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THE WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES OF MARVIN COOPER

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By

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PREFACE

During the year 1990, I wrote a 120 page history of the Underwater Demolition Teams of World War II, and a 308 page chronological history of my life from 1924 through 1990. A great portion of both of those manuscripts came from my memories of those years, and this is especially so for my life history. By the time I finished my life history and a rough draft of the Underwater Demolition history in late December, I realized that there was a considerable omission of facts and events about my years in the Navy. The reason for the omission of events or brevity of the essay is now quite obvious. The events of between 45 and 50 years ago first appeared in my my mind like seeing something in a fog, but the more I thought about it, the more I read about the experiences of others, and the more I talked to people who were with me in the Pacific during that period, the more I could remember the everyday events which took place during those war years. I also recalled that my wife, Wynola, had kept a diary during those war years, and the events in Florida and the dates of many events in the Pacific were registered in her writings. Her diary helped me establish more accurate time settings and helped my memory in recalling events. Because of this broader perspective, I have decided to write a more comprehensive essay about my war years. An essay that I am sure I will enjoy reading in the future, and also an essay for posterity if anyone might be interested.

Marvin Cooper

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Much of this story is about the Underwater Demolition Teams of World War II. The purpose of the Teams and the duties of the demolition men were to prepare the invasion beaches for the landing of the assault troops. This was accomplished the week before the planned invasion and involved reconnaissance, blasting obstacles and coral, and mine removal missions. After "Boot Training", I spent my entire Navy years in Navy Demolition. The first Underwater Demolition Teams were formed in January of 1944, about three months after I entered the Navy. The Teams evolved out of the Naval Combat Demolition Crews and were used exclusively in the Pacific theater of war. Naval Underwater Demolition Teams were a part of the Amphibious Forces until 1961. At that time their name was changed to the Special Forces - Sea Air Land (SEAL), and all the team members found themselves in the new organization. The SEALs were required to add parachute training to their experiences, but much of their training is today the same as we had in Camp Peary, Fort Pierce, and Muau.

I will begin the story starting in October 1943. I was nineteen years old, married and working with my Dad on his farm east of Moville, Iowa. The home farm was owned by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and rented by Dad after he lost it through foreclosure or repossession in 1932. I had been married since the previous March, and my wife Wynola was teaching rural school about 12 miles northwest of Moville. She boarded with the Ben Byers family, and generally we saw each other only on weekends. Early in October, the corn harvest was starting. Dad had about 120 acres of corn having reduced his total farming acreage after Carroll left the previous spring. I had spent the summer working part time for Charley Logan, and the remainder of the time helping Dad with his operation. By this time, I was picking corn by hand and taking care of several hundred feeder pigs, which Metropolitan had put on the farm to help with the war effort. Dad had bought an old grain elevator from Emory Klingensmith and hired Wendall Mace to machine pick about 40 acres of corn to fill the main cribs. I had interrupted my hand picking operation to haul the corn in from Wendall's machine. This operation took about five days to harvest the 40 acres. I spent about 20 days that October picking 20 acres of corn. I would work my butt off to get 80 or 90 bushels a day.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1943, I had been giving a great deal of soul searching thought about what to

do about my life, about the war, and about the future. I was married to Wynola who I loved very much, but I was young and wanted something besides a life on the farm. I will never honestly know why I decided to join the armed forces, and there were probably many factors which led me to that decision. Many of my high school classmates were already in the war, and I was automatically deferred from the draft because of my farm work. Maybe it was a hidden aspiration to break away from farm life, or maybe it was a sense of guilt that others were doing their part, and I was avoiding the war. I really cannot remember why, but that October I decided to go into the service.

About the first day of November on a Monday, I took Wynola to her school for her week's teaching assignment, and instead of returning to the farm, I drove on to Sioux City. By this date in the war, one could not enlist in the armed services unless you were going into the regular Army, Navy, or one of the other branches. The volunteer had to volunteer for induction and wait to be called. I volunteered for induction that Monday. I remember afterward that I stopped by and talked to Ralph Stiles, who was my best friend. He thought I was foolish for volunteering, but the die had been cast. What I had done was irreversible.

By the following weekend, I had already been told to report to the recruiting office in Sioux City the following Monday. That weekend I had to tell Wynola of my decision. At first she was irate especially because I had volunteered without consulting her. I actually had consulted with her in one way, because we had talked about my joining many times. But she was rightfully hurt because I had taken the action of volunteering without talking to her. She got over it rather quickly, and she took me to the recruiting service on Monday morning.

From Sioux City, a bus load of new recruits was transported to Fort Crook, Nebraska. Fort Crook was a few miles south of Omaha and is now the Strategic Air Command headquarters and is named Offut Air Force Base. There were at least four people from Moville on that bus including Harmon Hunting, Bill Corbin, Red Van Norman, and myself. We arrived at Fort Crook late in the afternoon, and everyone was assigned a cot in a large open room. There must have been several hundred people in the room. Fort Crook was located adjacent to the Martin airplane plant, and at this time they were producing the Martin Marauder a medium bomber. Near the building where I was trying to sleep the finished bombers sat on the runway with their engines operating. It must have been a method of preflight conditioning of the engines before their first flight. Whatever the reason, the airplanes put out a continuous roar all night, and I do not believe anyone was able to sleep. I was awake all night. The following morning we were given a

physical examination and interviewed about our preference of services. I wanted to serve in the Coast Guard, but their quota was filled, and I was slightly near sighted, and this also disqualified me from that service. I chose and was accepted into the Navy.

The same afternoon, all the people who were accepted into the Navy was taken by bus to the downtown Omaha recruiting station for the swearing in ceremonies. We were all assigned to the Seabees, because that was where the need was at the time. I thought maybe this would be a good deal for me because I could not swim, and this could lead to an opportunity for me to learn a trade. We were all given a one week leave, and were ordered to report back to Omaha. I took a bus back to Sioux City, and I still cannot remember whether the Navy paid for the ticket or not.

I did not do much that week. Wynola had to continue her teaching duties, and I helped Dad some with his farm work. Dad had hired uncle Jesse to pick corn, so I was not involved with that. Unfortunately, later on that week, we received one of those northwest Iowa blizzards, which blocked all the roads. They were still blocked when I was supposed to return to Omaha. By the time, the buses started running, I was "absent over leave" (AOL) for two days. What a start for my Navy career. When the roads were opened, I reported to the Omaha Recruiting Office for further orders.

