

Buddy Line



U S Navy Underwater Swimmers, Key West, Florida

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER:

Welcome to your BuddyLine. We are looking at the Return to the 2017 Reunion site in San Diego, CA. Date to be April 23, 24, 25 of 2025. There were various comments about keeping the reunion in Key West for each reunion.

The following are considerations for a future reunion.

The 2025 Reunion: Where? Look around. Starting with Google's Best Military Museums which are all around the country. Panama City has the Museum of Man in The Sea where you can put on various diving suits and gear. Kansas City has the National WWI Museum and Memorial while we need to turn to New Orleans for The National WWII Museum. The Military Museum Trail is remarkably interesting, and the locations are great for all types of events. Virginia also has several locations of interest. As well as Eglin AFB's Naval EOD School. The school is tri-service staffed. The Air Force Special Ops center at Hurlbert Field with Fort Walton, FL, located between them. When? Again, looking at the last weekend of April 2025. Depending on the area's climate, Spring Breaks, Numerous members would hopefully be able to attend the San

Diego afore mentioned locations.

This brings me to the next topic of inquiry. Do we have any small groups, say 2 to 10+ members who live in the same area, state, or region who would consider taking part in a monthly or quarterly gathering between our normal Bi-annual?

The gathering I am talking about would be members meeting in a mutually agreed place now and then to visit, playing golf, skydiving, or going fishing. Or just enjoying a meal together. Your group might be able to recruit more members and help increase our number of attendees for the Bi-annual Reunions.

Remember our organization is open to any military trained diver. So, your buddies do not have to be members, but it would be nice if you could get them to join us.

Either way, I would like to encourage small group gatherings among our members. If you are not sure who lives close by send me an email. I will help you get started. Just think the first meeting could be in Bermuda.

God Bless, the USA!



U. S. Navy Underwater Swimmers Treasurer Report Friday, February 2, 2024

Bank report for December 31, 2023

Balance of Dec 31, 2023	\$14,936.50
Deposits	\$79.23
Withdrawals/Debits	-\$10.40
Service Fee	-\$2.50
Ending Balance	\$15,002.83

