

Buddy Line



Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School, Key West, Florida

REUNION CANCELED!



We hope we will all be back together in Key West soon.

**Fraternal Order of
Underwater Swimmers
School Officers**



PRESIDENT:

Dave Gholson

goatlocker@msn.com
(270) 945-0719

**SECRETARY/
TREASURER:**

Ken Recoy

kenrecoy@aol.com
(620) 305-9900

25810 East 330 Road
Chelsea, OK 74016-5262

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

EDITORS:

Raelyn Webster

buddyline@uwss.org

Danny Mize

pjaviator@hotmail.com

WEBSITE:

Bob Bureker

navybob@q.com

www.uwss.org



14 January 2022:

To: All Members of the Fraternal Order of Underwater Swimmers School

It has not been a good week for our organization. Monday 1/10/2022 our President Dave Byers resigned due to work conflicts, which bumped our VP Dave Gholson up to our new President.

And after much study and deliberation, it saddens us that the first thing we must do is to let you know the UWSS Reunion, scheduled for May 2022 is officially cancelled. We had a long discussion with the Command Master Chief of N.A.S. Key West, and his outlook for next May is not good enough to risk opening up registration for rooms. Florida is the third highest COVID positive State in our Nation, and Florida has the third highest death rate from COVID in the United States with 62,504 dead as of today. In addition, the Florida government is actively resisting vaccinations and masking requirements, not a good sign for the coming months.

So we are back to ground zero now and all options are open. In the coming months, please talk amongst yourselves about future of our fraternal group. What is our outlook as we all approach an age where travel is difficult? The last diver graduated from UWSS Key West 48 years ago, which would make him about 68 to 70 or so.

Another current issue that has emerged is our newsletter, the BuddyLine is in danger of going away, as we have lost our

editor. Anyone (or their wife or children) with a flair for writing is requested to volunteer to be our BuddyLine editor, which also includes emailing out the quarterly BuddyLine and sending out a few paper copies as well to our brothers. If you are interested, please let us know by email. The reward for being editor is they get to rub elbows with lovable old military divers. There will be hundreds of members thankful to you for continuing our communications.

[We are glad to report that Danny Mize has stepped up to the plate to be our new BuddyLine editor. Thanks Danny!]

We also encourage you to get into the online mainstream and visit the U.S. Underwater Swimmers School Page on Facebook. It is a light forum to discuss anything related to UWSS, diving, or the US military in general.

As always, we will keep you informed through our BuddyLine, periodic Emails, the UWSS Website and the Facebook Group Page. And be sure to keep us up-to-date with your contact information.

Remember, we are the last of 7,000 US military divers trained in Key West. We survived the ordeal that produced the best trained divers in the World.

If there are any questions, please contact Dave or Ken, we would be proud to answer a question or swap sea stories.

Dave Gholson, FO UWSS President
Ken Recoy, FO UWSS Secretary/Treasurer



I was probably one of the few students who got to spend four wonderful months at UWSS. While on leave, I had injured my right elbow, and showed up with ten stitches in it. They were just put in four days previously. The medical doctor was called in. He removed the stitches and told me to bend my arm. When I did my elbow opened up and began to bleed. The dr. said, “well, he’s not faking it” and said “come with me kid, I’ll fix you up.” I couldn’t use my arm much for a few weeks, but I was allowed to go for runs, and do the leg exercises. Soon I was able to participate in all exercises. I was given ample time off and made many friends with the June/July 1968 class.