If I remember correctly, there were about ten men in the draft routed to Camp Peary, Virginia. One of the older men was given our written orders and assigned as our group leader. We boarded a train bound for Virginia via Chicago, and this meant we had to change trains and stations at Chicago. We traveled in style having pullman facilities on both legs of the journey. The trip took two or three days, and I found the change of scenery very interesting as we progressed eastward across the United States. For a farm boy who had never been over two hundred miles from home, the view from the train window was a view of a different world. The Mississippi, the big city of Chicago, the red soil of Kentucky, the Appalachian Mountains, and the forests of West Virginia and Virginia were all new to me.

Camp Peary was located near Williamsburg, Virginia, and was developed out of a southern pine forest, so dirt and asphalt streets were lined with pine trees. After our arrival, we were quartered with many other men in a large drill hall which was almost completely occupied by rows of army cots. The drill halls of Camp Peary were huge covered sheds about the size of a football field. There was no heat and even though we were issued a couple of army blankets, it was difficult to keep warm. I soon realized that some of the men had been sleeping there for several nights, and during that first night, the sound of almost constant coughing continued all night.

Fortunately, my stay in the drill hall was brief. The following morning, we really entered the Navy, and this is how it happened. We were taken into a long complex of buildings which seemed to be connected to each other. A steady stream of men entered a door at the beginning of the complex, and each man was given a large and small box and was told to remove all of his clothes and put them in the larger of the two boxes. Items that we were to keep were to be put in the small box, and these included a safety razor, tooth paste, tooth brush, soap, billfold, or any other small personal item that we thought we needed. Straight edge razors, pocket knives, finger nail files and other objects could not be kept. After we finished packing the boxes, we addressed our clothing boxes, and left it to be sent home. There we stood, stark naked, nearly freezing, and with our small box in our hands.

The men then started slowly moving single file through the building complex, and station by station were given a complete physical examination. I believe this process took about two or three hours, and I was almost hoping that they would find something wrong with me and send me home. One cannot describe the humiliation of standing, in what seemed to be the public, stark naked having sent his clothing on a one way trip home. The line did progress however, and the last station was the barber, who removed all our hair down to the bare scalp, and we were told this would be our last free haircut. Then came the issue of clothing and basic supplies. First we were given a white sea bag, and were told to put the small bag in the bottom of the bag. From window to window we picked up our new issue including blankets, pillow, clothing, and last of all our hammock. The clothing was issued according to ones statement of size whether it be shoes, caps, coats or underwear. There was no fitting or trying on any item. They just threw them at you and you put them in the sea bag. The last item was the hammock, which would not fit into the sea bag, and thereafter the hammock would be used to carry our blankets when we moved to a different site. After the issue was complete, we were told to recover certain clothing items from the sea bag and dress.

It was late afternoon when we arrived back at the drill hall carrying our heavy load of supplies. Waiting for us was our drill instructor Petty Officer. He had a muster list and called out our names in alphabetical order. My group were people with surnames beginning with A through E. He gave us some important instructions. We were immediately to stencil all of our new issues. A stamp and pad had been made for us at one of the issue stations. We stamped everything in specified places. For example, our white hats had to be stenciled inside of the brim where it would not show. I still have my hammock, and the end edges have a row

of "M. Cooper"s still plainly visible 48 years later. After the stenciling operation was complete, the Petty Officer marched us to the chow hall for our evening meal, and he assured us that our new issue would be safe because we had our names stenciled on each item.

Camp Peary was very large and had many different areas used for training purposes. The group I was with were assigned Area C-7, and we were soon moved into barracks in that area. Our barracks were about 60 feet long and 20 feet wide with rows of bunks along each side, and each bunk had a lower and an upper bed. I believe the barracks housed about 80 men. There were two wood burning "pot bellied" stoves each located about 20 feet from the ends of the building. Each stove was located in a square filled with sand to help reduce the fire hazard. Fresh cut wood was stored behind the barracks to supply fuel for the stoves. The toilets and showers were located behind the barracks, and they served four different barracks.

The men in the barracks were organized into four platoons, with about 20 men in each platoon. Many of the men came into the Navy with a rating. For example, if you were a carpenter in civilian life, you would likely have a Carpenter's Mate rating. One of the highest rated men was made platoon leader. My platoon leader was L.N. Cowart. Our drill instructor was named Odem. The drill instructor lived elsewhere, but was always there to march us to the chow hall and places of training. And he was the one who taught us how to march, present arms, and become qualified sailors.

Boot Camp training lasted about six weeks, and under the eagle eye of Petty Officer Odem we shaped up rapidly. The training consisted of much close order drill, rifle range practice, boat rowing, baynet instruction, and movies on practically everything. Duty was required of everyone and consisted of "KP" or kitchen duty, guard duty with dummy rifles, and barracks fire watch. With the wood stoves, someone always had to be awake to keep the fires fed and to watch the stoves. Everyone had some duty about once a week. Our only entertainment during Boot Camp was going to an occaisional "smoker". A smoker was held in a drill hall and usually consisted of amateur boxing or wrestling matches. Anyone who was interested could sign up to perform in those events, but no one from my barracks ever volunteered. I usually wrote Wynola at least once a week, Mom a couple of times a month, and Alice less often. I was too busy to be bored, because the training involved most of my time. There was a recreation hall in Area C-7, and we could go there after supper. The hall had a reading area, ping pong tables, a pool table, and some card tables. I did play pool some in the evenings, but usually the table was being used and everybody had to wait their turn. So my games of pool were infrequent.

The food during my boot camp training seemed terrible as compared to the meals I was used to at home on the farm. Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners were the exception, and we had turkey and all the trimmings on both occasions. After the first week of boot training, we were allowed to go to the chow hall for breakfast, dinner, and supper without being marched there by our drill instructor. Some people thought the food was so bad they would miss some of the meals. There was one man in our barracks who was from someplace in the Appalachians - a real mountain boy. He was so homesick he would hardly talk, and when he was in the barracks at night, he would just lie and look at the ceiling. He quit eating at the chow hall, and for about a month he lived by eating chocolate candy bars. Finally, he became so weak that they moved him into the sick bay (hospital). He never returned to our group.

