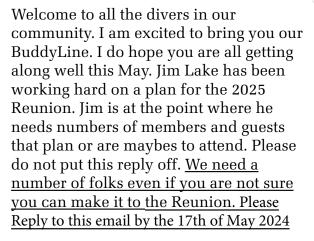


Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School, Key West, Florida

# **Executive Corner**



In other news. Those still diving might find a dive vessel near the hotel. Those who have been to San Diego or assigned there let us know about some of your favorite places we might be able to schedule those places into the events plan. Also, we are hoping to see our west coast members and others who were unable to make the Key West reunion. I am inserting Jim's outline for the reunion which is subject to change depending on the numbers of interested members wanting to attend the 2025 Reunion.



Draft Schedule Reunion 2025

April 21-25, 2025, San Diego, CA

As of April 19, 2024

#### Monday April 21:

Check-in Hospitality Room (Hotel TBD)

- Meet and Great - Snacks and Drinks
Provided

#### **Tuesday April 22:**

Breakfast on your own

0800: Hospitality Room Open for Coffee

0930: Depart for USS Midway Tour

1000: USS Midway Group tour - Veterans \$22

BuddyLine 1 May 2024

# **Executive Corner**



#### Draft Schedule Reunion 2025

1300: Balboa Park: Lunch and Museum

visits on your own.

1600: Return to Hotel

1730: Group Dinner - San Diego Old Town - Casa Guadalajara or Casa De Reyes

1930: Return to Hotel - Hospitality Room Open for Desert and Conversation

#### Wednesday April 23:

Breakfast on your own

0800: Hospitality Room Open for Coffee

0930: Depart for Group Tour for one of the following Commands depending on Availability

**EOD Mobile Unite Three** 

or EOD Training Unite One

or Mobile Diving Salvage Unit One

or BUDS

1300: Lunch TBD

1500: San Diego Bay Boat Cruise – 2 hours - \$33ea

1730: Group Dinner at Toms Light House

1930: Return to Hotel - Hospitality Room Open for Desert and Conversation

#### Thursdays April 24:

Breakfast on your own

0800: Hospitality Room Open for Coffee

0930: Depart for San Diego Pacific Coast Highway tour with site seeing stops.

Lunch - time and place TBD.

The tour will continue with a wine tasting stop at TBD.

1600: Return to Hotel

1730: Farewell Group Dinner - Little Italy

1930: Return to Hotel - Hospitality Room Open for Desert and Conversation

#### Friday April 25: Checkout

#### **Assumptions:**

The Hotel will be selected based on cost/location.

Group dinners will be individual checks, regular menu.

## **Executive Corner**



Draft Schedule Reunion 2025

UWSS will pay for the Hospitality Suite and drinks and snacks.

May need to one time charge \$25 or \$50 per person to cover suite drinks and snacks.

Must have a suitable number of members and guests that will attend; to search for hotels and transportation.

Hotels to consider:

Paradise Point Resort - Great Location with plenty to do on site. Marriot Old Town - Great location Hampton Inn and Suites - Liberty Station - Great location

<u>Humphreys Half Moon Inn</u> - excellent location

#### transportation

As you can see Jim is putting his firsthand experiences to work. He has planned and executed several Reunions, conventions, and get-togethers. Please support his efforts to make the 2025 Reunion one of the better ones.

<u>Give us feedback right away, please</u>. We are accepting Attending, not able to attend, and a strong possibility will attend. You will attend (not sure yet). The cost will be decided by the number of responses.

We really need the feedback. We might have to make changes so more members can attend a gathering of old buds from the UWSS.



The BuddyLine newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August & November

# Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School Officers

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(continued from Feb BL 2024) Every adventurer looks to some far-off place as a Mecca for exploration. For us divers, and anglers, it was the Dry Tortugas. This group of ten coral keys lie seventy miles west of Key West and is the site of the Fort Jefferson National Monument, a marine biological station, and a bird sanctuary. The Fort was built as a naval outpost to protect the Gulf of Mexico. It became a famous federal prison when Dr. Samuel Mudd was sentenced there for tending to President Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. To do the trip justice, I obtained permission to use the Underwater Swimmers School Landing Craft Utility (LCU). We would sail during Christmas vacation 1960, inviting all interested parties to participate in a week of re-qualifying dives, fishing, and adventure. Jay Stanley took care of all the heavy logistical requirements such as procuring six old junk deep freezers, a few large refrigerators, and as much ice as he could beg, borrow, or buy. The trip was advertised as the "Big Catch." Eight instructors and staff volunteered to make the trip and we departed as scheduled. The LCU was equipped with three 6-71 diesel engines which pushed it at about eight knots. We had gone about fifteen miles when one of the engines quit, reducing speed in half. Another fifteen miles out and a second engine failed, cutting us down to a slow crawl at two knots. We had carried a large spare part inventory and our staff engineer thought he could get at least one of the engines back online with the other a possibility. With this encouraging news, I decided to press on. After a seemingly never-ending voyage, we picked up the Tortugas light around 0400 dropping anchor before sunrise. Lack of a night's sleep did not stop anyone from heading off in different directions. I had anchored the boat off a 70-foot drop off in what looked like a promising bottom. It was far better

than anyone had ever expected. Those aboard the LCU hauled in fish all day. I cast lures along the shallow bank off Fort Jefferson and locked into some monsters including a forty-pound barracuda. The fishing and diving were so sensational, I found it difficult to decide what to do next. One thing was for sure, I was not about to waste a lot of time sleeping and eating. We dove and fished to exhaustion. Our nightlights at anchor attracted tarpon, snook, bonito, kingfish, and thousands of vellowtails. The bottom seemed paved with all kinds of grouper, snapper, jack, and plenty of sharks. We hauled in fish until our arms were sore. During daylight hours we dove in 35-40 feet of water and admired the beauty of pristine, virgin, and unexplored territory. This was a "once in a lifetime" trip. We returned with over two thousand pounds of whole fish, one thousand five hundred pounds of fillets, and many large lobsters. Everyone who made the trip filled their freezers to capacity. We gave away the rest to friends and those in need. Every combat vessel in the US Navy undergoes what is known as an Operation Readiness Inspection (ORI). The flotilla commander schedules these inspections periodically and the results enable him to award the best combatants a big "E" for excellence, which they can proudly display. The commander whose ship is so recognized is sure to have a significant edge in the brutal competition for promotion; thus, ORIs were not taken lightly by individual captains. To spice up the normally mundane procedure, the destroyer squadron commander asked our command to challenge the security of destroyers during ORI periods. We readily agreed. It would give our UDT instructors practice in attacking combatants on full alert. Our first attack was against a destroyer tied up at its berthing dock port side to a large concrete pier containing two wooden maintenance repair buildings



facing end to end. Our plan was to board the vessel and to capture it during great confusion. Two of our twenty-man contingent entered one of the buildings with SCUBA gear. Once inside, they ignited a smoke pot and two flares. Another of our men yelled "fire" and sounded the fire alarm. A third rushed to the destroyer's gangplank asking for immediate help, particularly fire extinguishers, hoses, and oxygen units. It did not take long before complete chaos prevailed. Gangplank security evaporated totally. Fifteen of our men boarded the vessel, shoving aside crew members streaming ashore trying to get a first-hand view of the fire. Two of our men assisted a volunteer crew member suit up for entry into the building. Our men separated the man's oxygen inhalation hose at the last-minute rendering it useless. I was dressed as a seaman and boarded the vessel without difficulty. I made my way to the bridge and crypto center. To my surprise it was unlocked. I entered the room, photographed its interior, and left after locking it up. We controlled the ship completely a brief time later when Captain Pearson arrived in his sports car. When he did not recognize his gangway watch, he knew what had happened. In fact, his suspicions were aroused when he heard the base fire alarm blasts. The Squadron Commodore's was beaming during the ORI critique. The Officer of the Deck (OD) claimed we had not penetrated the crypto center. I asked, "Then how did we get these photos?" His jaw dropped when he looked at them. When told about the critique, another destroyer captain, CDR John Reves, commented, "That would never happen aboard my vessel!" The commodore overheard the remark and asked me to be especially tough on Reves a few weeks later his ORI. This was a delightful challenge, and we used our imagination to the fullest. A week before the scheduled ORI, our Chief

