

Buddy Line



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

November 2013

Mystery Shipwreck

A story in the August Buddy Line about searching with the U-boat for a Russian submarine in the Gulf of Mexico ended with the discovery of a shipwreck of an old steamship. An email from Bernie Campoli suggested the discovery could be the remains of the *Valbanera*.



We did some research and found the SS *Valbanera* was one of at least six ships sunk during the September 1919 Florida Keys hurricane. She sailed from Spain loaded with cargo, 1,142 passengers, mostly immigrants to Cuba, and 88 crew members. Although most of the passengers were booked for Havana, 749 left the ship when it called at Santiago de Cuba amid rumors of a hurricane.

The storm was raging by the time the *Valbanera* approached Havana and the harbor was closed. The ship moved away from shore and headed north to ride out the storm at sea. A week later as news of the vessel's disappearance spread, a large scale search was begun.

When the wreck was located, the *Valbanera* lay on her starboard side in shallow water on the shoals

that caused her demise. The bodies of her 488 passengers and crew were never found. Rescuers theorized that the survivors escaped, but subsequent dives revealed that all lifeboats were intact. The *Valbanera* would go down as one of the worst maritime disasters to occur in Florida waters.

The wreck seen by the divers from the U-boat was a very large ship. The framework of the engine room contained huge machinery, boiler, wheel, and gauges. It is very likely that it was the *Valbanera*.

TODAY IN KEYS HISTORY



Navy Underwater Swimmers School Scuba class, 1955

ON THIS DAY IN:

1954 The Navy's first Underwater Swimmer School was commissioned in Building 107 on the Naval Station with Lt. R.J. Fay as commanding officer.

John Thiel sent this excerpt from the Key West Citizen, October 4, 2013 issue.

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 sleeves31.00 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 5.00 less if ordered with shirt
- Embroidered Patch7.00 ea
- UWSS logo decal – transparent or white2.00 ea
- UWSS Plaque – bright brass on blue45.00 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 logo7.00 ea
- Key Chain with enameled logo medallion7.00 ea

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

All logo items are pictured on the web site

Secretary/Treasurer’s Report

Membership November 2013	237 members
Account Balance August 2013	14,789.67
Dues	+575.00
Logo gear sales	+178.00
Buddy Line printing	-156.49
Postage	-64.40
Logo gear expense	-44.45
Account Balance November 2013	15,277.33

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 phone: (561) 391-6727
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 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.



Two photos from James Lake:

Above – SCUBA class July 1961

Below – EOD class August 1961





Two photos from Arnold Feller.

Above - Class February 1956 Some names: 2nd row:?,?,Arnold Feller, Garland Skaggs, ?, Joe Sybold. 3rd row: Doyle, Murray, Robert Murphy, P.T.Lang. Standing 3rd from right "Red" Merrill.

Below - EOD and Navy Combat Camera class October 1960 (taken in the rain) Names ->





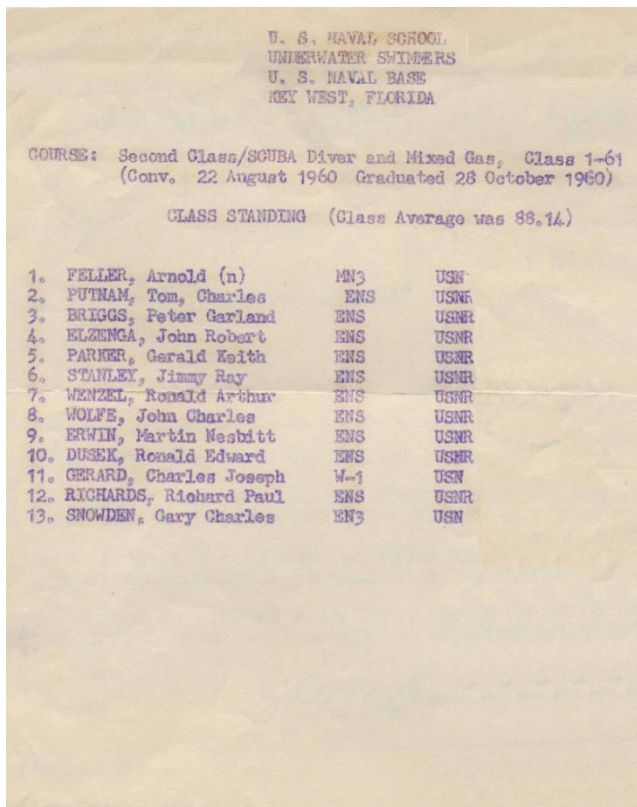
Hi everyone. We are hoping that this November issue of "The Buddy Line" and "Executive Corner" finds you all happy, healthy and enjoying life.

This Executive Corner for the "Buddy Line" today, is written a week ahead of November the 11th, Veterans Day in the United States. In Canada, it is our Remembrance Day. November the 11th is a day that men and women in our countries and the free world pause and thank our Veterans for allowing us to live the lives we live today.

Continued next column

<><><><><><><><><>

EOD and Combat Camera Class October 1960
Class list of EOD members



So, to all of you, This Veterans Day, we thank you for your service and we are proud be in your company every two years to have the opportunity to catch up break bread with all of you.

November the 10th is the is the **238th Birthday** of the United States Marine Corps. Believe it or not, Marines that reside in Canada, like U.S. Marines all over the world, call, email or personally try to wish every Marine we are in touch with, "a Happy Birthday".

Being the Vice President of this organization has been a great life experience for me

I am a Canadian, I am a Marine and this is a United States Navy Organization. Everyone and I mean everyone I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with at our reunions has helped make me a better person.

I would like to mention that I have in the last few weeks talked to Bob Holmes, Woody Woodward and Aaron Farior and things are moving along as expected in preparation for our 2015 get together in Panama City.