I made casual friends with several guys during the training period, and one of those became one of my best friends of my Navy years. His name was Robert Dunsmoor and was usually called Bob. I just learned last year (1990) that Bob died in Seattle about 15 years ago from a brain tumor. During our final weeks of boot training, we had a 12 mile hike, and that was our longest. Bob had bought a plug of chewing tobacco. He took a good chew and offered me the same. I took a good sized chaw just as we started on the long hike. Before we had progressed very far, I suddenly felt very ill, and quickly disposed of the tobacco. I looked a Bob, and he looked sort of green. For about a half an hour, we were both pretty sick but we kept walking, and gradually the queasy feeling left. I believe that was the last time I ever tried chewing tobacco. I did smoke some in the Navy but never developed the habit until much later.

Also I remember the twelve mile hike for a couple of other events. The hike was away from the occupied areas of Camp Peary, and we followed a trail deep into the southern pine forest. The area was where the Peninsula Campaign of the Civil War took place about 80 years before. This is where General McCellan's Union Army procrastinated for about two years afraid to attack Richmond. The trail we followed went over a series of depressions in the earth, and they were pointed out to us by the drill instructors as the remnants of Civil War trenches. The other event was when we passed a clutter of shacks which were homes for families of poor rural negroes. It was hard for me to believe that people still lived like that. It was exactly what you would imagine the slave quarters looked like before the Civil War.

By late December, our boot training was completed. As a reward, we had a pay day, and was given a 48 hour liberty. Bob Dunsmoor and I took the train to Richmond and stayed there over night. We slept in a servicemen's center sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. They furnished a cot

in a heated hall for servicemen to sleep at no charge. Our liberty gave us the larger part of two days in the city, but I can remember very little about our visit. We did visit and see some historical sites, and most of those were related to the Civil War era.

A few days before Christmas, notices were posted that volunteers were being sought for Naval Combat Demolition, and that there would be a presentation related to this at a designated auditorium. Bob and I decided to attend the meeting. A Navy Commander by the name of Draper Kauffman presented the information. He was later to be called the "Father of Underwater Demolition". At this point in time, the Underwater Demolition Teams did not exist and were not organized until a couple of months later. I cannot remember much about Kauffman's description of Demolition duties, but what he said sounded interesting. He mentioned rubber boats, beaches, blasting with high explosives, and a lot of special privileges. Bob and I were both non-rated and could see little advantage of staying in the Seabees. We even thought this might be our only chance to leave the Seabees. On the 24th of December, we were interviewed by Demolition people at the same auditorium site. I could not swim and was concerned about that. They said I would have to learn how to swim, and that would happen just as soon as I got to Fort Pierce, Florida. They also said that one could drop out of Demolition at any time. This later proved to be correct with one exception. In Underwater Demolition, a team member could not drop out after he was briefed for an operation. Before I left the auditorium, I had volunteered for Naval Combat Demolition.

Christmas Day was a day of rest with a pretty good turkey dinner. We only had two meals that day - a late breakfast and an afternoon dinner. I had received a few presents from Iowa, but had already opened them days before. I spent part of the day doing my laundry because the following day I would be moving. Bob and I were the only guys in the barracks who had joined the demolition unit, and we were the butt of a good many friendly remarks about us joining a suicide squad.

On December 26, Bob and I, loaded down with all our gear, boarded a bus and moved to the infamous Area E - the barracks area for the Demolition unit. After disposing our sea bags and hammock in our assigned barracks, we reported to the sick bay, where we were given a complete physical. There were a few people rejected, but I believe we had about 100 men start that training class. Area E was much different than Area C-7. I can remember four barracks with two for the enlisted men, one for the officers, and one for the U.S. Marine physical education instructors. The officers were volunteers, and they received their training along side of the enlisted men, and I understand this was

one of the few examples where this occurred in the service. The Marine instructors were in charge of our physical conditioning, and they had nothing to do with our demolition training. The demolition instructors were Seabee blasters and they did not live in Area E.

Our demolition training started the last week in December 1943 and was to last about six weeks. The training was in three parts at three different locations. The physical conditioning training was conducted at Area E under the instruction of the platoon of Marines. The technical training related to small boat handling, viewing movies about explosives and their use, and receiving lectures about the various requirements for combat demolition was received at the Dock Area. The hands on demolition training was on an uninhabited island in the York River.

I will review a typical day of demolition training, but keep in mind every day was somewhat different than the one before it. The training was described by the Marines and the Seabee blasters as "a separate the men from the boys" endeavor. We would muster at 0500 (five in the morning) prepared to leave for the days training activities. The class would run 3 miles to the dock area along the York River, and there we would be served breakfast. This daily run to the River was part of our physical training, and we were led by a couple of the Marines. The trainees developed a habit of singing songs as they ran through the forest towards the dock area, and many times these songs would be derogatory to the Marines. Many of the songs were composed completely by some of the trainees, and others were popular songs altered to fit the occasion. The Demolitioneer song on Page 8-A is one of the printable ones composed by the trainees.

After a hardy breakfast, we would have a couple of movies showing the different kinds of explosives used in Army, Marine, and Navy demolition squads during the war. The movies and possibly some lectures would last until about 1000 (ten in the morning). At that time we would receive small boat rowing instructions until noon and dinner time. After dinner, we would board a barge and it would take us to the island in the York River. On that island, we were taught how to use explosives, and all I can remember working with at Camp Peary was dynamite. By 1500 (three in the afternoon), were back at the Dock Area and preparing our run back to Area E. At 1600 (four in the afternoon, the Marines took over, and we had two hours of calisthenics which consisted of the usual physical exercises, rifle physical exercises, or mat tumbling using a rifle. Sometimes we would have a lot of close order drill, marching, and sometimes we would even run a mile or two before supper. By 1900 (seven in the evening) we would line up for supper at the chow hall. This would be an example of a typical day of a six day week.

SONG OF THE DEMOLITIONEERS

When the Navy gets into a jam
They always call on me
To pack a case of dynamite
And put right out to sea.

Like every honest sailor
I drink my whiskey clear.
I'm a shootin', fightin' dynamitin'
De-mo-li-tion-eer.

Out in front of Navy
Where you really get the heat,
There's a bunch of crazy blasters
Pulling off some crazy feat.
With their pockets full of powder
And caps stuck in their ears,
They're shootin, fightin, dynamitin
De-mo-li-tion-eers.

They will send me out to Italy
To clean the Fascist up.
I'll put a case of TNT
Beneath the dirty pups;
And now they'll be rushing madly
Straight up into the air.
I'm a shootin, fightin, dynamitin,
De-mo-li-tion-eer.

