

# Buddy Line



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

## COMMANDING OFFICERS



LT. R. A. FAY USN  
6-15-54 - 7-15-56



LCDR J.C. ROE USN  
7-15-56 - 12-19-57



LCDR C.R. HINMAN USN  
12-19-57 - 5-9-60



LCDR K. PLOOF USN  
5-9-60 - 12-1-62



LCDR R.T. FLEMING USN  
11-30-62 - 11-30-64

### COMMANDING OFFICERS

### NAVSCOLUWTRSWIMMERS



LT. BURNHAM USN  
11-30-64 - 11-30-66



LCDR P.W. WILLITS USNR  
6-30-66 - 10-1-68



LCDR C.W. WEHNER USN  
10-1-68 - 7-24-70



LCDR P.M. BADGER JR. USN  
7-24-70 - 10-6-72



LCDR R.A. ANDERSON USN  
10-6-72 - 9-17-73

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## F/O UWSS OFFICERS:

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*The BuddyLine, newsletter for the Fraternal Order of the Underwater Swimmers School is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.*

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Lots to report for this edition of the BuddyLine so let's get to it.

### **UWSS Reunion 2020**

By popular demand, we have begun the planning for our return to Panama City, Florida for the 2020 UWSS Reunion. The tentative dates have been set for May 14-16, 2020 which is the weekend after Mother's Day. So mark the date on your calendar and we hope to see you there.

### **Membership Dues**

In the past, we collected membership dues primarily during the reunion year, which had been scheduled to occur during the odd numbered years. At the 2017 reunion in San Diego, we elected to move up the next reunion to 2018 in Key West. One of the benefits of attending the reunion was that attending members' dues were included in the registration. However, an unintended consequence of the back-to-back reunions was that the dues for approximately half the membership that did not attend last year fell due this year. To remedy the situation, the Board has elected to make the membership dues date fall next year to coincide with the 2020 reunion and for every subsequent biennial year. This means that for members who were going to be invoiced for dues this year, your membership has been extended to 2020.



**Membership Pins**



On another note, we are excited to announce a new member benefit. Every member in good standing will be receiving our new UWSS lapel pin within the next few weeks. So be looking in your mail for your pin and wear it proudly. Additional pins may be purchased from the UWSS Ship's Store. And while we're on the subject of the Ship's Store, we are offering a \$10 discount of purchases of \$50 or more so be sure to check out what we have in stock. All proceeds go to toward supporting the UWSS functions and activities.

**UWSS History Project**

We have begun a project we can use your help on - a comprehensive history of the UWSS from its commissioning in the summer of 1954 (and even events leading up to the formation of the school) to its decommissioning in 1973. Our first assignment involves the 10 commanding officers of NAVSCOLUWTRSWIMMERS, where they came from and where they went after leaving UWSS.

Commanding Officer	From	To
Lt. R.A. Fay	6/15/54	7/15/56
Lt. Cdr J.C. Roe	7/15/56	12/19/57
Lt. Cdr C.R. Hinman	12/19/57	5/9/60
Lt. Cdr K. Ploof	5/9/60	12/1/62
Lt. Cdr R.T. Fleming	12/1/62	11/30/64
Lt. Burnham	11/30/64	11/30/66
Lt. Cdr P. W. Willets	11/30/66	10/1/68
Lt. Cdr C.W. Wehner	10/1/68	7/24/70
Lt. Cdr P.M. Badger, Jr.	7/24/70	10/6/72
Lt. Cdr R.A. Anderson	10/6/72	9/13/73

Anyone who can provide pictures, paperwork, stories (gospel truth or embellished), please forward to Raelyn (our BuddyLine editor). Also, we could use a volunteer who has skills and other resources for researching the history of the UWSS (including the Navy Archives). If that person is you, step up and let us know.

As always, if there is anything we can do for you, do not hesitate to contact me or anyone on the Board. We are here to serve.

