

Buddy Line[®]



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

May 2016

John Francis Rabbitt Lost in the Gulf of Mexico

By Erasmo "Doc Rio" Riojas

Johnny was one of the instructors at the U.W.S.S. Key West FL. Back in the 1960's.

Each class had to qualify open sea dives to about 100' down on the 12 Mile Reef off Key West. The way we made the trip was via the school's U-Boat. It was fully equipped for deep diving, decompression chamber and the whole enchilada.



Upon arriving at the dive site, the U boat crew would drop anchor and we would lower the descending line from the ramp of the Uboat. At the bottom of the descending line the weight (anchor) was married to a long piece of line which was the circling line. Each instructor would take a

group of students down the descending line to the ocean floor. Each diver would take his place on the line with the instructor at the end of it away from the weight. We would stay at that site all day until all the students were qualified and then pull up anchor and return to Key West.

On one particular day, it was noted that the current was somewhat swift. The Master Diver/senior instructor and the Diving Officer decided to put one instructor out. Johnny Rabbitt was the first group's instructor so he takes the plunge into the crystalline clear blue gulf. He immediately started swimming towards the descending line but the current was stronger than his best swimming strokes! Instructor Dow Byers grabs a piece of line and throws it at Johnny, who now was drifting some ten feet from the U boat. The throw was bad and Johnny did not catch it. Now he continues to drift swiftly away from the U Boat hollering for us to come rescue him.

The boat crew was busy hoisting the anchor but it was firmly stuck to a coral head and would not break. Using the U boats motor they maneuvered the boat trying to break the anchor loose but no dice. By now Johnny appears on sight about the size of a fly and rapidly drifting away towards Cuba.

Finally one of the Boatswain mates grabbed a fire ax and chopped the cable. Of course this took much more time and by now we cannot see Johnny anymore. We were all in a bit of a panic losing a diver and not able to see his line of drift.

Lost in the Gulf continued on page 5

UWSS LOGO ITEMS



All prices include shipping.

- Beefy-T t-shirt.....25.00 ea
white or ash gray, large logo back, small logo pocket
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL*
- Long sleeved t-shirt.....28.00 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.....28.00 ea
white or ash gray, small logo on pocket.
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL*
- Pique polo all cotton.....29.00 ea
birch gray, embroidered logo left front ,(no pocket)
Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL*
- Blue denim shirt, short sleeves38.00 ea
embroidered logo above pocket
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL*

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

- Cap – natural with logo20.00 ea
- Baseball cap – blue, embroidered logo.....30.00 ea
Cap 3.00 less if ordered with shirt
- All service mug – old logo front, new logo back..20.00 ea
- Embroidered Patch 12.00 ea
- UWSS logo decal – transparent or white3.00 ea
- UWSS Plaque – bright brass on blue60.00 ea
- UWSS commemorative coin 12.00 ea
enameled brass, raised design, 1 5/8 inch diameter
- UWSS all-service commemorative coin..... 15.00 ea
enameled brass, raised design, 2 inch diameter
- Bright LED pocket flashlight, shark rider logo10.00 ea
- Key Chain with enameled logo medallion 10.00 ea

Make check to FO/UWSS

**Send with order to Bob Shouse Jr., Treasurer
274 Boca Ciega Point Blvd N.
St Petersburg, FL 33708**

Questions? e-mail: stonefish8@gmail.com
or phone (561) 391-6727

All logo items are pictured on the web site

Secretary/Treasurer’s Report

Membership May 2016	266 members	
Account Balance February 1, 2016		\$14,294.64
Dues		+160.00
Logo gear sales		+699.74
Logo Gear postage		-81.44
Buddy Line and Roster printing & mailing		-171.32
Misc Office Supplies		12.18
Account Balance May 1, 2016		\$14,889.44

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 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.

FO/UWSS Officers

- President..... Bob Bureker
- Vice President..... Dave Byers
- Secretary/Treasurer..... Bob Shouse Jr

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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snail mail: 1440 SW 5th Ave., Boca Raton, FL 33432

WEBSITE: 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 buddyline@uwss.org.

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. Make check to FO/UWSS and send to Bob Shouse Jr., 274 Boca Ciega Point Blvd N., St Petersburg, FL 33708.