Some day we'll hit the coast of France,
Put "Jerry" on the run.
We'll wrap a roll of primacord
Round every goddamn Hun,
Goebbels and Herr Goering
Can blow it out their rears.
We're the shootin, fightin, dynamitin
De-mo-li-tion-eers.

When our Marines reach To-ky-o
And the "Rising Sun" is done
They'll head right for some Geisha house
To have a little fun.
But they'll find the gates are guarded
And the girls are in the care
Of the shootin, fighten, dynamitin
De-mo-li-tion-eers.

When the war is over,
And the Wacs and Waves are home,
We'll swim back to the U.S.A.
And never more shall roam.
All the local maidens
Will get the best of care,
And we'll raise a bunch of squallin,
Bawlin de-mo-li-tion-eers.

During this period of training, there are a few events which I would like to mention. First is the "tumbling incident". One day late in the afternoon, the Marines had divided the demolition men in to several groups, and were taking us through a training exercise they called "rifle tumbling". This training was in a drill hall and performed on cushioning or wrestling mats. They taught us to dive over a kneeling teammate (resting on his knees and elbows) with a rifle in front of our chest, land and roll in a somersault, and come to a standing position. That was the first accomplishment, but soon we were diving over two and three men in the kneeling position. This is something my granddaughter, Laura Surowski, could do today with no effort, but to me when the kneeling men were increased to four, I was afraid that I would land on the far man. The Marines noticed that some of us were showing apprehension, and they told us if we felt that we could not tumble over the four men to stand to one side. Two of us stood to one side, and when the training was finished in a few minutes, we were ordered to do close order drill for an hour. We marched until 2000 (eight in the evening), and reported to the chow hall just before it closed. That was the last time I tried to "weasel out" of a training assignment.

The second event was the "dynamite incident". We were on the blasting island in the York River late one morning. The weather, even though it was January, was sunny and warm. The trainees were assigned a working detail which involved moving dynamite off a barge into a magazine along the shore. This was a combined work and training assignment, and as explained by the instructors, we were learning how to safely handle dynamite. While the others were unloading the barge, Bob Dunsmoor and I were assigned to take several boxes of dynamite to a blasting area several hundred yards away from the location of the magazine. There we were to open the boxes and remove the dynamite from its protective sawdust, and place it where it would be used for that afternoon's training exercise. After lugging the boxes, we were both warm and sweating from the exertion. While taking the sticks of dynamite from the boxes, we would occasionally wipe the sweat from our brow. We did not realize that we were being the victim of a joke engineered by the instructors. Dynamite is made from nitroglycerin saturated in a fine sawdust base and rolled into a stick. The nitroglycerin soaks through the wax paper stick cover, and by handling the sticks without gloves, we were exposing our skin to the substance. We also, unknowingly, were rubbing it into the skin of our foreheads and face. Nitroglycerin effects the heart and will cause very severe headaches. Soon our heads were nearly splitting with pain, and we did not know what was the matter. The instructors were watching us, and when our discomfort became obvious, they laughingly pulled us from the job, and explained our predicament to the other trainees. Talk about learning from experience, we sure did.

Another event that I remember as the "Jeep incident" is worth mentioning. An officer drove a jeep and parked it in front of the Area E Administrative Office. The office was surrounded by a four foot ditch to provide drainage for rain water runoff. A bunch of us Demolition guys were on our way to supper, and somebody suggested moving the Jeep across the ditch next to the office building. About twenty guys grabbed the Jeep, lifted it across the ditch, and set it where it could not be driven back on the road. We went happily on to supper. The Jeep stayed there all night, but was gone when we came back from the dock area the following afternoon. I never knew how they moved the Jeep back across the ditch onto the road, but I do know it was not driven across the narrow pedestrian bridge spanning the ditch.

The last event, I will mention, is the "p _ _ s call incident". I have written that the Demolition officers had a separate barracks from the enlisted men in Area E. One night or early morning long after everyone was a sleep, a bunch of Demolition guys sneaked down to the officer's quarters, took two metal pails, opened the barracks door at both ends, and rolled the buckets into the sleeping area. Before the startled officers could recover their surprise and apprehend the culprits, the men were back in their own barracks.

The Demolition trainees called themselves "Demos" and displayed marked "esprit de corps" much to the dismay of the Marine personnel, and sometimes to the dismay of their own officers. This over-exuberant display of organizational spirit would often result in an extra mile or two run after an already strenuous day.

The meals served in the Area E chow hall were excellent, and this had been promised by Draper Kauffman. This promise of good food was made when I went into Demolition, and wherever we were based this held true. The days of training were long and hard, but from Saturday evening until early Monday morning, our time was pretty much our own.

Bob Dunsmoor and I took one Sunday liberty into Williamsburg, Virginia, which was almost adjacent to the base of Camp Peary. Williamsburg was and still is a town that has been restored to its Colonial appearance. It has many historical sites, libraries, art displays, unique inns and coffee shops, all displaying the spirit of Colonial America. Bob and I spent the day browsing around the town and visiting the interesting places.

The Demolition group finished their Camp Peary training the first week in February, and everyone was granted a seven day leave plus travel time. They allowed me four days travel time, which gave me a total of eleven days. On

VDT-15 NCDU
Jenkin's + Schofield's should be reversed

February 9, 1944, the entire Demolition group was taken by bus to the train station in Williamsburg. Many of the people boarded a train headed for Chicago, but others headed to the north and other directions. Bob Dunsmoor was headed for Seattle, Washington, and he took the Chicago train as the first leg of his journey. I believe Bob had a total of fifteen days because of his extra mileage. On the train trip to Chicago, there were several Demolition people on the same car, and many of them were friends, who I have long forgotten. I do remember Jenkins who later had his arm or leg blown off in the Normandy invasion, and a man by the name of Schofield who later was wounded with Team 15 At Iwo Jima. We played cards and talked to pass the time on the long train ride. In Chicago, we transferred to various other stations depending upon where we were headed. I transferred to the Chicago Northwestern and boarded a train to Sioux City.

I left Chicago in the middle of the night, it was snowing hard. I slept through the night, and the following morning I noticed one of the other Demolition men was on the train. We talked and I found out his name was Jay Sturges, and he was from Sioux City. Jay was older than I, and was probably about 25 or 26. He was not very talkative, and although I remembered him from Camp Peary, we were never really acquainted. Sturges was later badly wounded at Saipan while serving with Team 7. Last year, 1990, I located his address from some research materials I was accumulating, and I decided to visit him on my usual trip to Iowa. Last fall I called at his address and found that he had died in the Sioux Falls Veterans Hospital last spring.