*Dave*

*What do you remember about your Commanding Officer at UWSS?  
Send them to [buddyline@uwss.org](mailto:buddyline@uwss.org)*

## TELL US YOUR STORY:



*From Dave Gholson:*

56 year old memory repeats the phrase “Buoyant Free Assent” coupled with “blow and go” Also remember the first time with BFA was in the pool in the school. Sand Key with the YFU-2 and those bells. Also I recall Pappy Hewlett would be in the lower bell eating an onion, so when you fought your way down he would be right in your face, “Hi”.

*From Jerry Padrta, Port St. Lucie, FL*

I am enclosing a picture of my group at the school. We were the 2nd class to go through the school. We started in April 1955. The group was all officers, mostly fresh caught ENSIGNS, enroute to EOD School at Indianhead. I am third from left, middle row.



Under Water Swimmers School  
Class #2- April 1955

Of the many strange and wondrous events, a couple stick with me. The first occurred during a night surface swim from a mile or more out, to Ft. Taylor. We were well on our

way in, when we heard a panicked voice yell SHARK!!!!

Almost immediately, the vest lights came on all over the course! Talk about being scared — Everyone floated on his back, while waiting to get picked up by our boat. As for me, THE ONLY PART OF ME THAT TOUCHED THE WATER WERE THE CHEEKS OF MY ASS AND MY SHOULDER BLADES! No way were we going to remain face-down and expose the bait.

When we all got back ashore, we found that Howard Bissel, the swimmer on my

right in the picture had swum into a large Portuguese man-o-war. He looked like he had been sewed up all over with a sewing machine.

Another time, we found an

old cannon from some Spanish ship. It was later brought in.

I loved every day at swim school, I hated to see it end.

## TELL US YOUR STORY:



*From Robert M. Richter, LTC/USAR (Ret.):*

I was U.S. Army (Active and Reserve), and Federal Law Enforcement, with several Navy-related assignments.

While attending OCS at Fort Benning, I met two Navy Seals undergoing Airborne Training. They really impressed me and I never forgot the encounter.



As a Diver with the U.S. Customs Patrol, our equipment was supplied by, and our program monitored by the U.S. Navy. When we were looking for advanced training (i.e., SWAT, Miami Police Dept., etc.), we had a program with SEAL Team ONE in Coronado and Niland, CA.

When the Dive Program became more advanced, several of our divers attended the Navy's Second Class Divers School.

I was a Boat Captain and Diver (Scuba) in Key West, FL. Rather than send me

to Coronado, the Army's Special Forces Underwater Operation Course was

being conducted in Key West (1979), and I was assigned there. It was the toughest training I experienced in my Army career. The instructors were top-notch and the students, Army, Marine, and Air Force, were great to train with. At the completion



of training, when they pinned my Scuba badge onto my patrol uniform, it had been plated in gold to match my other uniform badges and pins.



I, subsequently, had a reserve assignment as Security Chief for the Admiral at the CCJTF (Caribbean Contingency Joint Task Force).

I am extremely proud to be associated with the outstanding personnel of the UWSS.

# TELL US YOUR STORY:



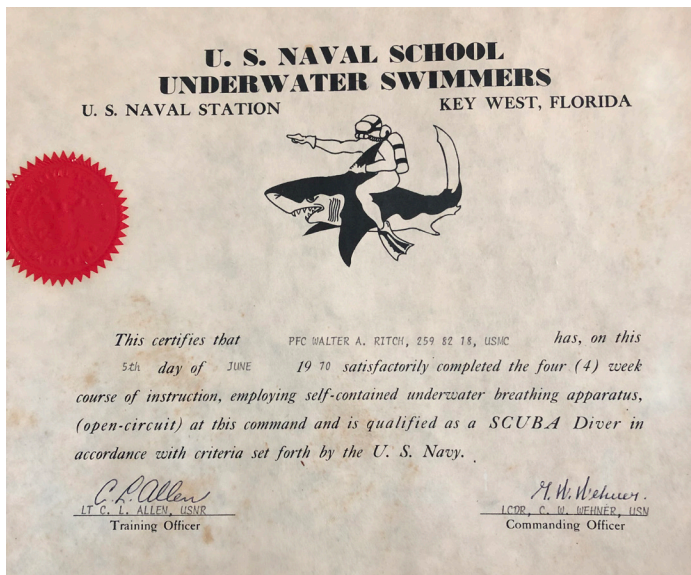
From Walt Ritch, class #7006



The black and white is me in November 1970 on a Med float diving with the UDT divers. My Lt arranged for my Marine Dive Buddy and I to train with them when they went on dives. That's me standing in the middle.



