo S. Conti, Kenneth J. Goss.

**3rd Row:** Instructor (LeMay), John F Rzeznikiewicz, Richard L. Brozak, James D. Carr, Richard H. Larson, William L. Shirley, Ronald E.H. Woodaman, Peter C Smith, James E. Soltis, Gordon C. Ablitt, Pemitrioj Kannelopolis, Ronald G Fox, (?)Warner

**2nd Row:** James C. Tyrie, Daniel J. Matie, Philip J. Mees, Robert A. Petersen, Robert W Peterson, James H. Seidel, Ralph T. Pepe, Jack F. Macione, Melvin F. Melochick

**Seated:** William A. Reagan III, Wayne E. Gough, Michael N. Boynton, Richard W. Hoff, James E. Soltis, James O. Wallace, Haydn R. Thomas, Gerald G. Larson, John E. Sjostrom

## The Executive Corner



**Bob Holmes**  
**Gerry Flowers**



Hi folks, hope this finds you all enjoying summer.

First, a quick update on the UWSS reunion, before we pass on some very pertinent information that is important to many of you and your families.

We have a little over nine months before we get together in Panama City May 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015 for our 2015 reunion. Aaron Farrior, Reunion Chairman, has already started working on the plans and advises us things will really start to happen in January

A few days ago, UWSS reunion notices were sent out to Leatherneck Magazine, the Marine Corps Gazette and Sgt. Grit at [www.grunt.com](http://www.grunt.com), (with the hopes of finding any Recon, EOD or Anglico Marines that may have attended the UWSS). The Vietnam Veterans Bi-Monthly Magazine, "The Veteran" as well as the "American Legion" National Magazine, the "Purple Heart" Magazine and the "DAV" National Magazine have been sent requests to publish our reunion notice. With the assistance of Larry Bailey, we have received a Thumbs up to get our notice placed in the UDT / SEAL Association Magazine, "The Blast" as well as the publication "Fire in the Hole". I am working on the format they requested. We know there are lots of publications still out there. Several more have been sent our reunion information, but if anyone has any ideas where else to place a timely ad, please let us know so we can send them the information.

Since the last "Buddy Line", I have had the opportunity to be a part of "U.S. Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange: Understanding the Impact, 40 Years later" and the lead up to Town Hall Meetings across the State of Washington. They are going on in locations across the country to raise awareness, not just for you but your children and their children. Please take the time to investigate this, if not for you, for your families. You might not have thought much about it over the years, but it certainly needs to be put out to all of you and here is our chance.

Agent Orange, as you know, was the highly toxic herbicide used by the U.S. Military during Vietnam to defoliate hiding places for the Viet Cong. It was a colorless herbicide that got its name from the Orange Band painted on the drums used to store and transport it. Over the years, many thousands of veterans have developed many illnesses that no one could understand where they originated from, nor did they know there was a connection to this widely used herbicide. It has even been expanded to some veterans that served on the DMZ in Korea in the late 1960's.

After years of advocacy, led by the VVA (Vietnam Veterans of America) Congress enacted into law, the Agent Orange Act of 1991. There have been many changes, but the bottom line is, this legislation forced the VA to declare certain Maladies "presumptive".

What does that really mean ? It means, that as a Vietnam Veteran, if you set foot, boots on the ground in Vietnam, you have most likely been exposed to Agent Orange. Of course, certain areas were more heavily sprayed than others. If you have been near or operated out of defoliated areas, there is a good possibility that you have been exposed. There are now Service Connected benefits for these presumptive conditions that you may not be aware of.

Let's say you have been pretty healthy, but your daughter or son has been sick with something that came out of left field, a cancerous tumor that you could not explain, you need to check out the website I am going to include at the end of this article. From Spina Bifida, to a cleft lip or palate, heart disease, numerous types of tumors to Club feet in babies to lymphoma, the list is long and things are being added as I write this. You could see Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 3.309(e) "diseases associated with exposure to certain herbicide agents" or you could visit any of these sites for more info.