When my class finally rolled around In August, I was in top shape and able to get through the physical grind, so I could concentrate all my efforts to understand all of the mental challenges of diving science, medical conditions, dive tables, mixing gasses, and more. The mind was taxed as hard as the body. After having done daily exercises for so many weeks, I was becoming a little bored with the routine. My swim buddy wore the same size shoes, and so we purchased a pair of blue and yellow sneakers each. We showed up on the grinder for PT, we each had one blue and one yellow sneaker on. It only took a moment for the instructor to spot us and yelled, “pretty sneakers front and center!” Our sneakers were removed and tied around our neck, when we heard the dreaded call to “drop and give me 25”. We wore our sneakers that way, through the

morning run with a side trip through the sand dunes that were loaded with sand spurs, for our extra pleasure. At the end of the day, I found myself in an office with 3 of the instructors who each had their own special exercise that they wanted me to do. Then they kept asking me to do more pushups. They called me names, encouraged me with their feet, and cheered me on. Finally I rolled onto my back laughing uncontrollably. When I finally stopped laughing, I told them, “I couldn’t do another push-up, no matter what they thought or did.” That was when they released me and let it be known that I would be in proper uniform from then on.

*What do you remember about PT
at UWSS?*

Send them to buddyline@uwss.org

I also remember the night underwater swims. We would take a compass reading and then swim to shore. Unfortunately we swam over an old steel pipe and our compass was then leading us to Cuba. We towed a light that let the instructors know where we were at., but we were not allowed to surface. They let us swim south until they thought we would not get turned around without help. They tugged on our rope and advised us to take another compass reading. Needless to say we were the last team to get ashore.

Underwater at night is like visiting another universe. The bushes and sea-weeds



were covered in phosphorus and other chemicals that made them glow, shake, and sway with the waters movement. Sometimes I would think this large glowing bush was going to eat me, and I was glad to make to shore and not be sea-chow. The diving and swimming was nothing short of spectacular, things were pretty much unspoiled then. It was a great time to be in Key West.

Rich Craig

PS, if anyone has any class pictures of us I would love to see one (darkirish@live.com)

Rudy's Memories

(continued from November 2021 BuddyLine)

On December 31, 1958, Zaldivar Fulgencio Batista was driven out of power in Cuba by the revolutionary forces of Fidel Castro. Batista went into exile, first in the Dominican Republic and later to the United States. He arrived in the United States aboard his yacht and was forced to anchor alongside a small pier at the Key West Coast Guard station. Rumors circulated that Batista fled Cuba with some 12 million dollars, which led US authorities to go over the vessel with a fine toothcomb. No money was ever found. Although the odds were slim, I felt it could have been possible for Batista to cache the money at sea near some prominent feature such as a channel buoy, marker, reef, or lighthouse. I knew of all the likely places and asked Jay Stanley to help look for the treasure

the day after Batista's yacht arrived. We left early in the morning after loading enough double tank lungs to stay in the water all day, if necessary. We systematically covered all possibilities and dragged ourselves back to base at sunset without success. Had we found the loot, it would have been the world's best-kept secret.

In the late 1950s, Scott Slaughter, Bob Stevens, and I spent practically every weekend diving from American Shoals to Marquesas Rock. Other than a few Swim School guests, very few volunteered to dive with us in these seemingly unknown and dangerous waters. Of course, we had our share of shark encounters, and some are worth noting.

One weekend, Jim Hazelwood took some family friends aboard an LCPR to snorkel around the shallow coral heads close to Sand Key. He asked me to go along and look after the youngsters. We speared a few small grouper and kept them tied together inside the boat and covered them with wet rags. I was chasing a large grouper when a five foot black tip shark passed in front of me. I swam near the LCPR and identified at least a dozen sharks circling around the legs of six young boys and girls in the water. Without causing panic, I told them to climb in the boat immediately because I saw a shark. Hazelwood also spotted the sharks and helped everyone climb aboard to safety. We later discovered someone wanted to keep the speared fish fresh by tossing the stringer in the water. Once the fish were

TELL US YOUR STORY:



removed, the sharks disappeared. Nevertheless we moved to a different spot in shallow water and resumed swimming.