I realize there's not a lot here but maybe if you need filler space for an issue. The first one is June 1970 in front of the shark/diver monument so to speak. My self Pfc Walt Ritch class #7006 representing the 2nd Recon Bn from Camp Lejeune NC.



It was customary that if you saw "Lan-gusta" or spiny lobster on a recreational or training dive to break the tail off and keep them for a BBQ at the conclusion

## TELL US YOUR STORY:



of the 4 week SCUBA session. As I recall there had been 72 tails collected and frozen by students of class #7006 along with copious amounts of beer. At any rate keep up the good work with the E issues of the Buddy Line.



*From John Marinovich, Lt Cdr., Ret*

Class 30 was lucky enough to have one special Marine....I'm sorry I don't recall his name but here is a description...One of the shorter guys in the class with a huge Semper Fi tattoo on his shoulder, a voice that cut fog, and teeth like a rake. He had been to every special school the Marines offered. While we all wore standard issue fins, he went to town to buy extra long fins and wore two pair of wool socks to make them fit .Guess who was one of the first swimmers on the beach!

Well this next part describes the night before graduation....there we were in a Duval Street bar enjoying lots of "Depth

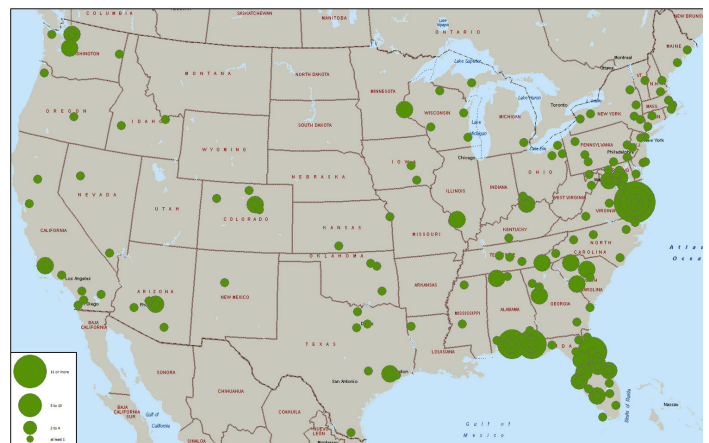
Charges" along with "Basket" a UDT instructor who was called that because of his pot belly. It must have gotten wild because the next thing was the arrival of a Key West Paddy Wagon. When the Marine asked "What is going on?" he was bopped on the head and thrown in the wagon. His buddy "Basket" also asked and the answer was "You don't like it" and bop he went in too....

Well, next day at graduation (and that scene still burns brightly in my memory).....Here was Cdr. Roe congratulating the Marine whose hat had a port list to accommodate the lump!

PS Another fond memory:

I was at the school when Rudy Enders was there. His reputation for free diving was well known. He and the Chief would go out and bring back huge grouper on their spear fishing dives.

## MEMBERSHIP MAP



map researcher: Ken Recoy  
map graphics: Dave Byers

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## TELL US YOUR STORY:

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From Ken Recoy:

So being a Radioman (and a Diver) on US Navy Submarines, as I'm sure you know..., I am not accustomed to talking much about the specifics of where I was or was not, when or if I was there, what I did or did not do or what if anything I may remember...

What I can say is, I reported aboard the WWII Diesel Submarine (Boat) The USS Threadfin SS-410 in late Summer 1971 in the Philadelphia, PA. Naval Shipyards, and was told the 1st day, (as all new "non-quals" on Submarines are told), if I didn't get "Qualified in Submarines" in a few short months, I would be kicked off Submarines for good. So, I immediately became very interested in Submarine Qualifications. I still have my Qual Cards.