Boatswain Mate, Jay Stanley, phoned the XO informally, telling him he was being assigned to the vessel. Chief Stanley produced the story the navy Bureau of Personnel (BUPERS) was cutting his orders, but he wanted to get an early start and would report for duty the following Monday, the day the ORI was to begin. I boarded the destroyer early in the morning on inspection day with ten student officers from the Fleet Sonar School. The day would be spent in Gulf Stream waters exercising school procedures against a US submarine in the area. I had showed my regular ID card to the gangway guard, and he let me through without checking my name against the student manifest. At sea we split into two groups. One went to the Combat Information Center (CIC), the other to the bridge. I joined the CIC crowd and stayed at the end of the line in hopes of finding out what the student CIC officer was expected to do. It did not take me long to understand the essence of anti-submarine warfare, CIC information was used to plot the submarine's position, course, speed, and anticipated evasive turns and make recommendations to the bridge to best position our vessel for a hedgehog and depth charge attack without colliding with our sister destroyer also pursuing the mock enemy. The aim of the two destroyers was to shorten the run between depth charge attacks and thereby pressure the submarine to destruction. By the time my turn came up, I was ready. I had no trouble anticipating the submarine commander's next move. He did what I would have done had I been at the con. I made run after run completing three passes before our sister destroyer was able to make a single pass. The CIC officer praised my performance as "splendid." I could also sense looks on the student faces asking, "Who the hell is this guy?" The afternoon lunch was a formal affair. The

captain sat at the table's head and treate us like new Ensigns. I kept my mouth shut. The students thought I was a ship's company and the ship's officers thought I was a student. It worked well. I was even bold enough to ask for seconds. I was on the bridge with the rest of the students when we approached the dock. There standing on the pier was Chief Stanley in his spiffy blue uniform with white cap. The captain was delighted. At the time, the highest-ranking boatswain aboard ship was a second-class petty officer. "The assignment of a chief boatswain mate is a gift from the heavens," said the skipper as he ordered his XO to help carry the man's duffel bag aboard ship. I almost choked, knowing the bag was loaded with mock explosives. I had to hand it to the Old Man, he was taking no chances. After the students disembarked, he pulled up the gangway and headed to sea, anchoring in the swift southwest channel. I hid in his room and had to wait at least an hour before he finally returned. He was shocked when I handed him the note saying "YOU HAVE BEEN KILLED BY AGGRESSOR FORCES. YOU ARE TO REMAIN SILENT UNTIL THE EXERCISE HAS BEEN COMPLETED OR IF YOU FEEL THERE ARE SAFETY REASONS TO TERMINATE THE EXERCISE." All he could say was, "Well I'll be damned!" Using the captain's intercom, I said "Will Chief Stanley report to the captain's office immediately." He reported to me a few minutes later. Chief Stanley then used the intercom to summon all petty officers for a meeting in the Skipper's office. When they were all inside, we handed them their kill messages. Within a few hours we had complete control of the ship. Before leaving, we told the captain we had planted over five hundred bombs aboard his vessel and wished him luck in finding them. I must say in all fairness, the captain was a class act and took all of this in stride. I mentioned

his to the Commodore, and he appreciated my comments. On the next ORI, we decided to conduct an underwater attack at 0300 while the destroyer was tied at the dock. We ran pairs of swimmers against the vessel using closed circuit SCUBA, open circuit SCUBA, and only swim fins and mask. I volunteered for the latter, by far the most challenging. The rules were simple. A swimmer pair would be detected once the ship's searchlight held them in view for three minutes, including bubbles emitted by a SCUBA team. Once detected, the swimmer was to swim to the surface and surrender. A flare ignited next to the destroyer's hull was considered a hit. A flare signal anywhere else signified an emergency, terminating the exercise. All searchlights were then to be directed skyward. I made my way along a finger pier directly opposite the target, dodging an array of searchlights sweeping the area. A fifty-to-sixty-yard underwater swim would be required before I could reach the hull and surface behind an overboard water discharge outlet near the ship's stern. Navigation would have to be precise. I made a few dives for orientation purposes. The water was dark, but it was easy to tell direction from the predominant light pattern to the east. After hyperventilating for a minute, I made the crossing and came up. I then surfaced under the spray and stayed there wondering how long it would take for someone to find me. I remained there for over an hour without detection. I had a clear view of everything. All our open circuit swimmers were picked up by searchlight. The final swim pair was discovered exactly where I descended on