I once took a group of divers to the “J” Marker off Eastern Dry Rocks. We had been in the water for roughly an hour when a five foot lemon shark approached me with a hook and three foot wire leader trailing from its mouth. I usually didn’t worry about a shark of this size, but this one was different. It was arching its back and moving toward me. I was carrying a 45-caliber powerhead at the end of a three-foot spear shaft and struck the fish

broadside when it came in close. It quickly swam away but returned after I had just reloaded. I hit it again, yet it returned quickly. After four shots I began to get nervous. I had never encountered such an aggressive shark. And this one seemed to be after me. Two more lemon sharks, of the same size, showed up so I began making my way back to the LCPR two hundred yards away. Until this time, to keep the sharks in sight I held my head underwater. When I lifted it out in search of the LCPR, I noticed one of the divers was suspending a three-pound hog snapper on his spear above the water. I immediately swam over to him, grabbed the spear and threw it to the sharks. They no longer followed me. We retrieved the spear gun later with a very bent empty shaft.

The “K” Marker is the first reef west of Sand Key. I frequently joined Scott Slaughter and Bob Stevens in small competitions to determine who could shoot the largest

grouper and the most groupers. I was diving east of the marker when I spotted a nice forty-pound grouper in thirty-five feet of water. I swam down and speared the fish near the tail. It was a terrible shot. The fish pulled the gun out of my hand. I had to swim with all my might to keep my expensive gun in sight. As the gun was dragged between two thirty-foot brain coral heads rising from the bottom, I almost collided with a six to seven hundred pound bull shark. The massive shark stopped immediately while two smaller ones passed to the right and left of me. I was still a good quarter mile from the LCPR, without a gun, and surrounded by these sharks with no powerhead and nothing to fend them off. Fortunately, they were more interested in the grouper I had shot and left while I was swimming back to the boat. I never did recover my spear gun.

Sand Key reef consists of coral fingers which point south and disappear as the depth reaches approximately one hundred feet. About a mile south there is a second reef when the water shoals to around fifty feet. When the Gulf Stream moves inward toward Key West and over this reef, water visibility often exceeds two hundred feet unmasking the most spectacular underwater marine life imaginable. Such was the day when we witnessed the migration of millions of tiny shiners blanketing the area, thus obscuring the bottom. As I free dived through the schools of bait fish, the water would suddenly clear exposing a variety of large groupers. Never before had I seen such a concen-



tration of large groupers. They could have been there because of the bait, or it could have been a spawning run, nevertheless there were thousands of grouper swimming on the bottom. I could have shot a grouper on every dive, but it would not be a challenge and certainly not sporting. Instead, I donned my double tank aqua lung, swam down on top a large brain coral and sat there admiring the beauty. It was something to behold. The streams of tiny shiners seemed to instinctively know how much space was needed to stay safe. As groupers, snappers, and other fish roamed the bottom; the clouds would part momentarily and melt together after the fish passed. Enormous schools of bait fish swam above me, yet I detected no predators attacking the upper level fish. Chief Hazelwood was with me that day and his reaction to the scene coincided with mine. He too picked a coral head to sit on to view the beauty. To get a broader view, I decided to leisurely swim about and roam through the walls of fish. Suddenly the waters came clear and I was looking at an enormous eight hundred pound plus hammerhead shark. For some reason the shark didn't scare me. It was moving slowly, seeming more curious than menacing. If he did come closer, I felt I could hold him off by grabbing the bars at the end of its nose. As I suspected, it soon moved away and disappeared into the walls of bait fish.

(to be continued in the May 2022 BuddyLine)

From: Patrick Curran

I graduated from Swim School in Key West in 8/64 then on to EOD school and to EOD Unit 1 in Pearl, then all over Pacific and Vietnam.

I am writing up some of my interesting ops along with friends who were also EOD, pilots, SEALs, and salvage divers in Vietnam.

Dirks, Cahill and Lyons were instructors when I was at SS. I would like permission to use some of the pictures in your blog. I will give you full credit. Once we get the book together we'd like to donate any proceed to a worthy veterans organization.

