

# Buddy Line



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

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February 2014

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## SEALs & UWSS Featured in Key West Citizen Story

Key West residents of Truman Annex were startled last month by the sound of gunfire and some called the police for answers. It was just the SEALs in town again engaged in a training exercise involving blank gunfire.

While researching the history of Navy Special Ops training in Key West, Citizen staff writer Adam Linhardt found the UWSS web site and telephoned Don Stone. Adam's questions encouraged Don to reminisce about UWSS in the 50's and early 60's. With Linhardt's permission we share excerpts from his story (shown in italics).

*During the war, most future operators had trained in Fort Pierce, where the Navy SEAL Museum is now located. In those early years, the SEAL Teams had yet to be officially formed, but their history is directly linked to the Underwater Demolitions Teams — or UDT operators — from which the SEAL Teams would evolve.*

*Many of those early UDT men on the East Coast rotated through Key West, where instructors like Stone taught them to dive. "It was challenging for most in that you have to keep going regardless of whether you were tired or scared," Stone said. "The guys who made it were men."*

*"The old school was located at the corner of Front Street", said Monroe County historian Tom Hambright. "The guys would run five miles around the island before breakfast and people would scream at them as they ran and sang their cadence. The guys who wore hard hats while diving were here, too. The conditions for that kind of training here are ideal and it continues to be."*



**Instructors Kappesser, Hazelwood & Stone returning from evaluating a dive training site**

*"Key West plays an important role," said Navy SEAL Museum Executive Director and retired SEAL Rick Kaiser. "It did then and it continues to, because it's the best place to learn. There's clear water day and night. You can hone your skills in Key West before entering a nasty harbor in 'country X.' It's just an invaluable place."*

*Lt. David Lloyd, spokesman for Little Creek, Va.-based Naval Special Warfare Group Two, reiterated that in an email to The Citizen following the training exercise.*

*"Key West offers a unique environment of waterways, consistent water temperature and challenging currents that test and refine our abilities in preparation for real world strategic operations," Lloyd wrote.*

*Stone's recollection of the old swimmers' school is evidence that as much as things change, they often remain the same. Though techniques and monikers for the forces have evolved over the years, the core training and Key West's role therein remains relatively static.*

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**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\*

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

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

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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 February	239 members	
Account Balance November 2013		15,277.33
Dues		+175.00
Logo gear sales		+41.00
Buddy Line printing		-165.93
Postage		-98.95
Web site expense		-37.68
Account Balance February 2014		15,190.77

**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. 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.

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**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.

## The Executive Corner



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



Hi Everyone, as usual, Bob, myself and all of the Executive of the UWSS hope that this note finds you all healthy and happy and ready for 2014, heck, we are already a month into it. I have attached a photo of what I did on Saturday....instead of writing the Newsletter update and getting it in on time.

In mid December, I received an email from Doc Rioja. Attached was a photo of our President, Bob Holmes and Doc Rio. Right at that moment, I reminded myself that life was too short not to see friends. I decided to jump into my car and drive from Vancouver to Texas to visit both Bob and Janet and Doc Rio and his family. Vancouver, British Columbia to Galveston and back. Almost 7000 miles....for a yak and coffee.

I needed to get out of the cold and wet North West and it seemed like a great idea. Now, around 6500 miles and 27 days later, we are back....and, yes, it was well worth it. We had great visits with Bob and Janet and Doc and his family. That, coupled with Marine Corps friends on the way down and back to visit, we looked forward to being tourists in the south west United States. The idea rekindled the warm feeling of looking forward to and attending the approaching reunion. Also, I would be fulfilling an ulterior motive.

Folks, we live on a huge, diverse, wonderful and free continent. **Thanks to all of you and those that have worn the Uniforms of the United States Military.**

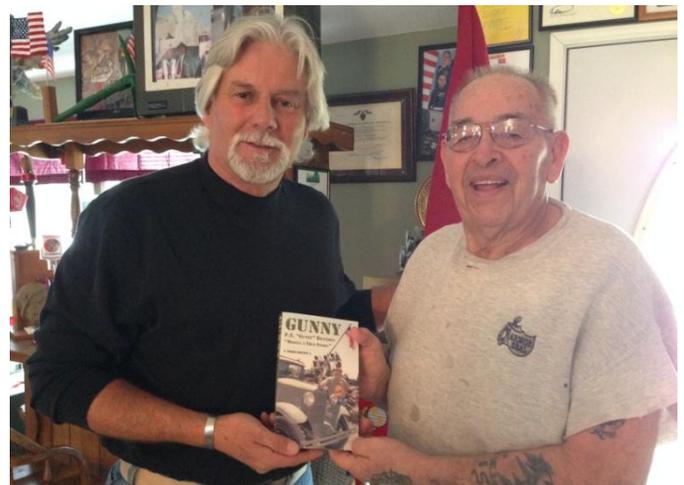
On our way there, I made a point of stopping into every American Legion and VFW that came into sight, from the highway, all the way down. As I am the Commander of the American Legion up here in Vancouver, British Columbia, it was the perfect introduction to walk into the facility (BAR) and say hello to the men and women who helped forge our freedom and thank them personally. All were

surprised that Canada had a Post of the American Legion. Ours up here is the "Theodore H. Snow" Post # 75 of the American Legion.