The Executive Corner

Bob Bureker, President

I regret to pass the word that Robert W. Shouse 89, of Seminole, Florida passed away on Friday April 15th. Please read the celebration of his life of service to our great country on our memorial page of the website <http://uwss.org/Memorial.html>. It is a tragic loss of an honored member of the UWSS origination. We will all miss him in person however his spirit will live on in our memories and the wonderful contributions he has inspired in his shipmates at UWSS. Our heartfelt condolences to Robert Shouse Jr that serves us all with his hard work as our Treasurer.

UWSS members it is time to start thinking about the reunion next May. We all need to remember the important things in our lives both family and friends. The UWSS family is a very important part of my life and I am sure that many shipmates feel the same way. If we all start planning now we can again enjoy meeting and getting the latest news from the UWSS family.

I would also like to report on the health and welfare of Don and Art Stone. Art tells me that Don is quickly recovering from hip surgery and looking forward to outdoor activity (such as mowing the yard) really! I wish you both healthy and happy times ahead. Your kind participation has made it possible for this organization to survive all these years. Thank you again your efforts and guidance.

As we head towards the 2017 reunion, there are many things to be thankful for and many things to be aware of in this troubled world. As a Vietnam vet I see the problems that some of our current servicemen face returning home from hard duty in the high deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq. I would like to encourage all UWSS members to look around your home town to see if there is a serviceman that may need help.

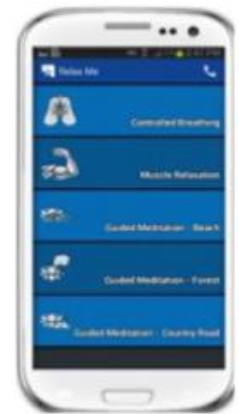
I am proud to partner with organizations like UWSS to increase awareness of suicide prevention resources and decrease the stigma of receiving treatment for mental health and substance use issues. You know more than most about the sacrifices that veterans and service members have made and the invisible wounds they may be dealing with. Your support is incredibly important to their wellbeing and you can make a difference

In EOD training, we learned the power of immediately ceasing what we were doing when our teammates said

“stop.” It saved lives including my own. One of the things I learned in medical training is that we really don’t know what someone is thinking unless we ask them specifically, such as “Have you been thinking about hurting yourself?” These direct questions can be hard to ask because we think it might not be any of our business. But, you may never get the chance to say “stop” unless you do. In this digital age there is even a Smartphone App for that!

The Virtual Hope Box app was developed for service members and veterans, but is available free for everyone through the app stores. Users set up the app with photos of friends and family, sound bites and videos of loved ones and special moments, music, relaxation exercises, games, and helpline phone numbers. The app also has relaxation exercises and distracting activities to help cope with stress or depression.

Research and testing showed the Virtual Hope Box to be a useful tool for addressing many issues. Patients in the proof-of-concept testing included those diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder and mood disorder. It can also help those who might be at risk of self-harm. During the first clinical tests, patients who used the app liked the Distract Me section which has puzzles and games. It wasn’t just because they were so fun to play—patients said the games took their minds off whatever was bothering them at the time.



The mobile app, developed at the Defense Department’s National Center for Telehealth & Technology is available for Android and iOS devices at the App Store, Google Play, and Amazon. More information about the app can be found at <http://t2health.dcoe.mil/apps/virtual-hope-box>

Welcome new member

Paul D. Sibley Cumberland, MD
USMC UWSS Feb/Mar 1966

**Robert W. Shouse
1926 – 2016**



Robert Shouse Sr. of Seminole, Florida, Plank Owner of the Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School Key West, passed away April 15, 2016. Bob served two tours as instructor at UWSS, first from 1955 to 1958, second from 1964 to 1966.

His naval career included service with UDT Teams during WWII and in Korea. Then after his first tour at UWSS Bob went into submarines, serving on the USS Chopper and the USS Seawolf. He finished his naval career with a second tour at UWSS.