Thanks for any help you can provide.
Lt. Curran

PS: Shorty Lyons was on my team in Da-nang when he removed the mortar from the ARVN

From Patrick Curran

Thanks for your quick response. I don't know if my stories are up to your standard, but I could share one...but it has a lot of your photos in it, and I'd need someone to proofread it to make sure I got all the details correct. It's been awhile. I don't think I revealed anything that is confidential, but that needs checking too.

Writing the book is a long story, but here goes. One of my dear friends, Rob Bond, who I met in Navy OCS and stayed together with through Swim School, Bomb

FROM THE MAILBAG:



School, Vietnam, and many years later climbing big peaks and generally screwing off around the world. So Rob and I decided to write up some of our EOD/Vietnam stories for our kids. Think Butch and Sundance when you think of Rob and I, co-dependent mavericks.

Well any way Rob committed suicide last year. Who knew? A very smart guy, Stanford B school grad with a successful career and a wonderful family. He was fiercely patriotic and may have had a touch of PTSD.

So, I have undertaken the task of finishing the stories and perhaps publishing them and contributing any proceeds to a worthy Veterans Group.

So that's what I am up to. I could share a swim school story. It's all true...the death of a boat crewman, Rob and I in the Key West Jail, etc. Not sure that you'd want to put it in BuddyLine. Let me know.

Finally, regarding the book. I will give proper credit in the book for any pictures. Who should I contact to get permission to use the Swim School picture?

Thanks again I look forward to working with you.

Pat Curran

From: Trisha Johnson

My grandfather, Frank (Francis J.) Hale, was one of the first instructors at the school and also did a stint at the EOD

school in Indian Head, MD where he met my grandmother. Though we have many photos from his reunions, our family does not have many photos from his time in the service. We would love to have any copies of pictures or remembrances anyone would be kind enough to share with us. Kind regards and thank you,

Trisha Johnson

trishamarsh@earthlink.net

From: Ross Neely MM1 (SS) USN-Ret

Boat house crew, 8-66 to 8-68. (EN-2) Trying to find a list of personnel assigned to UWSS during this time. Instructor Alan Hale and Jim Eaton. Also Jerry Regnier and McKinnon.

nannel1950@icloud.com

From: E.J. Kleinert

I was in the spring '55 class
Sent down by my BeachJumper Unit 2 command

Now 91 and still swimming.

Glad to share stories

Jack Kleinert (watch for Jack's memories in the May 2022 BuddyLine)

What are your memories of UWSS?

Send them to buddyline@uwss.org



by Ken Recoy

MEMBERSHIP JANUARY 31, 2022

Members in database = 290

Members in good standing = 241

We learned of the loss of William "Mike" McDowell this quarter. Mike passed 11/23/2021 UWSS Grad. and Joe Mares died on 9/14/2021.

We currently have 4 brothers in Hardship that FO UWSS is helping. Donations are accepted.

New Members this Quarter = 0

TREASURER'S REPORT

Account Balance:

November 1, 2021 = \$14,519.07

Dues Income	+ \$197.28
Label Fees Income	+ \$0.00
Logo Gear Sales Income	+ \$208.91
Other (Donations) Income	+ \$75.00

Reunion Expenses	- \$0.00
Logo Gear Expenses	- \$3,739.91
BuddyLine Expenses	- \$0.00
Business Expenses	- \$325.06

Account Balance:

January 31, 2022 \$10,935.29

**FO UWSS Secretary's
Notes and updates**

1. If you are Not receiving your **Buddy-line**, please let me know.
2. Dave Gholson FO UWSS President is also our **Reunion Committee Chair**.
3. Jim Houle is our **Logo Gear Chair**. You can order by going to the UWSS Website and printing out the Order Form and sending us a check or by sending an email to: kenrecoy@aol.com and then sending us a check. Our address is in the Buddyline and on our UWSS Website. Watch for a Special Logo Gear Sale in March!
4. Please be sure to pay your "**Label fees**" to receive your Buddyline by regular mail. Label Fees are \$5.00 per year. We currently have 24 members that receive their Buddyline by regular mail.
5. Please check to make sure you have paid your UWSS **Membership Dues**. We currently have 52 Members that have expired Dues. FO UWSS Dues remain at \$25.00 for 2 years.
6. UWSS **Graduating Class pictures**. If you do not see your Class picture on the FO UWSS Website, please send in a copy for the FO UWSS Archives.
7. **If you have changed your address, phone number/s, or email address**, please send me an update, so we can be sure to stay in contact for important News, Updates and your Buddyline.
8. **So we may honor them**, if you know of a UWSS brother that has passed, please let us know and please send in a copy of the Obituary.