Shifting gears here, sometime in the next few months, our Captain asked for volunteers to attend US Navy Divers School in our Home Port Key West. And, although I had a crazy love with diving, the Ocean, swimming, etc., I was 20 years old and had no clue what I was really getting myself into.. Anyway, 13 of the Tfin Crew volunteered right away. However, by the time we got to Key West several months later, only 3 of us made the cut and received Orders to report to Under Water Swimmers School in February 1972.

What I remember next (but cannot confirm) is we arrived in Key West by Submarine in the mid-winter, 1971-72. And we (the USS Threadfin SS-410) did some stuff locally for the next few months near

and around Key West. We pulled into Key West, quietly under the dark of night, so my first impression of Key West, that first morning (we were docked just inside the inner mole), it was a beautiful site! I am an Iowa boy, born and raised, and had not been to Florida before!

Then in February 1972 the 3 of us reported to UWSS KW. As I am told 73 of us young bucks started out in my UWSS Class and 20 of us finished. I do have a copy of the list of my graduating Class, names, etc. But, I do not have a copy of my UWSS Graduating Class picture.

At the end of the first day, there was only 2 of us from the Threadfin, my buddy Mark Nelson and myself. My impression at this point was that these UDT/Seal and other Instructors were some what serious about all this! Anyway as you all probably well understand and can relate, I did what I was told, worked hard, kept my head down and my mouth shut, did my best and tried to stay out of the "line of fire".

I weighed 152 pounds my first day of UWSS and 138 pounds on our graduation date. I told myself I would leave UWSS School in one of three ways, dead, boot-ed out for passing out or by graduating, but, that I would not quit, no matter what happened.

Now I am going to try to tell you about one particular day at UWSS that I was quite concerned about (at the time) the outcome. I think it was near the end of my third week. During the night I woke up





## FROM THE MAILBAG:

(several times) with a severe case of diarrhea. Yeah, no fun. So upon rising for the day and our morning run, I decided I better tell the Doc about my situation. Well when I did, I was asked something about so you are quitting? Or you can't participate? And I quickly mumbled something about, no, I didn't say that, I just wanted you to know because I don't know what is going to happen on our run..... Then I headed out because I was not really sure what else to do. Anyway, about a mile into the run, is when it started. And as my Classmates quickly started to move away from me, our Instructors soon noted my situation, and I won't go into any details here, but, they eventually told me to get on the truck. Ok, so I know you all know getting on the truck was generally not a good idea. So at first, I tried to ignore them, but as things continued to get worse, I eventually agreed to get on the truck, but, emphatically explained that I was not quitting. And (all while running) we briefly went back and forth on the matter, and I was eventually told, and convinced they understood and I got on the truck around mile 3. So, then the leg lifts started which did not help matters. Eventually, as I heard later, everyone had a big laugh about it and everything returned to normal by the next day.

I think the most disturbing thing for me was the night surface swims with the Portuguese Man o' War swarms we encountered. Ouch! All in all it was as they say "the best of times, the worst of times..", and I would do it all again in a heartbeat!

Thank you my friend. Jew fish were abundant at K.W. waters.

*Erasmio Riojas*

GGGGRRReat stuff! Thanks for the info!!

*Tommy Miles Jr.  
USAF Retired*

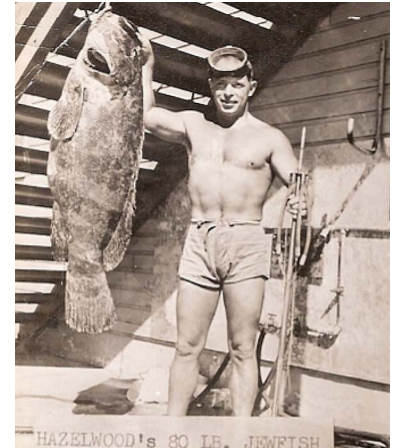
Great buddy line.

*Ed Abel*

I'm not sure who is looking for me, but I think it's Rudy Enders. Anyway, the answer to the question is that I was in that class. I have the photo here somewhere.