On February 11, 1944, I arrived in Sioux City and hitch hiked out old Highway 20 to Dad's farm. From there, I borrowed Dad's car and drove to Hansen's farm where Wynola had just arrived from her teaching assignment. It was a Friday, so we had the weekend together. Ray Winneke, Alice's boy friend, was home on leave from the Navy also, and the four of us went to a movie in Sioux City on Saturday night. On Sunday morning, we all went to church in Moville.

Events during my week in Iowa are blurred in my memory. Wynola took a week off from her teaching duties, and we visited friends, relatives, and neighbors. I remember that Mom had Thiesons over for dinner one evening. Vernon and Carroll and their families were there for Sunday dinner, and it seemed like a family reunion. My Dad and Mom were scheduled to move from the farm and move to a forty acre tract two miles east of Moville the following month. This bothered me, because I was born in that house and had lived there for the first nineteen years of my life. That week was the last time I was to sleep in my southeast upstairs bedroom, and nostalgia abounded when I left the following Friday. Wynola drove me to Sioux City and saw me off on the train.

When I bought my return ticket to Virginia, I chose a different route. Instead of the Chicago and Northwestern, I took the Hiawatha a flyer on the Milwaukee Road. It took ten hours to reach Chicago, and reduced my travel time by about four or five hours. I arrived in Williamsburg on Sunday February 20, and immediately took a bus into Camp Peary.

There were no training activities after the Demolition people returned from their leaves. The people who went to the west coast arrived back four days later than I. Before the end of February, we received orders to move to Florida. I believe it was on the early morning of March 1 that we boarded a train in Williamsburg and started our trip south. I cannot remember the number of people in the move, but we traveled by draft and went on a regular coach passenger train. The following morning when darkness lifted, I looked out the train window, and we were moving by the lush growth of northern Florida. I could see an occasional orange tree loaded with fruit, and I was very much impressed by the sight. Late on the afternoon of March 2, we pulled into Fort Pierce, Florida.

From the Fort Pierce train station, we were moved by bus to the Naval Combat Demolition area of the Naval Amphibious Training Base located on South Hutchinson Island. The town of Fort Pierce, population about 8,000 at that time, was located on the mainland and separated from North and South Hutchinson Islands by the Indian River, which was an inland water way about fifty or more miles long. North and South Island was separated by the Fort Pierce inlet which connected the Indian River with the Atlantic Ocean. The Indian River consisted of tidal waters, and in one sense could be considered to be a long narrow bay. There was a causeway from Fort Pierce to South Island, and a low loose plank bridge from Fort Pierce to North Island. To drive from South to North Island, one had to drive in through the town, because there was no bridge across the inlet from the Ocean.

The Naval Amphibious Base was a tent city. The tents were about sixteen feet square, and would hold about six cots around their inside periphery. They had wooden floors, screened sides and doors, and the canvas would roll up or down along all sides. The Naval Combat Demolition area was separated from the beach front by the Naval Scout and Raider tent area. My assigned tent was about one hundred yards from the beach, and we were lulled to sleep every night by the sound of the surf. The tents were separated by alley ways which were all sand. Each alley way had a 30 gallon lister bag which furnished drinking water for the trainees. The chow hall and drill field was just west of the main tent areas, and the hospital and officer quarters were just to the north and across a blacktop road.

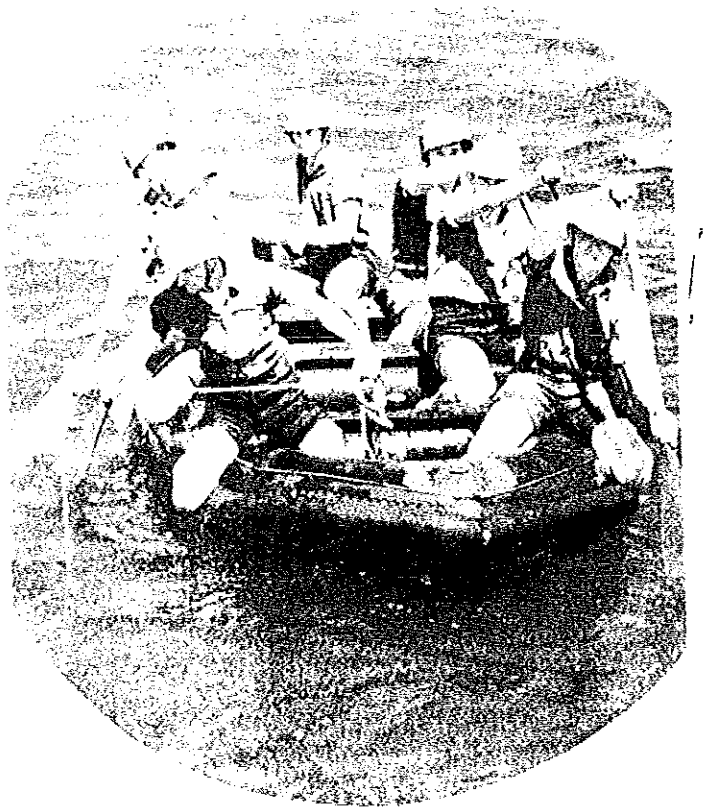
According to my memory, our Florida training started almost immediately after our arrival. During 1990, my research offered evidence for the reason for an apparent hurry to train Demolition personnel. Our training started on about the 4th of March, and by June a great number of Demolition men would be needed for the planned invasions of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in the Pacific. Also the Normandy invasion was planned for early June, and this group would take part in all of those invasions. When we started training that week in March, there were less than four hundred Demolition people in the Pacific, and less than one hundred in Europe for the Normandy invasion and the operations in southern France. My group from Camp Peary, residuals from earlier Fort Pierce classes, and a few from the fleet and mine disposal school were put together in a training class called Class 5. Class 5 consisted of over two hundred men, and would eventually become Underwater Demolition Teams 6 and 7 in the Pacific, and several Navy Combat Demolition Crews who went to England for the Normandy invasion.

The men of class 5 were divided into rubber boat crews each consisting of 5 enlisted men and an officer. I can hardly remember the men in my crew, but I can remember four last names. Lt. Burke was the officer and Osling, Arnold, and Mueller were enlisted men. Lt. Burke became Commanding Officer of Team 7, and Arnold's and Mueller's names are on a Team 7 muster list that came into my possession in 1990. Mueller was wounded at Saipan. I have found no record of Osling in my research, and the sixth man in the crew I cannot remember his face or name. I was only with those people for a week, and this accounts for the haze in my memory.