With that in mind, we would again ask you to consider saving a few dollars to make the trek to the reunion. It was a thrill to meet the adult children of many of our senior members and see how proud they are of their fathers. Let us try to do that again.

As always, thank you to Don and Art for driving the ship, Aaron Farior and crew for planning the docking and of course all of you for planning Port and Starboard Liberty in Panama City.

Merry Christmas (can I still say that) to all of you, keep healthy and we look forward to seeing all of you again. I am leaving the link below for those of you that want to see what the Navy's Little Brothers do on their birthday.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtEiNECNA4c&feature=youtu.be>

Warmest Regards to all of you. Gerry

Class May 1960 – photo with names from Hank Holder



- | | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Stevenot, ENS | 7. Trainor, LTJG | 13. Foster, ENS | 19. | 25. Hunnel, SWF3 |
| 2. Holder, GM3 | 8. Usry, ENS | 14. Castagna (CIV) | 20. | 26. Yankus, ENS |
| 3. Brown, BM3 | 9. Wenter, AO2 | 15. Concilio, ENS | 21. Upmeyer, ENS | 27. Ward, ENS |
| 4. Kimbery, BM3 | 10. Worthy, BM1 | 16. Johnsoin, TM1 | 22. Williams, FA | 28. Phillips, ENS |
| 5. Lyon, AO2 | 11. Terry, EMS | 17. Szczepanski, DC1 | 23. Behne, ENS | 29. |
| 6. Roane, PHGAN | 12. Ballard, ENS | 18. Baron, MMC | 24. Vizethann, ENS | 30. Jacoby (Proctor) |



Class 1 1970 Photo from Patrick McKinney

The Mind Can Play Tricks On You

By Don Stone

Back in the old days, when scuba diving was just starting to be popular with the general public, there were not many civilian operated recompression chambers. So if a civilian diver came down with decompression sickness, the Navy was the place to go to get treatment.

In one case, two well known journalists, working on a story for a prestigious magazine, were taking underwater pictures in cenotes, water filled sink holes, in Central America. These cenotes contained many artifacts from Pre Columbian days when human sacrifices were thrown into them.

They were making repetitive dives daily but mistakenly decompressing just for each individual dive. They got away with it for a while, but eventually both came down with the bends. In pain, frightened, they tried to treat it themselves, but things just got worse.

As I remember, they contacted the American Consulate, who contacted the Navy, which air evacuated them to Panama City where there was a chamber and diving locker – but no diving medical officer.

The Master Diver there was adequately treating them according to the Navy Diving Manual, but the younger of the two men was not responding to the treatment and still complained of pain as the chamber was decompressed. The older diver was brought to the surface and the younger one was put in the inner lock and recompressed to a depth of pain relief.

Dr. Aquadro and I were sent from Key West to Panama City to assist with the situation. There were lots of newspaper reporters around the chamber, also the patient's mother. Dr. Aquadro went in through the outer lock to check on the patient, then I was sent in to the chamber with the patient and the doctor directed the treatment from the outside

In treating the bends, rules state that the chamber should be descended to a depth that relieves the symptoms and brought up in stages. The patient was a frightened young man, and each time the chamber started to ascend he would complain of pain returning and down we would go again.

He was in a distraught emotional state and crying mother, mother. I felt that his symptoms were no longer physical but the result of his state of mind,

so I explained to him that every time he complained about the pain recurring we would have to go back down to the depth of relief. When that sunk in we were able to finish out the treatment table and return to atmosphere pressure.

The mind can play tricks on you.

Welcome New Members

Michael Murray of Virginia Beach, VA
USN 69-91 EOD UWSS 7003

Kurt W. Braeutigam of Houston, TX
USN 61-70 EOD UWSS 6603

Philip J. Mees of Benton City, WA
UWSS 62

From the Mailbag

Chris Seger wrote about the Pool Training With the Scot Hydro-Pak article in the August issue "Way it Was":

"I think the picture of Lee Barber at the edge of the pool might have been taken of me one day when I was having a terrible time ditching and donning the Hydro-Pak. Whenever I'd hit the bypass valve on the right side of the mask to start the purge, a huge blast of air would jam a pint of water right up my nose and I'd begin choking and gasping. I had to abort three attempts and came to the surface with a mask full of water. It looked like I wasn't going to pass the course and I was desperate!

"Chief Barber called me over to the side of the pool for counseling, just as the picture shows. He said "look, just go down, put on the gear, and swim one length of the pool underwater from there....*purging is optional.*"

"I didn't ask for further clarification. I hyperventilated and started back down to the deep end. I ditched and donned the gear in just a few seconds (being careful not to hit the purge valve) and started swimming toward the shallows. When I came up at the wall the Chief was standing there with a bemused look on his face. Neither of us made any further comment about that piece of gear, and I went on to graduate."

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 5th Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33432

The Way It Wasby Don Stone

Shark! Shark! That cry can get the adrenalin pumping in even the most experienced diver. In the 1950's and 60's it was not uncommon to see a shark while diving in the Keys, but few actually attacked unless you were spear fishing or irritating the shark.

In my forty nine years of diving and spear fishing, only once was I attacked. That was because three buddies and I were spearing fish in the tiger's territory and the shark was attracted by injured fish vibrations and blood in the water. When he opened his mouth on the third pass, I

was able to change the sharks mind by spearing him in the top of his head. He was so close that the spear didn't completely leave the gun. The shark began rolling, taking the spear and gun with him. I fled to some nearby mangroves, scrambled down to the boat and piled in with my buddies who had left the water so fast the bottom was littered with their gear. Two cigarettes later I went back to check out the site and found the gun on the bottom with the stainless steel spear bent like a pretzel. I bet that shark had one hell of a headache.



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