I was one of three USAF guys. SSgt Dudley Pecinpaugh, SSgt Tony Willis and Shorty Lyons was one of my instructors, Others marines included Lt Richardson Pvt. Brown, Cpl. Murphy. I'll look through my stuff and see if I have the photo. I can be reached @ [hjobeirne@aol.com](mailto:hjobeirne@aol.com) or phone # 256-883-6634.

*Henry O'Berine*



*What do you remember about your time at UWSS?*

*Send them to [buddyline@uwss.org](mailto:buddyline@uwss.org)*



Notes and updates -

1. We are in need of a volunteer to be our FO UWSS Chaplain. If you are able to serve, please let us know.
2. Thanks to the great work of Bob Bureker FO UWSS Webmaster we have a new Donation Button on the [www.uwss.org](http://www.uwss.org) Website. If you can give, please do.
3. Our FO UWSS 2020 Reunion Committee is working hard. Dave Gholson is our new Reunion Chair.
4. Don't forget about our FO UWSS Logo Wear Program. Jim Houle is our Logo Wear Chair and he is doing a great job! You can order by going to the UWSS Website or by sending an email to me at [kenrecoy@aol.com](mailto:kenrecoy@aol.com) And you can pay by check, PayPal or cash. My address is in this Buddyline and on the Website.
5. Please be sure to pay your "Label fees" if you want to continue to receive the Buddyline by regular mail. Label Fees are \$5.00 per year.
6. UWSS Graduating Class pictures. If you do not see your Class picture on the UWSS Website, please send in a copy for the FO UWSS Archives. I am currently in the process of copying our Archives into the electronic file.
7. Please be sure to reach out to your UWSS buddies and check on each other from time to time. None of us are getting any younger and it is always good to hear from a brother.

If I can help with a question about FO UWSS give me a call anytime.

Stay in touch. HooYah!

*Ken Recoy 620-305-9900 Cell  
UWSS Graduation Class March 1972  
Submariner and US Navy Diver*

**MEMBERSHIP APRIL 30, 2019**

Members in database = 281  
Members in good standing = 226

We have had 3 new members join us in the last Quarter:

- Russell Clusman, joined 3/8/2019
- Elliot Santiago, joined 3/8/2019
- Kenneth Taylor, joined 4/2/2019

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Account Balance:	
February 1, 2019	\$18,511.56
Dues Income	+ \$247.96
Label Fees Income	+ \$0.00
Logo Gear Sales Income	+ \$570.63
Other (Donations) Income	+ \$299.29
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Reunion Expenses	- \$0.00
Logo Gear Expenses	- \$2,066.73
BuddyLine Expenses	- \$67.84
Business Expenses	- \$19.95
Account Balance:	
April 30, 2019	\$17,474.92



## LOUIS J. DICROCE JR.

On February 18, 2019, Louis passed away with his son by his side in Washington D.C. He was 75.

Louis Di Croce Jr. was born 13 July 1943. He joined the Navy in 1962, following his brothers path of becoming a Navy Frogman, he went into the Submarine service until selected to attend UDTR. Upon completion of UDTR class 032, in 06 January 1965 at Little Creek, served with UDT-22, UDT-12, ST-1.

Lou completed 5 tours in Vietnam and was 4 days short of completing his 6th when on March 3, 1971, he along with other members of X-Ray platoon were ambushed ending his career as an operator.

Lou earned 2 Silver Stars, 5 Bronze Stars, and 3 Purple Hearts along with several other awards and citations associated with his times in the Teams and actions in Vietnam.

Lou had been a resident of the Armed Forces Retirement home since 2007, where many of his family and teammates had visited him. A Memorial will be scheduled at Arlington at a future date.



**T-shirts: \$25 to \$30 each**

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or phone (352) 249-9140

*All logo items are listed on the web site  
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*All prices include shipping.*



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**FO/UWSS**

**MISSION:**

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*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.*

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Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School  
Buddy Line Newsletter  
25810 East 330 Road  
Chelsea, OK 74016-5262

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