[www.vva.org/committee/AgentOrange](http://www.vva.org/committee/AgentOrange)

[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange)

[www.veteranshealth.org](http://www.veteranshealth.org)

One could also call 1-202-512-1800 which is the Government Printing Office and ask for "Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations.

What do you need to do ? You need to register yourself, regardless of whether you have any symptoms or not. Why, to make sure your children and Grandchildren are protected. It sounds awful, but if you do not register, you all know how that will work out if you need help for a family member in the future. If anyone of you, or anyone of your children or grandchildren have an illness or disease that you wonder....Where did that come from, I want you to....at the very least, visit the VVA website and find out what the many presumptive diseases are that can arise from exposure, decades later.

On a sadder note, if a Vietnam Veteran has died of a medical condition considered to have resulted from exposure to this herbicide, certain surviving family members may be eligible for monthly VA compensation payments through the VA's dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) Program.

Everything you need to know can be found on the websites provided. Please do your due diligence as it can make a difference in the lives of your siblings.

Thank you all for reading this. Please pass it on to all Vietnam Veterans. We look forward to seeing you all next May in Panama City.



CLASS 5-60

If you can fill in any of the missing names, send them to [buddyline@uwss.org](mailto:buddyline@uwss.org)

Missing are 1 thru 7,14,19,20, and 29



1. NOT, ENS  
 2. GR, GM3  
 3. JN, BM3  
 4. BERY, BM3  
 5. U, AO2  
 6. NE, PHGAN  
 7. NOR, LTJG

8. USRY, ENS  
 9. WENTER, AO2  
 10. WORTHY, BM1  
 11. TERRY, EM3  
 12. BALLARD, ENS

13. FOSTER, ENS  
 14.  
 15. CONCILIO, ENS  
 16. JOHNSON, TM1

17. SZCZEPANSKI, DC1  
 18. BARON, MMC  
 19.  
 20.

22. WILLIAMS, FA  
 23. BEHNE, ENS  
 24. VIZETHANN, ENS  
 25. HUNNEL, SWFS  
 26. YANKUS, ENS

28. PHILLIPS, ENS  
 29.  
 30. JAKE JACOBY, TM1 (CLASS PROCTOR)

## Editors Corner

by Don Stone

I hope to start something in this issue.

Don Stone loved the Key West of the 50's and 60's. The waters were clear, warm and beautiful, full of corals, fish and bugs. There were lots of large sharks but no one I knew of ever got killed or even bitten by one. But morays — that's a different story! If you intruded on their home turf, watch out! But we will get to those later.

How did I first come to be stationed in Key West? My first enlistment was completed and I was shipped back to the TI Receiving Station for discharge or reassignment. I had gotten into a little trouble on liberty and was up before the CO of the base. He dropped the charges and asked what it would take to get me to ship over. My answer was to be stationed at the warmest place in the continental U.S.

Later he called me back to his office and said, "Doc, how would you like duty in Key West?" In the early 50's the Overseas Highway was built on the top supports of the Bahia Honda bridge. Coming around the curve, it looked like the road led up to heaven. And for me it did! The duty included overseeing recreation equipment at the Naval Hospital and I was introduced to masks, fins, snorkels, and free diving.

Shortly after I began my job at the recreation locker a CPO from the Air Station who frequently checked out snorkeling gear took me out and showed me how to use the gear. But he didn't tell me about equalizing pressure. In no time I was diving deeper and spearing more and larger fish than he was, but my ears hurt . . . until I finally found out about popping ears and equalizing pressure.

My running mate was Paul Heckert. We both put in requests and received orders to Deep Sea Diving School in DC; and that was the start of our Navy diving duty.

Now, what I hope to start is getting members thinking about their experiences in Key West and how they came to be there, then write them up and send them to the Buddy Line. Together we can fill the Buddy Line with stories.