We Dive the World



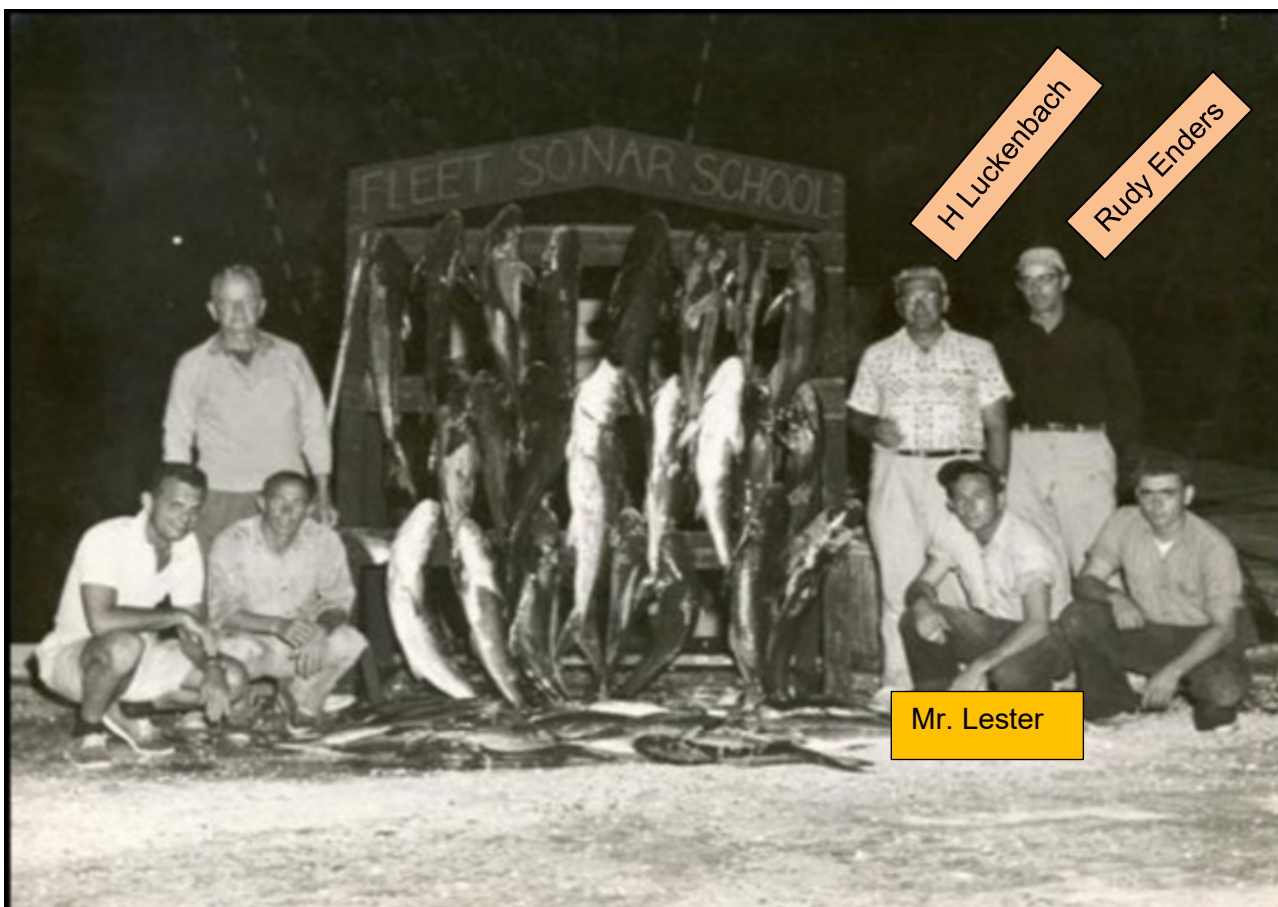
1. **Stanley Worthley** writes he is living in Japan. However, his phone number and mailing address are still the same (Honolulu). I am living in Japan. How much do I owe? I want to keep current. Again, Thank you. Stan Worthley
The reply: Stanley, hope you are doing well. Please go to the website <https://uwss.org>. Select from the headers the LOGO GEAR tab. Press the red button for an order form to print out and mail to Jim Houle, Treasurer at 3220 W. Pebble Beach, Lecanto, FL 34461. Stanley, let me know if that does not work for you. Just a note Jim Houle is the Treasurer, Secretary, and the Ship Store point of contact. His email address is. Treasurer @uwss.org or Secretary/ Treasurer and Ship Store: Jim Houle shipstore@uwss.org (620) 422-2838 3220 W. Peddle Beach Lecanto, FL 34461.
2. **Jim Houle** asked when we started the FO of UWSS. Art Stone and Dave Gholson were his only responses. Art suggested a look back to the first BuddyLine. Dave Gholson's answered with, well that is a story that could be served best over a beer. Answer can be found in the first BuddyLine on our website under the newsletter tab.
3. **Dan Wolfe** Email: dwolfe2115@gmail.com wrote I went through UWSS in Aug 1970 as a member of the US Coast Guard stationed aboard an icebreaker. Are there lists of people who attended the various classes over the years? If anyone attended, then if you can help Dan, we would be really glad and do not forget to talk him into joining UWSS.
4. **Jim Houle** wrote he would be sending a check in the amount of \$1,200 to the Foundation which is called: GUMBO LIMBO COASTAL STEWARDS. You can visit <https://www.gumbolimbo.org/our-story/> to learn more about the foundation. This was a response for Art's selfless donation of Little Jake for our raffle at the last reunion.
5. **David Gilley Jr** drgil65@gmail.com Message--I'm doing some research on my father, he was a UDT and a hard hat (Mark V) diver. He passed away last year in September 2022. I wanted to know, personnel that went to UWSS in the early 1960s' at Key West, Florida, did they have to go through BUDS afterwards? Or were these two separate schools, UWSS for all branches of service, and BUDS strictly for SEALS? And why would a UDT have to go to BUDS if they were already UDTs'? There's too much confusing information on the internet, and there are not many people from that time still alive to talk to. Thanks. Again, if you know or know someone who can help David with his search would be appreciated.