Recruited by the CIA, Bob served as an advisor in Vietnam. His service is detailed on the UWSS website memorial page. (Control click on <http://uwss.org/Memorial.html>)

In his retirement he enjoyed sailing with his wife Rosalie, and joining and supporting several Navy fraternal organizations. A staunch supporter of FO/UWSS, Bob and Rosalie attended almost every reunion and his contributions of photos of the early years of UWSS are a great addition to the archives and to the school history on the website

Beside his wife, Rosalie, Bob is survived by two sons, Robert Jr. and Ronald, 3 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Bob's ashes will be scattered at sea by the US Navy SEALs at the UDT Muster Memorial Service and Ash Swim Out in Fort Pierce on Sunday Nov. 6, 2016



Bob Shouse Sr. Instructor Underwater Swimmers School Key West, Florida 1956 & 1965



Reunion 2000 Panama City Beach. The Fraternal Order of Underwater Swim School was created at this reunion.



Bob and friends at Reunion 2006 in Key West, Florida



Bob and Rosalie at Reunion 2009 Panama City, Florida

My Dad by Robert Shouse Jr.

There are so many wonderful memories associated with the Underwater Swimmers School Key West that it is very difficult to choose just one. Dad's first tour at UWSS began in 1955, I was in the 3rd grade. On weekends, Dad and the other instructors would take out the boats and I would sit on the end of the ramp, watching the divers below.

On nights that Dad had the duty watch, I would go and hangout with him at UWSS and have dinner before going home (school nights...). I enjoyed going down to the Enlisted pool and watching the pool training, thinking... Darn, they are trying to drown these guys! To this day, I can still recall the smell of the equipment room.

Dad went to Sub school, then Nuclear Power school but when he was assigned a sub out of Key West we still were fixtures at the Swimmers School. In 1964, Dad started his second tour at the UWSS Key West, I was a Senior in High School, and I no longer had to watch from the ramp, I could snorkel and spearfish with the men!

Dad arranged for me to attend the school, that was probably my fondest memory and surely the toughest challenge of my young life (way beyond that of High School football's Two a Day work outs in the Key West sun).

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.

I feel that my childhood was made very special and enriched by UWSS Key West and all the students and Instructors that not only put up with me, but taught me valuable lessons. Thanks to all of you!

From the web "Contact Us"

When Jodette Taylor, youngest daughter of Richard C. Nealy (PeeWee), wrote that he was missing from the UWSS website memorial page, we called her to get the information needed to include him. She could use some help with dates of service and dates at UWSS. If anyone can supply this information, or even estimates, please email buddyline@uwss.org

Lost in the Gulf continued from page 1

The Boat Officers alerted the USNAS Boca Chica to send a rescue helicopter and we got underway trying to chase down Johnny Rabbitt who by now was probably out of air in his twin 90's.

It was late afternoon when the helicopters finally found and rescued Johnny. The chopper returned him to the Naval Station where we were waiting with an ambulance to take him to the naval hospital if necessary.