From the small, almost deserted Legion Post on the Salton Sea, California to a small VFW in the middle of nowhere Texas, I spent about ten to twenty minutes meeting folks. Sometimes I got a strange look for a split second before everyone in every Legion and VFW listened to why I was going to Galveston and a little bit about the UWSS.

I told them of the group of men and women of the UWSS that get together every two years and what we do at the reunion of Divers in Panama City. I told them of the UDT, the Army SOG, Recon Marines and Navy SEAL's, EOD, Submariners, Para-Rescue and the Astronauts that had attended the school.

I left them all with the website [www.uwss.org](http://www.uwss.org), either written on a post-it, a napkin or the white side of a Beer Coaster. They all seemed interested and most knew someone that had been a diver. I asked them all to pass that information on. In some cases, I had a five minute yak with an old Bar tender, the only one there who promised to pass the information on.



If anyone has seen the movie "Heartbreak Ridge" starring Clint Eastwood as Gunny Brandon, his Marine Corps Flag flying high, caught my attention and a visit turned out to be an afternoon, culminating with the Gunny signing and giving me his book. What a thrill. He now knows of the UWSS.

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## The Executive Corner

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Every vet knew what I was speaking of when I told them of the reunions and how great it was. From the Ice Breakers to the Flag Folding ceremony, everyone knew exactly what I was speaking of. I told one bunch of the pride I felt (and they knew of and had the same feelings) when we I told them of all of us standing and Singing Lee Greenwood's song, "Proud to be an American". I ran out of gas doing it on the way down and did not do it on the way back as our ten day road trip morphed into twenty eight days. It was wonderful to have that opportunity. Everyone gave me a pretty strange look when I got to the part about being a Canadian and that 33,000 of us came south and joined and had the privilege of wearing the Uniform of the United States Marine Corps.

Folks, our reunion is now fifteen months away. At the last reunion, Woody told all of us that not much really gets finalized until about a year away. Speaking to Aaron Farris several times over the last ten months and again just last week has confirmed that. We are approaching 14 months to go and Aaron and his crew from Para-Rescue are gearing up for this final year.

At the last meeting, we discussed having a Manual of sorts made up to help the reunion committees drive the same road and not re-invent the wheel. I hope that over the next few months we can put together a book that has all emails and letters, list, budgets, thank you letters and the people to talk to, that will help us iron out all the minor issues and make it smooth sailing for the New Committee. Terry would like an assurance that she will not be held ransom as a "Foreign National" and not allowed on the base until the Prime Minister called with her clearance.

Folks, I am really looking forward to this next reunion, I am looking forward to attending the Para-Rescue reunion in the fall where we (Aaron and I ) can see if we can locate and coerce a few more divers to attend.

Until May's Newsletter.....Keep well and we all look forward to seeing you again.

## Key West Citizen Story

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*That Key West is ideal for Special Operations Forces training is also exemplified by the Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School, which is located on the northern edge of Fleming Key. SEALs sometimes undergo the Army course on Fleming Key to cross-train with their differing comrades, which often leads to confusion among residents as to who is who and who trains where. Neither military branch advertises where they train, due to safety concern for the forces as well as for the public.*

*Such strenuous training would make most shudder, but Stone called Key West his favorite place. "It was challenging and great fun." Stone is a member of The Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School, which holds regular reunions for those who attended, or endured depending on one's perspective, the old school. He said that at the reunions many members agree that UWSS Key West was their favorite tour of duty."*

## Editors Corner

by Don and Art Stone

Just want to say thank you to the members who contributed news and stories for this issue of the Buddy Line, and to encourage others to do the same so we can continue to provide a newsletter members want to read.

A special thank you to John Thiel who, since his move to Key West, keeps an eye out for stories in the Key West Citizen that mention UWSS and sends us copies of them.

Rio reports Bob Holmes back in the hospital for a second surgery February 7<sup>th</sup>. We wish you a speedy recovery, Bob.