(Continued from November 2023 BL)

While in Key West, I had the privilege to become friends with Dr. Lance Lester and his wonderful Cuban born wife, Isabel. Dr. Lester and his son, Lance Jr., shared a common interest in fishing and diving, proving to be some of the few who dared to dive the deep reefs in those days. One could only admire Dr. Lester's stamina. He was older than us, could only work out on weekends, yet was able to stay with us in the water and continue well into the night. On one occasion after a

long day's diving, he was summoned to the hospital in an emergency and returned near midnight. By that time all of us were half dead and had already decided to clean the fish the following day. As tired as he must have been when he returned, Dr. Lester did not want the fish spoiling overnight, so he filleted them in the wee hours of the morning. Dr. Lester and his son joined us on many dives and fishing trips. He was with us when we blitzed cobia on a trip to the Luckenbach freighter.





Isabel loved to catch fish on a hand line and always came equipped with gloves and a strong desire to show us rod and reel fisherman how they did it in the "old country." The Lesters invited Scott Slaughter to live with them when his active-duty time with the Navy ended. Scott worked at Frank Toppino's Safe Harbor Marina as a Mercury mechanic and tried his hand at commercial spearfishing. When the weather was poor, he stayed at Lester's lovely home on Eagle Avenue, often spending time charming Mrs. Lester and her school-aged daughter, Georgina, by strumming his guitar. The elderly hard-working doctor with a strong work ethic hit the ceiling one day when he compared his quickly made salad to the gourmet dish Isabel had prepared especially for Scott. The Lesters were sure wonderful people who will always hold a place in my heart. I have stayed connected with the Lesters over the years. It seems there just is not enough time to visit them as frequently as I would have liked. Len Moody was also a diving buddy of ours. He was a retired Navy chief who served aboard the Yorktown in WWII. He was an aircraft maintenance mechanic and had no special assignment during battle stations. To stay alive in battle, he found a forward compartment that he felt would be safe from aerial bombardment. During the Midway battle, he was moving to his safe haven on the flight deck when a large fire broke out. He quickly helped push a fueled aircraft overboard and helped extinguish the flames as the battle raged on. When things settled down, he later visited his battle sanctuary only to find it had sustained a direct hit from a Japanese bomb. Moody was an avid spear fisherman. We often met him at the reef with his 17-foot molded plywood boat where he joined us in search of large grouper. When he retired from the Navy, he stayed in Key West as a school-

teacher. Bob Stevens, Scott Slaughter, and I visited him in 1995 at his lovely home on a canal site in the Blue Haven development near Stock Island. The years had taken their toll on Len. He was suffering from Parkinson's disease, yet his mental faculties were intact as he remembered all the good times of the past with no difficulty. We were all sad to learn of his death a year later. One morning I received a call from the Base Commander, Admiral Mustin. The President of the Navy League and a personal friend of his were visiting Key West and were interested in spearfishing. The Admiral heard of my diving exploits and asked me to take him to some of my hot spots. His 54-foot cruiser, Repulse, was berthed at the Key West Yacht Club where I could find him to make arrangements for a trip offshore. I drove to the yacht club and met Mr. Byron Wilson and his mate, Napoleon, whom Byron said hailed from the Bahamas. I tried to get a feel as to his diving experience and asked, "Would you like to visit some of the more exotic undersea life around Sand Key where the scenery is interesting and beautiful, or would you prefer to concentrate on spearfishing for large grouper in a less picturesque setting?" Without hesitating he replied, "Let's go after the big ones." I then made my mind up to go to the reefs off Satan Shoal. The boat did not have a ladder or after platform, so I planned to bring one of the swim school UDT RB-10 rubber boats. On our way to the reef, I went over the usual safety precautions we stress when diving with new partners. (1) Never point a loaded gun at anyone. The spear shaft could break any time, causing the rubbers to propel the shaft at top speed, as no line would be attached to slow it down. (2) Always unload the rubbers before leaving the water. When a spear shaft is fired out of water with no resistance, it will fly to the end of the line and ricochet backwards at the same speed. (3) Observe the buddy sys-