my approach dive. Ensign Hiles, a new officer to our command, was swimming with an instructor. When detected, however, instead of surrendering he lit his flare and tossed it at the searchlight beam. Everyone, including me, thought there was an emergency and we all surfaced as the searchlights went skyward. I swam to him quickly only to learn there was nothing wrong. I read him the riot act for screwing up the operation and from that moment on I knew Ensign Hiles was a loose cannon who needed watching. I might add he did not disappoint me. I later learned he turned the air off on a student's tank during a one-hundred-and-thirty-foot dive. Fortunately, we had paired him with one of the best students and nothing happened. The man had to be crazy to do this to a student. I told him so when I prohibited him from future student dives. We conducted countless night attacks against alerted destroyers and cruisers at anchor in the swiftest of current. Our closed-circuit success rate was high. The only problem was overshooting the vessel and not being able to swim back to the anchored target. For this reason, we always kept a safety boat a mile astern with the light on. If a swimmer pair missed, he was directed to surface, shown a white light, and to swim to the LCPR. If the current pushed them past the recovery boat, they were to light an emergency flare for pickup. (to be continued next issue)









Amid a moonless night, two United States Air Force Pararescuemen, Staff Sergeant Alex Mitchell and Sergeant Gary Walker, prepared to embark on a daring mission over the vast and mysterious Atlantic Ocean. Their mission: to parachute onto a freighter ship that had radioed for assistance in the middle of the Atlantic, its Captain in the throes of a life-threatening heart attack.

As the massive C-130 Hercules transport plane lumbered through the night sky, the two PJs checked their gear meticulously. Their night vision goggles illuminated their determined expressions, reflecting the tension in their eyes. They were the best of the best, trained to manage high-stress situations in the most challenging environments, and this mission was no exception.

At precisely 2 o'clock in the morning, the green light above the cargo bay signaled their cue. The two PJs leaped out of the aircraft, their parachutes blossoming above them as they descended gracefully towards the freighter ship, christened the "S.S. Atlantis."

However, as they descended toward the ship, they were immediately confronted by the relentless forty-foot swells of the ocean. throwing off their precise jump. They hit the water hard, struggling to maintain their composure in the churning sea. Sergeant Walker later told Staff Sergeant Mitchell he had sucked most of his scuba tanks dry from the entry into the cold ocean. His regulator did have evidence of a deep set of bit marks. The freighter, the "S.S. Atlantis," had altered its course to create a makeshift racetrack pattern around the distressed Sergeant's location. Floodlights from the ship illuminated the darkness, casting a surreal glow over the heaving ocean. Staff Sergeant Mitchell and Sergeant Walker could feel the collective focus of the ship's

crew as they navigated the vessel, their hope pinned on the PJs' arrival. With the towering swells lifting and dropping them like helpless driftwood, the PJs fought to regain their bearings. The freezing water soaked through their gear, and the darkness of the ocean depths seemed endless. However, their training kicked in, and they knew they had to reach the "S.S. Atlantis" quickly to save Captain Charles Reynolds.

Desperation fueled their determination as they spotted the rope netting dangling from the ship's side. With every ounce of strength, they swam towards it, struggling to time their approach with the crest of the next swell. The ship's crew expertly coordinated their movements, adjusting the freighter's course to keep the netting within reach.

Finally, Staff Sergeant Mitchell and Sergeant Walker grasped the cold, wet ropes. They clung to the netting, their fingers aching from the cold and the exertion. The ship's crew, led by the determined chief mate, began hoisting them up, their muscles straining against the relentless swell that repeatedly slammed them into the ship's side.

For what felt like an eternity, the PJs fought their way up the forty-foot ascent. The ship's floodlights revealed their determination as they inched upward, their fatigue and the relentless pounding of the swells making each foot advance requiring a significant effort

But as the two PJs reached the deck, battered, and bruised, they were greeted by the cheers and applause of the "S.S. Atlantis" crew. They had made it, against all odds, to save Captain Reynolds. The gratitude in the crew's eyes was palpable, and the PJs knew that their incredible journey through the rough seas was worth every drop of sweat and every bruise they had endured.