That first week in training will always be remembered because it was "Hellweek". That week we went through an ordeal that is almost beyond description. Hellweek was designed to "separate the men from the boys", and a high drop out rate was intended. I went through hellweek but dropped out as one of the "boys" because I could not swim. There seemed to be no schedule during the week, and we were lucky to get two or three hours sleep and night. I am going to describe a typical day, and it could be any one of the first six days. The seventh and last day was different and it was called "So Solly Day".

At 0300 (three in the morning), each crew would be mustered and alerted for action. We would run to the Tucker Cove area which was the small boat docking area used by the people who were training to be crew members of assault landing craft in the Amphibious Forces. Tucker Cove was a small bay that extended from the Indian River back into South Island, and it was only a couple of hundred yards from our tent area. At Tucker Cove, each crew would be issued a rubber boat, 6 paddles, and 6 Kapok (Mae West) life jackets.

Designed by Mrs. Kenneth Simpson, wife of Warrant Officer L. K, Simpson, CEC, USNR, and made by Joseph Fortino EM2c, John Parrotta Slc and Frank Molina Slc, this marker was placed at the entrance to the Naval Combat Demolition Unit area, Fort Pierce, in June 1944.



Reading the depths, a boat crew practices for taking the measure of enemy-held beaches.

The Navy Combat Demolition marker was placed at the entrance of the Naval Combat Demolition Area of the Naval Amphibious Training Base at Fort Pierce, Florida while I was living off base and working in Chief Tokes' crew. It was about eight feet high, and we (Tokes' crew) built the back support (not shown) in the picture.

The picture to the right shows a seven man rubber boat crew training at Fort Pierce. The officer would be the one in the back steering the boat with a paddle. Usually the crew was a six man crew, and the officer would be the third man on one side.

These pictures were sent to me in January 1991 by Donald Walker, Team 13's Executive Officer, during our Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations.

The rubber boat would be carried along the cove for a short distance until we reached a swamp area adjacent to the main channel of the Indian River. The boat had to be carried on or above our heads and we could not walk but had to run. When we reached the swamps, we waded through the slime and mud dragging the rubber boat, and thinking about everything from snakes to alligators. Soon the water became deeper, and we could board the boat and start paddling. When we left the swamp and entered the main channel of the Indian River, the lights of Fort Pierce were plainly visible across the half mile wide river. We would paddle up the river, under the cause way, across the ocean inlet, under the North Island bridge, and on up the river until we came to a buoy. The buoy was our point to turn right and enter the swamps of North Island. The swamps and jungle of North Island were more extensive than those near Tucker Cove on South Island. We paddled until the boat drug the bottom, waded the swamp area, and then when we reached solid ground, we carried the rubber boat across the narrow strip of North Island until we reached the Atlantic Ocean. This entire journey probably took about two hours from the time we rolled out of our cots on South Island. On the beach, a couple of instructors were waiting for us, and they generously told us to lie in the sands for about ten or fifteen minutes to catch our breath and rest.

So far our journey through the swamps and up the river had been during the black of night, but as we sat on the beach catching our breath, the eastern sky was showing the approach of dawn. Our next assignment, was to take the rubber boats through the surf, board the rubber boat, and paddle out to sea. I had never swam a stroke in my life, but I was not afraid of water. The old "Mae West" had easily kept me afloat in the transition area between the swamp and the river. When we went through the surf, much of my feeling of security left me, and I felt very helpless trying to help drag the rubber boat through the water. I began to wonder what I was doing there. No one had even mentioned the exact time that my swimming lessons would begin, but that it would be after the finish of "Hellweek". Lt. Burke and Osling said not to worry, that they would take care of me, and everyone in the crew was very understanding, but they were all swimmers. I knew some other people in other crews who were non-swimmers, and I remember one by the name of Meyers who never dropped out and became a crew member of Team 7.

We paddled far out to sea, circled a buoy, and paddled back towards shore. There must have been about forty rubber boats, and it seemed almost like a race with each officer urging his crew to reach the beach first. Going in through the surf was simple compared to the outward journey. A breaker caught our rubber boat and lifted us into shallow water. From the beach, we ran with our rubber boats to the

North Island drill area. This area consisted of a large drill field, two magazines where high explosives were stored, a diving tank, and an open air chow hall. It was probably nine or ten in the morning when we arrived there, and a breakfast was waiting for us. All meals served on North Island were brought there by truck from the main kitchens on South Island. We had a good half hour or more to eat and rest for breakfast.

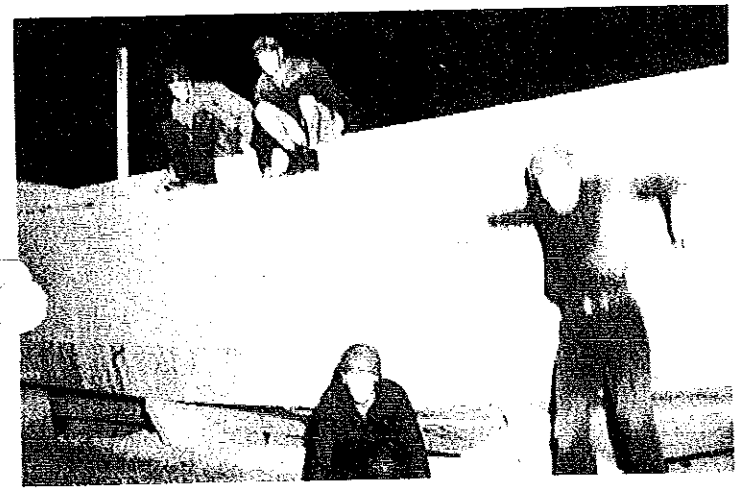
I cannot remember the sequence of the abuses we had to take during the day, and I believe the order was changed from day to day. The following are some of the exercises that we went through during the day. In a swampy area a rope was suspended over the muddy water, and one by one we would try to cross the expanse by suspending from our arms and moving with the use of our arms. The rope was so suspended that the instructors could provided slack and drop us in the water. Another ordeal was a half mile crawl along a muddy path with instructors telling us to keep our heads and butts to the ground. Then there was the obstacle course that started with an old abandoned house which we had to climb over using suspended ropes. In 1950, when I was in Florida with my family, that old house was still standing, and I believe I have a picture of it in Iowa. The day was long and grueling. We had our dinner meal about two in the afternoon during a break between activities. The physical exertion continued until night fall, and then we returned to South Island by swamp, Indian River, and swamp. Supper was about nine or ten in the evening at the Demolition Area chow hall. After a half an hour rest, we did calisthenics for an hour before showering and going to bed.