### Richard M. Eselgroth Jr 1945 - 2014



FO/UWSS member, Richard Eselgroth Jr passed away May 1, 2014 in Glendale, Arizona.

He served in the USAF from 1965 to 1997 and was a 1970 graduate of UWSS.

A pararescueman, Richard served 14 years in Air Rescue and Recovery and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He later served as U.S. Air Force Director of Intelligence. Condolences can be sent to his wife, Sue, at 10927 W. Laurelwood Ln., Avondale, AZ.

### Lewis J. Roberts , Jr. 1933-2014

FO/UWSS member Lew Roberts passed away June 28, 2014 in Ft. Walton Beach. A USAF pararescueman, Lew was awarded the Airman's Medal and twice awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions during the Vietnam War



Aaron Farrior wrote: This picture, taken at Moron AB, Spain in 1968, is the only picture I have of Lew Roberts (left, standing).

A little background. This pararescue team were all graduates of Key West between 62 -67. They have all served a one year Viet Nam tour flying Combat Rescue Missions and now are flying support covering fighter aircraft for Nato Countries way up north. We are also flying for NASA, parachuting into different oceans retrieving space hardware and the Gemini capsules. Before that we jumped on Mercury capsules. We stayed pretty busy.

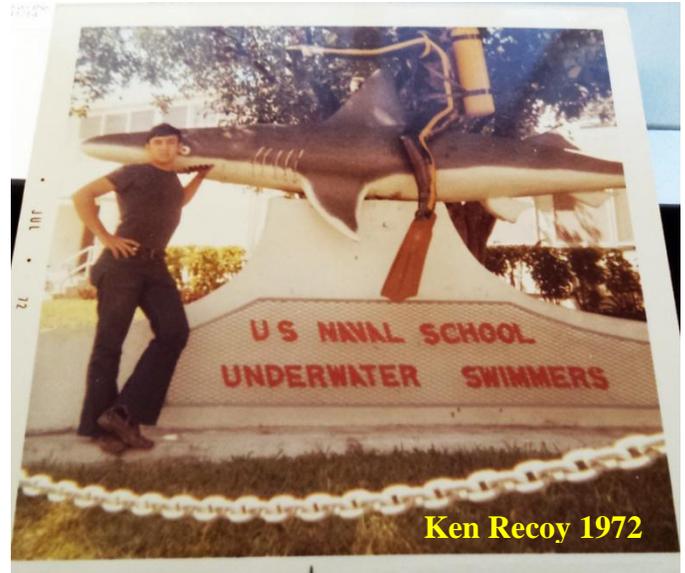
## Welcome New Members

Kenneth "Ken" Recoy of Chelsea, OK  
USN Subs 70-74 UWSS 7203

Lawrence "Larry" Hill of Frederick, MD  
USNR EOD 64-68 UWSS 6502

Welcome back to

Sam Silvers of Tulsa, OK  
USN EOD 62-82 UWSS 1968



## From the Mailbag



Patrick Weyand sent this picture for his Dad, Richard Weyand, a very proud 76 year old Marine. The class is 6207 graduating 29 June 1962

## Membership Application Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Wife's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Buddy Line Newsletter by email \_\_\_\_\_ or snail mail \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Service: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Class at UWSS: \_\_\_\_\_ or Associate Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Make check payable to FO/UWSS and mail to Don Stone, Treasurer, 1440 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33432

## The Way It Was



These scuba trainees practicing pool entry had to demonstrate the correct use of the scuba apparatus, then successfully ditch it underwater, recover it, don it, and swim off breathing from it while continuously submerged.

When the class completes that phase, there is pool harassment by the instructors. As buddy pairs swim around the pool submerged, instructors pull off their face masks, turn off air, pull off fins, etc. The trainees have to remedy these problems while submerged.

One trainee was so cool through this that when instructors pulled off everything except his swim suit and tanks, he just kept on going.

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