tem. (4) Don't swim too far away from the yacht. (5) Don't panic if you see sharks, there are plenty of them. (6) Let the sharks have any speared fish on your shaft. (7) Don't leave dead fish in the water on a stringer. I also asked about Napoleon. Byron assured me he was an excellent skin diver who had a lot of experience spearfishing with him the past summer in the Abacus. I anchored the yacht in thirty-five feet of water at the edge of a coral finger. After positioning the raft alongside, I made a quick dive to look under the ledge. It was loaded. I shot a thirty-five-pound Nassau grouper on my first dive and brought him aboard. I told Byron the fish were easy prey. By this time Napoleon had jumped into the water and begun to descend. I watched him from the raft by placing my head underwater. He could only make it to twenty feet. I thought he might have had ear problems, but he sure did not look like an experienced diver to me. Byron was next in the water. I joined him and pointed to the ledge. After cocking the rubber-powered arbalest, he dove toward the ledge. At about fifteen feet, he could not overcome his own buoyancy and began to float upwards. At that moment I was convinced they would never make it to the bottom. I made the next dive myself and shot a forty-five-pound black grouper. I was in the boat trying to dislodge the spear from the fish when I heard what sounded like a spear gun hitting the rubber boat, followed by the sound of the gun going off and Byron's loud scream, "Oh my God!" Without seeing what had happened, I envisioned the shaft passing through Byron's stomach in the same manner I had previously shot the grouper. I looked up and saw Byron's right arm holding on to the forward inflation bladder of the raft. A large spear shaft dangled from his elbow pointing upwards. Apparently, he tossed his loaded gun into the raft, and it triggered as he was attempting to climb aboard. The spear

missed his head by inches, hitting the bend of his right elbow. Only the bone prevented it from going completely through. My concern was that Byron might pass out. I immediately dove in, placed my hand on his rear end and pushed him into the raft. I told him to hold on to the shaft and ease the pain as best he could, an impossible feat I thought because wave action caused the steel to sway back and forth. I went to his toolbox and was fortunate to find a vice grip and pliers. I returned to the raft with the tools and a towel and took a close look at the spear. One barb opened under the skin while the other had not yet opened fully. I fastened the vice grip to the head, held it firmly, and began unscrewing the shaft with the pliers. Luckily, the shaft was not frozen, and the head came off easily. Unlike most of my spearheads, Byron's threads were well lubricated. We purposely let them rust together or used lock tight to prevent fish from spinning off expensive spearheads, a common occurrence. With the shaft removed, Byron's pain was tolerable. I placed a ship-to-shore telephone call to Dr. Lester, explaining the emergency, and asking him to meet us at Malory Pier. We moved the boat at top speed and met Dr. Lester less than an hour later. Lance performed the surgery. The tip had missed all vital nerves, blood vessels, and arteries. It hit the bone but caused little damage. Dr. Lester removed the head with a two-inch incision and a week later Byron's arm was as good as new. I thought I would be in hot water with the Admiral; however, Byron took full responsibility for the mishap. He admitted he had made a costly mistake after being cautioned by me about the potential consequences of leaving the water with a loaded spear gun.