Day after day the physical ordeal continued, and people soon started to drop out. Some were injured, but I believe most men who quit felt that staying in Demolition was not worth the abuses of that week. The five man crews shrunk and were combined to bring them back to size. Four men could not handle the rubber boat through the various activities. I cannot remember how many men dropped out of training in Class 5, but the average during the war period was said to be between 40 and 50 per cent. The SEALS today lose about 40 per cent of their volunteers during "Hellweek" at San Diego. On the third or fourth day, we had an assignment that convinced me that until I learned to swim, I would not continue the training. Where the inlet from the ocean to the Indian River starts at the sea, there are two jetties extend about a half mile into the ocean, one from North Island and the other from South Island. We were assigned to start from the North Island side, cross the jetty, paddle across the inlet channel, and then cross the south jetty. When we approached the north jetty, the waves were breaking on the rocks, and our boat was overturned into into the rocks, and we fell into deep water. My "Mae West" lifted me to the surface just as another wave crashed

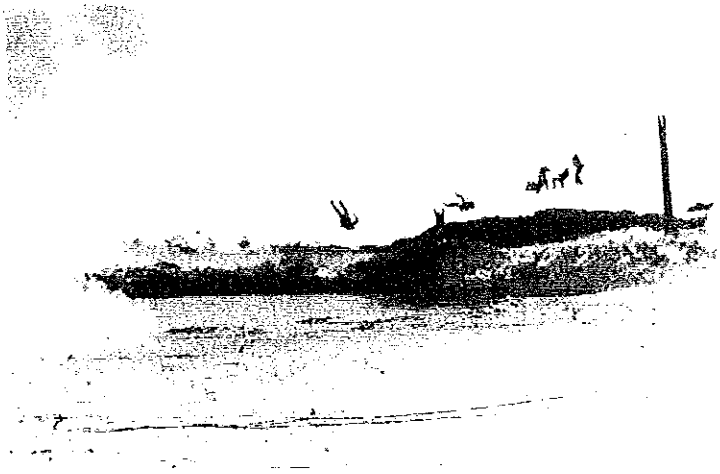
HELL WEEK . . .

Instructors: "It's mind over matter! We don't mind and you don't matter!"

"Forward, double-time, ho!"



Remember the Boats!



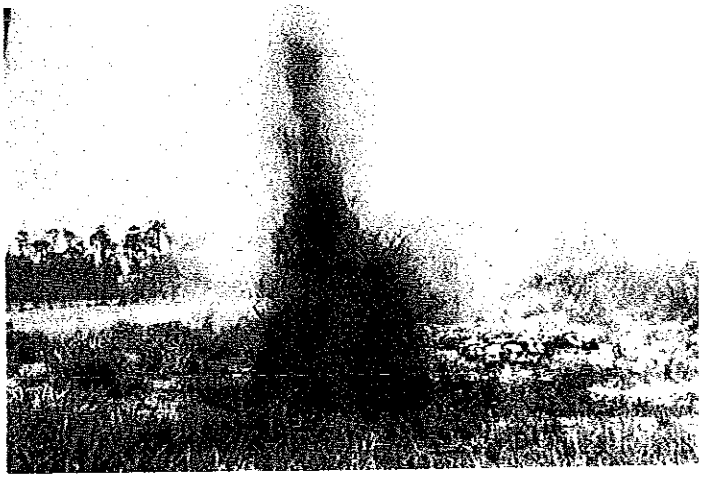
Death trap

Over the river . . .

. . . and through the woods.

"SO SOLLY" DAY!

Ramblin' wreck from Georgia Tech.



"Fire on the trainee!"

"Don't just lay there! Do push-ups!"

"Get your foot outa my face!"

"Don't worry, be happy!"

"Where's my rubber duckie?"

over us. The rubber boat was bottom side up 20 or 30 feet away. Two of the guys swam and recovered the boat, and the rest of us managed to climb onto the rocks. After a struggle, the two swimmers threw the boat's bow line to the four of us on the rocks, and we managed to pull the boat onto the rocks and over the jetty. The battle was over because on the inlet side of the jetty there was no surf, and the south jetty was crossed from the inlet side where there was no breakers.

We were bruised, sore, and had some abrasions on our arms and legs. When we arrived at the Demolition tent area, I told Lt. Burke that I was dropping out of training until I learned to swim. He insisted that I stay in until we finished "hellweek" using the argument that we were over half way through, and the worst was behind us. He also said once I had finished "hellweek" that I would not have to go through it again, when I joined a future crew. He was wrong, but I promised him that I would try and stay the week out.

I stayed with the crew, and then came the last day of the week and it was called "So Solly Day". This was an euphemism developed by the instructors referring to how the Japanese was supposed to pronounce so sorry. The day was definitely different than the other days of "Hellweek" but it did not involve any water scares, so I managed to not be too intimidated. This was swamp and jungle training where the instructors set off explosives near the trainees, fired machine guns over our heads, and performed other unkindly acts. The warning we would receive before the above events was a gleeful yell "so solly". When we heard the cry, we were told to keep our butts down and push our faces into the mud.

The day after I finished "Hellweek", I reported to the training officer telling him that I wanted to drop out of Demolition until I learned how to swim. He told me that if I wanted to join a future class, I would be assigned to Base Maintenance and go to swimming school part time. He said that I was what they called a "backslider" and that "dropouts" were transferred from Demolition almost immediately. He praised me for finishing the "Hellweek" training, and that made me feel a little better.