Immediately, they rushed to the ship's Captain's quarters, finding Captain Reynolds in excruciating pain, clutching his chest. With unwavering professionalism, Staff Sergeant Mitchell and Sergeant Walker stabilized Captain Reynolds and administered the necessary medication to keep him alive until they could reach proper medical facilities.

For the next three days, the PJs remained on board the freighter ship, working tirelessly to ensure Captain Reynolds' condition remained stable. They also lent their expertise to the ship's crew, teaching them essential medical skills and assisting with other minor emergencies that arose during their voyage. The crew members grew to admire their dedication and bravery.

Finally, after what felt like an eternity at sea, the "S.S. Atlantis" arrived at the beautiful shores of the Virgin Islands. Captain Reynolds was transferred to a waiting ambulance and rushed to a local hospital, where he received life-saving treatment.

Nowassistance. it was They the contacted the American PJs' turn to seek embassy in the Virgin Islands, explaining their mission and requesting transportation back to Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. The embassy, recognizing their heroism, arranged for a military flight to pick them up.

Back at Eglin AFB, Staff Sergeant Mitchell and Sergeant Walker briefed their superiors on the dramatic rescue mission in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Their mission had been a testament to their training and dedication to saving lives, even in the most challenging circumstances. The experience had brought them closer together as a team, and they knew that they were always.

ready to answer the call of duty, no matter where it took them.

## **GARY HIRSCHKOPF**

Firefighter/PJ Thailand Ret. Firefighter, Pittsburgh 412-983-3518 609 Tyro Way Apt 2 Pittsburgh, PA 15210-4058

Gary was the inspiration behind the ChatGPT generated store. The story was exciting to hear Gary tell it. He even wrote it down for me and put it in a letter a few years back. I must say I asked to be pin pals and have not held up my end of the agreement very well. I should call him and chat a bit before this thought fades from memory. Thank you, Gary, for the delightful story.





# From the mailbag:



Jim Stephenson

Email: mountaincruiser@hotmail.com

Name: Andrew J Cabral, HM1, USN, Ret. Email: spindoctorfccm@gmail.com is asking – I've been told that my former Command Master Chief, Larry Hubbard a graduate of UWSS. Was Wallace Gray Rather a graduate, as well? How many Navy Corpsmen attended the school? Please advise.

I did tell him I would have to screen the members for that answer.

\_

Name: Capt. <u>Colin Jones</u> USN(Retired) Email: <u>colin@ieee.org</u> was asking about: I am a member. Need to pay my dues. Will not make the reunion, am 88 years old and a bit beat up! How much do I owe, and where should I send?

Colin,

Thank you for asking. Your dues end May of this year. Please send \$25 to my address below and I will update your records. Jim

Jim Houle UWSS Treasurer 3220 W. Pebble Beach Ct Lecanto, FL 34461

This might help someone else that is not sure about who is who and where to send your dues. It is reassuring to hear members keeping in touch even though they may not travel as they once did. Thank you, Colin, for staying connected.

\_

Name: **Robert Evers** 

Email: <u>robert.evers@pm.me</u> sends us a bit of sad news.

Message-

I am writing to let you know that my father, Robert E Evers who is a member of FO/UWSS died on 28 February. He was 87 but was in great shape and had just been in Germany visiting my family and me. He went in for a valve replacement and seemed to be doing great. Then he just suddenly took a turn for the worst. If you require any further information from me, or if there is anything you need me to do, please do not hesitate to contact me.

\_

Bob Rieve replied: David... I saw your request in Buddy Line. I can answer some of your questions. From your request I assume your father attended UWSS in the 60's. Was your father in UDT? I have access to a database that lists all the names of the men who graduated from the training to become a Frogman/SEAL. I asked for your father's name to be checked. I assume his last name was Gilley. There are no men on the list with the last name of Gilley. If you are sure your father was in UDT, you can provide me with more information, and I will do further research. Information that would help confirm if you father were a Frogman is: His full name and rank or rate. What class did he graduate from? Where had he trained? What team(s) did he serve with? Names of people he trained or served with? I recommend you check his DD214 for information.