**James E Grilli**

Sunday, October 25th, 1942 - Tuesday, August 8th, 2023, James E. Grilli of Dover passed away at his home on Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at the age of 80, surrounded by his family. James is survived by his wife for life, and "running mate", Jeanne (McCormack) Grilli of 57 years. Their two daughters, Katherine Weston and Jessica Mallamace and son in law, Ralph Mallamace; five grandchildren, Autumn Grill, Taylor Ryan, Nicole Weston, Ian Weston, and Rachel Mallamace; three great grandchildren, Skylar Rowe. Lux Williams, and Silas Grill. James was born in Franklin, PA to George W and Lenora J (McKane) Grill on October 25, 1942, second of four surviving children including his sisters Helen Sexton, Joyce Neidich, and his brother Michael Grill. After graduating from his hometown school in Franklin, PA, James joined the U. S. Navy in November 1962. During his military career, James drove battery, diesel-, and nuclear-powered submarines as a diver and mechanic. Following this career, James moved to Delaware where he became a mechanic for

an international HVAC/R company in 1970. In 1986, James made the decision to form his own HVAC/R business servicing the Del-Mar-Va area for 26 years until he retired in 2012. While in business, he was a member of ASHRAE, a board member at Poly Tech for the HVAC program, Local Plumbers/Pipefitters Union, and Chamber of Commerce.

James advocated for helping others both within the community and abroad including Caring Hearts and Helping Hands, Mom's House, Special Olympics, and Operation Afghanistan.

He became a member of the Order Son's of Italy (former President), The Elk's, The American Legion, Rotary Club (former President), Holy Cross Church, supporter of Tunnels to Towers, St. Jude's Hospital, and The Salvation Army.

As a musician, he enjoyed playing his guitar and bass fiddle with his bluegrass buddies around Townsend, DE area, playing card with friends and family, and bowling and hunting with his wife.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be offered Thursday, Aug. 17th, 12PM at The Church of the Holy Cross, 631 S. State Street, Dover, DE 19901. Committal Services will be private in Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Please visit www.ambruso.com for more information or to share a fond memory of James. Arrangements by Michael J. Ambruso Funeral Director, Inc., Dover.



Robert Barth, a Pioneer of Deep-Sea Diving, dies at 89, born in Manila, Philippines on August 28, 1930, passed away at home in Florida March 26, 2020

Mr. Barth was the sole “aquanaut” to play a major role in all four stages of the Navy’s landmark program to open the depths to long-term habitation.



Robert Barth, described as the “ultimate aquanaut,” inside a decompression chamber in 1963. In 2010, the Navy named its aquatic training facility in Panama City, Fla., after him. Credit...U.S. Navy



By **John Schwartz**

Published April 7, 2020, Updated April 13, 2020. The hatch would not open. Six hundred feet below the surface of the Pacific

Ocean off the Southern Cali-

fornia coast, Chief Warrant Officer Bob Barth struggled to get inside the Navy’s new Sealab 3 habitat. The 340-ton undersea platform, where he and a nine-man crew were scheduled to spend 12 days together, was leaking, and Mr.

Barth and a fellow diver, Berry L. Cannon, had headed down with two other divers to fix it.

Suddenly, Mr. Barth realized that Mr. Cannon was having convulsions, that his respirator had floated free and that his jaws were clenched shut so that it could not be reinserted.

The scene played out on the closed-circuit television monitoring the habitat from the surface; Mr. Barth frantically tried to get his crewmate back to the diving pod, where the other two divers waited. One of them, Richard Blackburn, helped wrestle Mr. Cannon back into the capsule for the slow return to the surface. As they rose, they tried to resuscitate Mr. Cannon, but without luck; using their intercom, they called to the surface to say he had died.

Mr. Cannon’s death marked the end of one of the great programs of naval exploration, one that had begun with a dry-land test called Genesis and had moved through three versions of the Sealab underwater habitat, from the late 1950s to 1969. The program greatly increased the depths at which humans could safely live and work. The divers were called aquanauts, an under-the-sea analogue to the glamorous astronauts who circled the earth and landed on the moon.