- 9. About 5 years ago, I created a **UWSS Facebook Page** and if you are interested in joining, the Link is below. It is free and only members of the UWSS FB Page can see who is a member and our Posts.
- 10. **It is important to reach out to our UWSS dive buddies** and check on each other from time to time. Especially in this time of COVID 19, and none of us are getting any younger. It is always good to hear from a brother.

Stay in touch. Stay safe. HooYah!
 Ken Recoy, FO UWSS Secretary/Treasurer
 620-305-9900 Cell (And text is ok).
 UWSS Graduation Class March 1972.
 Submariner, Radioman and US Navy Diver.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/682196168496022>
www.uwss.org.



WILLIAM “MIKE” McDOWELL

May 24, 1939 to November 23, 2021

Mike was a member of Navy ROTC and was commissioned Ensign upon graduation from OSU. He was assigned to Navy Underwater Swimming School in Key West, FL, and later to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal School in Ft. Story, VA, as an instructor. He served on the USS Forrestal where he qualified as Junior Officer of the Deck (Underway). He was also a classified materials courier. In 1969 Mike and his diving team participated in the recovery of the moon landing capsule, Apollo 11. Later that year, Mike transferred to the Navy Reserve.

His Navy Reserve years included assignments on the local Readiness Command Inspector General Staff, a perfect place for Mike with his eagle eyes for how things should be. He retired from the Navy Reserve in 1991.

**SPECIAL SALE ON
 LOGO GEAR DURING
 MARCH 2022**

If your order is:

Between \$15 - \$30 you receive a 10% discount

Between \$31 - \$75 you receive a 15% discount

Above \$76 you receive a 20% discount

Item	Description	Size	Number	Price	Total
	Logo Decal Transparent 4 inch			\$3.00	
	Logo Decal White 4 inch			\$3.00	
	Embroidered Patch 4 inch			\$10.00	
	Blue Face Mask			\$8.00	
	White Face Mask			\$8.00	
	Key Chain			\$10.00	
	Bright LED Pocket Flashlight			\$10.00	
	Polo Shirt S, M, L, XL,			\$28.00	
	Polo Shirt XXL	XXL		\$30.00	
	Gray Microfiber Tee Shirt S, M, L, XL,			\$25.00	
	Gray Microfiber Tee XXL	XXL		\$28.00	
	Blue Microfiber Tee Shirt S, M, L, XL,			\$25.00	
	Blue Microfiber Tee XXL			\$28.00	
	Long Sleeve Tee S, M, L, XL,			\$28.00	
	Long Sleeve Tee XXL	XXL		\$30.00	
	Blue Denim Shirt S, M, L, XL,			\$38.00	
	Blue Denim XXL	XXL		\$40.00	
	Blue Baseball Cap			\$30.00	
	Khaki Baseball Cap			\$30.00	
	All Service Commemorative Coin	2 in		\$15.00	
	UWSS Commemorative Coin	1 5/8 in		\$12.00	
If your order is: Between \$15 - \$30 you receive a 10% discount Between \$31 - \$75 you receive a 15% discount Above \$76 you receive a 20% discount					
			Tax		
			Total Amount Due		
Name _____ Address _____					
City _____ State _____ Zip _____					

Print form, fill in and mail with a check made out to
FOUWSS care of
Ken Recoy, 25810 East 330 Road,
Chelsea, OK 74016-5262.

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

*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.*

MISSION:

FO/UWSS