## Welcome New Members

Charlie "Red" Morgan of Poulsbo, WA  
USN 56-79 UWSS 6103

Stanley G. Lawson of Newland, NC  
USMC 2<sup>nd</sup> Force Recon

## A Diver's Story

In remembering the past and all the good and exciting times, I wrote this short biographical sketch and included a relevant and historical spear fishing contest banner. **Mickey Kappes - Merritt Island, Florida**

I started skin diving and spear fishing in Long Island waters in 1951, and in 1953 while a cadet at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, I founded the "Trident Club" with life-long diving buddy Rudy Enders who went on to be UWSS/XO. The club was active for almost 40 years and many Kings Point cadets enjoyed their first introduction to the wondrous undersea world that existed beneath the hulls of the ships they would sail as Merchant Marine or Naval Officers. As part of my active duty Navy time in EOD, I graduated from the Underwater Swimmers School (UWSS) in Key West on 12 October 1956.

As a civilian, in late 1958, I accepted a contract to try to determine the cause of a crash of a Cubana Airlines flight which went down in shallow waters off the Cuban coast. The Batista government blamed it on a bomb planted by Cuban (Castro) rebels while the rebels claimed a Cuban Air Force fighter shot it down. It was believed that if the aircraft could be located and photographed, it would be evident that either an onboard bomb went off or that incoming bullet holes would prove an aircraft shoot-down. However, immediately after my arrival in Havana, I learned that the Cuban government had already located and raised the aircraft remains and put out the story of a rebel bomb planted aboard.

Being single and unemployed, I decided to stay in Cuba and was in Havana when Fidel and his bearded guerrillas marched into town a few weeks later. I met several Cuban divers and started a diving and salvage business. For the first year under Castro, before the communist flag was raised high (the honeymoon period), business was good.

A highlight of my first year residing in Cuba was participating in the first post-revolution "Campeonato Nacional de Caza Submarina" (National Spearfishing Championships) held in Varadero Beach on 20-21 June 1959. Each 3-man team was assigned a 100 meter wide zone running

from the beach out to deep water. No SCUBA allowed – total team weight of anything speared counted. I was quite amazed to observe that the 3-man team to one side consisted of bearded fellows including Fidel Castro himself. We came in second but happily beat Fidel's team.



By the end of an almost two-year stay in Havana, life was getting economically difficult and politically dangerous. In October 1960, heeding an urgent warning from a good friend in the U.S. Embassy, I made a hasty departure from Havana. While transiting Miami on my way to ship out again in the Merchant Marine, I was contacted and recruited by the CIA. A promise of four months employment evolved into a rewarding 47-year Agency career which included an exciting operational 125 ft. dive with a Navy SEAL in unfriendly waters during an extended paramilitary assignment and recreational diving in many parts of the world during my 20 years overseas.

At age 81, it may be time to hang up my flippers, and if I can't shoot my age on the golf course, I may try to free-dive my age (feet not fathoms) down in the Keys.

## From the Mailbag

Mike Lively wrote:

I was looking at the [uwss.org](http://uwss.org) website and noticed a picture of my father getting "suited up for a hard hat dive". He is the one sitting in the dive suit. His name is Richard Lively (USN) and graduated from the program back in the 1950's. I remember seeing this photograph and would love to get a better copy.

Also, I am attaching his class photograph that I scanned recently. My dad is recently deceased, but retired from the Navy and was always very proud of his diving experiences. We are proud of him too.

Richard Lively's Class



Ernest Slattery wrote:

Re photo on the cover of the November Buddy Line, class graduated 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1955. Some members were BJU2 Lt Jack Klienert, BM2 Slattery, a seaman, two USCG from the west coast, BM1 hard had diver. CO of the school was Lt Robert J. Fay. I hope this will help, the old memory is not so good. Have a good one, BM1 Slattery (ret)



## From the Mailbag - continued

Peter Noonan wrote:

These photos are from the UWSS graduating class on March 27, 1964. In the small photo is Joe Battle (5th group SF, deceased) on the left and Peter Noonan, (1st group SF Okinawa) on the right. We were in the Special Forces training group at Ft. Bragg, N. C. when we were selected to go TDY to Key West, Fla. for underwater training.. Most of the class were navy personal and they were just starting to train 'Green Berets'. I utilized my UWSS training later when I was deployed to the 1st SF group on Okinawa in the fall of 1964 and was assigned to the newly formed 'Scuba school' and later saw duty on the submarine (forget the name for now) and was active on SF operations in and around the south China sea; including South Korea.



Class of March 1964 (Noonan circled)



Paul Payne wrote:

One addition to the 'In Memoriam' list:

**Class 7201**

**AMN Raymond A. Wagner, Jr., USAF  
KIA , Vietnam (Laos)**

I searched the 'Wall' for members of my class and only found one (best to my knowledge and eye sight), lost in Vietnam...Raymond was lost I read, on his first mission aboard a chopper that went down over Laos. So young.....

## 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

President Harry Truman was interested in everything about Key West including the Underwater Swimmers School which was situated close to his residence, the Little White House.

Here he is paying a visit to the school and inspecting the troops.



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