Personnel that went to UWSS in the early 1960's at Key West, did they go through BUDS afterwards? "No." In 1968, training started being called BUDS with Class 46 in Coronado and all training was moved to Coronado by 1971. Prior to 1971, training was conducted in two locations – NAB, Coronado, CA and NAB Little Creek, Norfolk, VA. Before 1968, Frogman/SEAL training in NAB, Coronado was called UDTRA. SCUBA training was done during UDTRA. Semi-closed- and closed-circuit

# From the mailbag:

training was conducted once the Frogman reported to his assigned team. Training conducted at NAB, Little Creek was called UDTR and later UDTB. Only those you training Little Creek attended UWSS, and that was after graduating from UDTR or UDTB. So, if your father attended UWSS and was UDT he would have graduated from UDTR or UDTB. To my knowledge, no one attended UWSS and then subsequently went to BUDS training.

Were UWSS and BUDS separate schools? "Yes." BUDS and UWSS are not connected. Totally separate missions and purpose. Personnel from all services were eligible to attend UWSS.

Why would a UDT have to go to BUDS if they were already UDT? They did not. (Only a few men have gone through training twice because of broken service.) Apart from evolutionary changes in the curriculum UDTRA, UDTR, UDTB, and BUDS are all the same programs. Combat swimmer training and parachute training are now included in the BUDS curriculum and the course no longer includes this training.

I graduated from a UDTB class in Little Creek, went to UWSS, and did parachute training at Ft Benning.

I hope this information helps clarify any confusion. Bob Rieve

Thank you, Bob. That was a great reply.

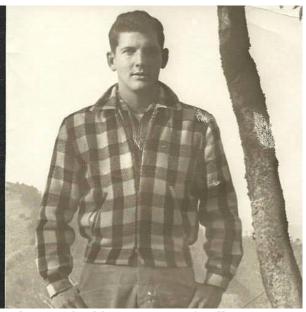






#### **Crossing the Bar:**

# Robert E. (Bob) Evers



Robert E. (Bob) Evers, 87, of Gilbert, Arizona, died Feb. 28, 2024, at Lund Home, Hospice of the Valley, Gilbert. He was a Gilbert resident for over 35 years.

Robert E. (Bob) Evers was born in Grand Island, Nebraska on Oct. 29, 1936, to William F. and Maxine (Williams) Evers.

He was the youngest of three children and raised amongst German immigrants in Grand Island. As a boy he was impacted by the example of service set by his father, and the great movements of troops and materials during WW2. He attended Grand Island public schools, and later studied political science at Kearney State College.

His military career began when he lied about his age to enlist. He served briefly in the Nebraska Army National Guard, before serving first in the US Air Force in photo reconnaissance, and then in the US Navy as 2nd Class Diver and EOD Technician within the Naval Special Operations Community.

He was a graduate of the US Naval School of Underwater Swimmers in Key West, and was a veteran of both Korea, and Vietnam.

After leaving the service he entered law enforcement, working both as a police officer, and in private security. He also worked as a surgical scrub nurse at Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, NE.

He was a life member of the VFW, American Legion, DAV, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Fraternal Order UWSS, and Masonic and Elks Lodges. Bob joined Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, Phoenix, just before his death.

Bob loved to read (especially history), foreign travel with his wife, oil painting, and his various dogs. He was especially fond of dachshunds. He was an aviation buff since childhood, and was both a fixed-wing, and helicopter pilot.

Survivors include his wife of 54 years, Diane (Gee) Evers of Gilbert, Arizona; son, Bob Evers, and his wife Carolin of Schweinfurt, Germany; and son, Eric Evers, and his wife Desiree of Clay Center, Kansas; He is also survived by his 8 beloved grandchildren, Angela, Christopher, Tyler, Isabella, Anna-Marie, Sophia, Marlene, and Benedikt. Bob was extremely excited about the coming arrival of his first great-grandchild in May.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his sister Dorathy Wiese, brother William Lee Evers and by his daughter, Kim Zerr.

# U. S. Navy Underwater Swimmers Treasurer Report Friday, April 19, 2024

Bank report for April 19, 2024

Deposits \$200.00

Withdrawals/Debits (USPS) -\$10.40

Ending Balance \$14,035.98

We have one new member this quarter. Please welcome Ken Herdliska, USAF pararescueman. Class of 73-3 UWSS.