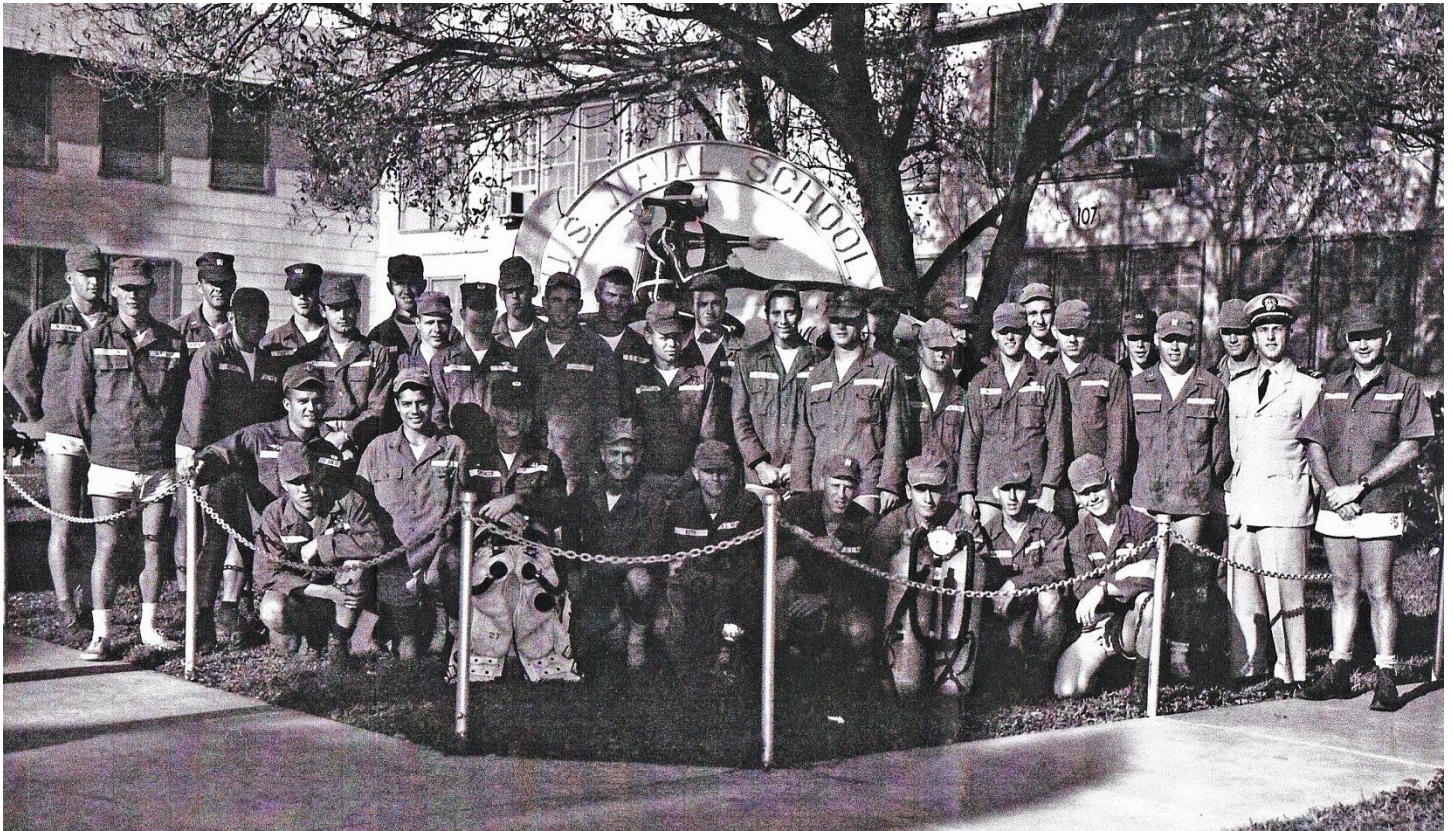
Johnny was redder than a cooked New England Lobster and in severe pain. We were prepared to give him food and water but the first thing he asked for was a beer. We had a small igloo with a six pack of beer and a couple of sandwiches. Johnny was not angry, well, hardly at all.

He wanted to know why we had not started up the U boat and chased him down and rescued him. He said after running out of air, he lay down on his tanks and floated away to somewhere, he thought it would have to be Cuba. He said he just sang songs and tried to go with the flow.

The school doctor checked him out, gave him several tubes of tetracaine for his sunburn and Johnny went home to Sigsby Park Navy Housing. John Francis Rabbitt earned his \$55.00 dollars diving pay that day.

John died at a young age in Virginia Beach VA after he retired; may he Rest in Peace in Frogman heaven.

Class of October 1963 from Thomas Michael Ligon



Class of February 1964 – from archives



The Astronauts at UWSS - shared by Erasmo "Doc Rio" Riojas



Mercury astronauts are (l-r front row) Wally Schirra, second over, Gordo Cooper, Al Shepard, John Glenn, Scott Carpenter. (Second row) Gus Grissom between Shepard & Glenn, Dr. Bill Douglas and Deke Slayton holding face mask

The Final Test of 48 Original Astronauts:

About the beginning of May 1967 NASA decided that the closest thing to weightlessness, which the astronauts would encounter in outer space, was working under water. They decided to send the available men to U.W.S.S. (Underwater Swim School) in Key West Florida. It was run by the Navy and all the instructors were either First or Master Divers or Underwater Demolition divers (UDT). At the time they taught all four services and the Coast Guard. U.W.S.S. Command put Senior Chief Yeoman (UDT diver) Byers in charge and he picked Chief Engine man Atkinson (UDT) and First Class Aviation Metal smith Rabbitt (also a UDT Diver) as assistants. The basic SCUBA course (Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus) was four weeks long. NASA wanted it condensed into one week which Dow Byers did. The only book they had to study was the U.S. Divers Manual which took many months even years to master. They studied a few hours each night and bugged us each day about the upcoming test on Friday. They were all so competitive. They knew just a few points here and there could possibly put them on a flight into space. Dow knew this also and knew he couldn't gauge them on a four-week course condensed into one week so he came up with this test. On Friday, the three instructors came into the classroom and Dow withdrew from his briefcase the final test. He had bought three beautiful pieces of white parchment paper and a pen with four buttons on the end of it. The four colors were blue, red, green and black. He said if you are in the Navy, sign your full name in blue three times and pass it back. If you are a Marine, sign your name three times in red and pass them back. If you are in the Air force, sign your name three times in green and pass them back. And finally, if you are a civilian, sign your name three times in black and pass them back. After some minor grumbling about how hard they had studied, they all complied and received a final grade of 100%. He also told them to tell the next 24 astronauts who were flying down on Sunday that the final test was a Bitch! Needless to say the next batch spent half the night trying to memorize the U.S. Divers Manual and double bugging the three of us about Friday's test. Come Friday there was considerably more grumbling (as some of them claimed to have memorized the manual) but all signed and received 100% for a final grade. If you count the names, there are 49 instead of 48. Some wise guy signed the parchment in three different colors JAY PEE FOUR (Jet Fuel) and to this day who did it remains a mystery.

John Francis Rabbitt

John Francis Rabbitt (USN Ret.)

UWSS Astronaut Class

DON L. LIND
EDWARD G. GIBSON
VANCE D. BRAND
MAJ WILLIAM R. POGUE, USAF
LCDR BRUCE McCANDLESS, USN
TEXAS H. WARD
CAPT JACK R. LOUSMA, USMC
OWEN K. GARRIOTT
CDR E. D. MITCHELL, USN
LCDR PAUL J. WEITZ, USN
LCDR RONALD E. EVANS, USN
CAPT CHARLES M. DUKE, USAF
FRED W. HAISE
RAYMOND G. ZEDEKAR
LCDR ALAN L. BEAN, USN
JOHN L. SWIGERT, JR.
LCDR JOSEPH P. KERWIN (MC) USN
CDR PETE CONRAD, USN
MAJ CLIFTON C. WILLIAMS, USMC
CDR SCOTT CARPENTER, USN
LCDR JOHN S. BULL, USN
MAJ JAMES B. IRWIN, USAF
WALTER CUNNINGHAM
MAJ DONN F. EISELE, USAF
LOU G. RICHARD
MAJ STU ROOSA, USAF
MAJ JERRY CARG, USMC
CAPT JIM LOVELL, USN
MAJ BILL ANDERS, USAF
MAJ ED GIVENS, USAF
RUSTY SCHWEICKART
LCOL TOM STAFFORD, USAF
CURT MICHEL
MAJ JOE ENGLE, USAF
MAJ AL WORDEN, USAF
CDR DICK GORDON, USN
NEIL ARMSTRONG
LCOL MIKE COLLINS, USAF
CDR GENE CERNAN, USN
CDR JOHN YOUNG, USN
LCOL BUZZ ALDRIN, USAF
DAVID SCHULTZ
LCOL DAVE SCOTT, USAF
NORM SHYKEN
DON CARRETT
LCDR KEN HATTINGLY
JACK SCHMIDT
LCOL JIM McDIVITT

3 proctors

John F. Rabbitt, Dow Byers,
& Sol Atkinson

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: _____

Send copy of class picture if you have one. 2 Year Membership \$25.00 Make check payable to FO/UWSS and mail to Bob Shouse Jr, Treasurer, 274 Boca Ciega Point Blvd N, St. Petersburg, FL 33708

The way it was



The Acey Deucy Club, directly across the street from the swim school, was intended for first and second class petty officers as a place to relax off duty with a cool one, but it's convenient location made it the unofficial hangout for UWSS.

We had all kinds of fun activities there from chiefs' initiations to wedding receptions, but mainly it was the place to relax with your buddies.

Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School
Buddy Line Newsletter
1440 SW 5th Avenue
Boca Raton, FL 33432