Only one aquanaut was deeply involved in all four stages of that grand adventure: Mr. Barth, who died on March 26 at his home in Panama City, Fla., at 89. The cause was complications of Parkinson’s disease, his son, Dale, said.

The dangerous experiments Mr. Barth took part in paved the way for exploits of deepwater espionage, undersea construction and demolition projects around the world.

He never achieved conventional fame, but he was the “ultimate aquanaut,” said Leslie Leaney, the executive director of the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame. “His contributions benefited the world of science and national security, but also the economies of all nations that explored for offshore oil.”

Crossing The Bar:



Robert Barth

In 2010, the Navy named its aquatic training facility in Panama City for Mr. Barth. “Nothing



that Navy divers do is one guy,” he said at the dedication. “There is always a whole bunch of people involved in it.”

The comparison between aquanauts and astro-

nauts was apt, said Ben Hellwarth, a journalist and the author of “Sealab: America’s Forgotten Quest to Live and Work on the Ocean Floor.”

Mr. Barth, left, at a training dive near San Clemente Island, Calif. in 1969. Credit....US

much like the first NASA astronauts of the U.S. space program, Bob Barth volunteered to put himself on the line to do something extraordinary that had never been done,” Mr. Hellwarth said, “and not everyone in the Navy thought it was such a good idea.”

Mr. Barth would say: “Some people called us guinea pigs. They called us a lot of other things, too,” a suggestion that skeptics thought anyone involved in the program was stupid, crazy or both. Many Navy higher-ups doubted that the program could lead to anything useful, Mr. Hellwarth said.

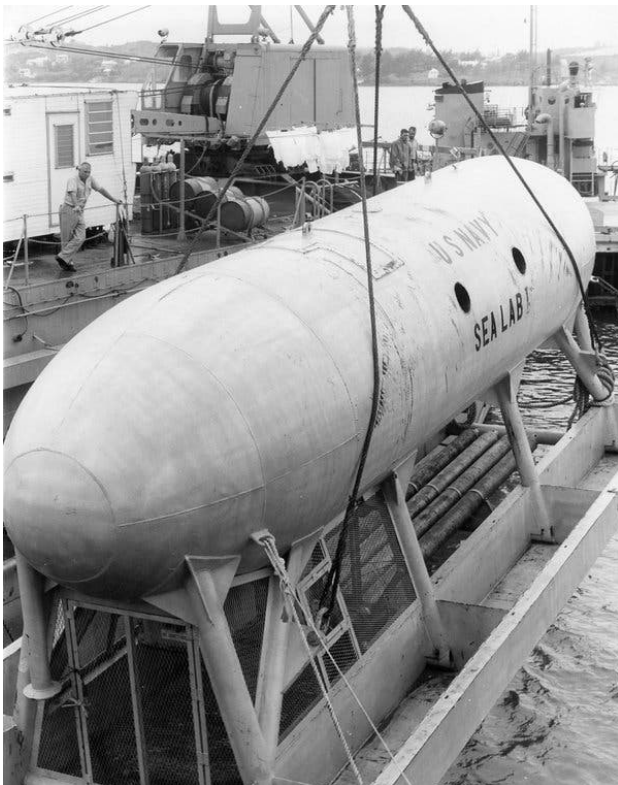
The Sealab program got its start with Capt. George F. Bond, then head of the Medical Research Laboratory at the Naval Submarine Base in Groton, Conn. Mr. Barth was stationed there.

The concept that Captain Bond developed was “saturation diving,” which involves putting divers under high atmospheric pressure before descent and bringing them back to normal very gradually.

Under the pressures of diving, atmospheric gases get forced into the bloodstream and bodily tissues. Come up too fast, and the gases bubble out, like the fizz of a carbonated soda when you pop the lid. Without careful decompression, escaping gas can cause the potentially fatal condition known as bends.

The best mixture of gases for such excursions had to be determined. Under high pressure, too much oxygen becomes toxic. Too much nitrogen can have a narcotic effect. The experiments led to gas mixtures that, for great depths, were composed largely of helium, which made the divers’ voices high-pitched and squeaky.

Helium also transfers heat more quickly than nitrogen and oxygen do, which meant that deep-sea work could expose the divers to bone-chilling cold. Levels of carbon dioxide had to be carefully managed; Mr. Cannon was poisoned by too much carbon dioxide, and it was later discovered that a crucial canister, which was supposed to be filled with a chemical that ab-



Navy

SEALAB I being lowered into the water 30 miles southwest of Bermuda. Credit...U.S. Navy



sorbed the CO2 in recirculated air, had been empty.

Mr. Barth possessed natural authority; his former teammate Mr. Blackburn recalled. “He would lead from the front,” he said, meaning that he would be the first to take any risk that was expected of his crew.

Mr. Barth could be profane and direct. “You didn’t want to get on the wrong side of him on a bad day,” Mr. Blackburn said, but added that “he always had some kind of prank up his sleeve.” Friends referred to him as “Sweet Old Bob,” with the abbreviation intentional.



Mr. Barth, left, leaving a decompression chamber in 1967. With him, from left, were Terrell Reedy, Richard Blackburn and Bill Mesplay.

Robert August Barth Jr. was born in Manila on Aug. 28, 1930, to Robert Sr. and Phyllis (Ludwig) Barth. His father was an Army officer on the staff of Gen. Douglas MacArthur; his mother managed a shoe store. They divorced when he was 10.

According to biographical information provided by Mr. Hellwarth, with the coming of the World War II Mr. Barth’s mother and her second husband stayed behind in Manila while young Bob was put on a ship to the United States, where he rejoined his father. He was later reunited with his mother and stepfather, and they moved to Chicago, and later South Africa.

At 17, Mr. Barth took a job as a seaman on a cargo ship bound from South Africa for Baltimore; once in the United States, he signed on with the Navy, where he encountered Captain Bond.

He married Georgia Murrow in 1951, and they had a son, Bobby, who became a rock musician. They divorced in 1954. In 1958, he married Joyce Ann Williams and adopted Dale, her son in her first marriage; the couple had a second child, Samuel, and later divorced. In 2014 he married Sharon Kay Kinsey. She survives him, as do his sons.

After retiring from the Navy, Mr. Barth worked in commercial diving and later took a Civil Service position with the Navy Experimental Diving Unit. In 2000 he published a memoir, “Sea Dwellers.”

The Sealab program included one real-life astronaut, Scott Carpenter, one of the original seven Mercury astronauts and the second American to orbit the earth. His daughter, Kris Stoevers, said that he and Mr. Barth had “formed a fast friendship.” Mr. Carpenter, who died in 2013, wrote the foreword to “Sea Dwellers.”

Ms. Stoevers’s brothers got a taste of the kinds of pranks that Mr. Barth could pull. One summer Mr. Barth was visiting the Carpenter family vacation home at Palmer Lake in Colorado, south of Denver, and Mr. Carpenter was trying, without success, to interest two of his children, Matthew and Nick, both in their preteens, in the maritime art of tying knots.

“The boys didn’t want to do it,” Ms. Stoevers said. “Bob Barth tied them to a tree.”

Matthew, in retrospect, finds it funny, Ms. Stoevers said; Nick does not.

Neither could recall the knots Mr. Barth employed.

Crossing The Bar:



Louis Di Croce Jr.

Louis Di Croce Jr., 13 Jul 1943 - 18 Feb 2019 (aged 75). Interment on April 3, 2019.
BURIAL: [Arlington National Cemetery](#) Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia, USA PLOT: Section 55 Site 1666 MEMORIAL ID: 197936967 · [View Source](#)



EM1 US Navy

He was paralyzed as a result of injuries sustained while on a mission in Vietnam. Among his military awards and decorations were three Purple Hearts and two Silver Stars.