I was assigned to a base maintenance carpenter crew. I was supposed to go to swimming classes in the morning, and work with the carpenter crew in the afternoons. I was to be with the crew for nearly four months, and I can remember them very well except their first names. In the Navy, most people were called by their last or nicknames, and unless he was a close friend you may never know his first name. The men in the carpenter crew were Tokes the Chief Petty Officer, Jones, Letcher, Morrison, and Malone. Tokes,

Jones, and Letcher were in their middle to upper twenties, and Morrison, Malone and I were about the same age - around twenty years old. I moved into their tent shortly after I had dropped out of Demolition. They were a friendly group and they accepted me into their crew in a way that made me feel as one of them. Chief Tokes was the official leader, and he also was a boss by nature. In other words, he ran the show, and the only complaints were from Jones and Letcher, and this was usually some behind the scene grumbling. Jones was an ex-boxer - an Irishman with cauliflower ears - but a very friendly guy, and he became a good friend of mine. Letcher was the quiet type, but could be very assertive if challenged. Morrison, also said little, and he was studious and liked to read in his idle time. I believe, Morrison later joined Team 15. Malone was talkative, and being from New Orleans, he had a distinct Louisiana drawl. Malone and I become very good friends. The crew's tent was located in the first row behind the administrative area along side the other Ships Company's quarters. The crew had built a table in the center of the tent, wooden lockers under the cots with the cots raised to about 30 inches from the floor, and benches to seat all six of us. They called it the Penthouse. I had replaced someone in the crew who had recently been transferred.

My swimming instruction started almost immediately after leaving my Demolition crew. The instruction was short lived and lasted only for about a week, and maybe even less. I had to go to North Island for the instruction, and each morning I would ride in a truck with the regular Demolition instructors - the guys who had herded us through "So Solly Day". My initial training started in the diving tank mentioned earlier. The tank was about 30 X 60 feet and was about 16 feet deep. The first morning the instructors had taut ropes strung across the width of the tank about four feet apart. There were probably about ten trainees in the swimming class, and I believe, two instructors. We were taught three basic strokes - side stroke, breast stroke, and a modified back stroke. We were not allowed to remove our arms or legs out of the water, in other words we could not splash the water. We spent about an hour lying in the sand and going through the motions of the various swimming strokes. Then we went to one side of the diving tank and entered the water, and we used the ropes to keep us afloat. Our first assignment was to swim across the tank using the breast stroke which we had learned in the sand. We were reinforced with instructions on breathing, and were told not to grab either of the ropes unless we felt we were in trouble. I started awkwardly to swim across the tank, and I could not believe it, when I reached the other side, I had not touched a rope.

For about four hours that morning, we swam back and forth across the 30 foot tank using all three basic strokes.

When we finished the training session, I was astonished by what I had accomplished that morning. When the lunch truck, went back to South Island after dinner, I rode on it, and reported to my carpenter crew for the afternoon's work.

The swimming instruction lasted about a week. By the end of the second day, the ropes were removed from the tank, and we were swimming the length of the pool. On the fourth day, the instructors moved us into the ocean, where we swam just outside of the breakers. Before the end of the training week, we were swimming 440 yards using the three basic strokes. Of the swimming trainees, I was the only one assigned to base maintenance, the others being part of Class Five. My instructors told me that the rest of my training was to be on my own, and that I should practice daily until I reached the proficiency of a Demolition swimmer, and that was to swim a mile in the ocean in forty minutes.

Tokes, Jones, and Letcher were married men, and their wives lived in Fort Pierce. They spent five nights and Sundays ashore. I began to think about having Wynola move to Florida if I could stay in the carpenter crew. Tokes encouraged me, and told me that, with luck, we would all spend the rest of the war in Fort Pierce.

I found a room on Delaware Avenue with some nice people in a nice part of Fort Pierce, and on March 21, I sent Wynola a telegram telling her to come to Florida. On March 25, a Saturday, Wynola arrived in Fort Pierce by train at 4:00 PM. The people who rented me the room were Mr. and Mrs. Hornbeak, a couple in their middle fifties. They had a son who was a Navy pilot in the Pacific, and a daughter who lived in Virginia. Mr. Hornbeak lent me his 1940 Ford sedan to meet Wynola at the train station. The dates in this section of my War History may very slightly from the dates referred to in my life Chronicles. During the war years, Wynola kept a diary, and I used it to locate points in time for this essay. These dates should be accurate.

Wynola was amazed at the obvious segregation in the South. First there had been the "Jim Crow" cars on the train, and in the train station there was colored and white restrooms and even two sets of drinking fountains. We loaded her luggage in the car, and drove to Hornbeak's place. It was a two story duplex, and Hornbeack's had the upstair unit. A young couple rented the lower level. We had to go up to the second level by an outside stairway. The duplex had a kitchen, dinning room, living room with a fireplace, one bath and three bedrooms. We had the southeast bedroom. I introduced Wynola to Mrs. Hornbeak, and then we drove the car down to Mr. Hornbeak's Standard Oil service station on U.S. Highway One. After introducing Wynola to Mr. Hornbeak, we walked around town and finally back to our new home.

Wynola had arrived on Saturday, and I had arranged for a weekend pass, so we were together until Monday morning. Wynola went to work that Monday in the school cafeteria. It was a part time job, but I believe it provided enough to pay the rent on the room. Hornbeak's also told her she could board with them if she helped with the housework and cooking. I planned to eat all my meals on the base, so the situation became affordable. I had to get up and leave for the base at five in the morning, and was usually home a little after six in the evening. I rode a Navy bus both ways, and I met the bus about five or six blocks from our place. I had to stay on the base two nights each week, and those nights were during the week - not on weekends.

I have mentioned our crew Chief, Tokes. Tokes was a rather small well built good looking man. He was dark complexioned with black hair, and had an arrogant bearing about him. Jones called him the "Mad Hungarian" but not to his face, and I believe, Tokes was a Hungarian. Tokes had a lot of connections from old buddies who came down from Camp Peary with him, and those people were the ones who were running the Naval Combat Demolition Area at that time. All members of the carpenter crew had dropped out of Demolition for one reason or another. If Tokes wanted a jeep to go off base, he signed one out of the Motor Pool with no questions asked. His many privileges led to many excursions which I was to play a part. Tokes was an instigator of unusual if not illegal events.

After I finished my morning swimming lessons, I worked with the crew full time, but usually took an hour before supper to swim in the ocean. We were the carpenter crew, but we did most everything but carpenter work. We moved explosives from freight trains in Fort Pierce to the magazine on North Island. We often helped reconstruct the simulated mine fields on North Island which were used in the training program. We hauled sand from an abandoned pit north of Fort Pierce. We hauled and installed some kitchen equipment for the mess hall. And we did do some real carpenter work - built a head and shower building including the plumbing and built an addition room on the mess hall. One thing about Tokes, he put some fun in everything. When we went to get sand north of town, we came back with bags of oranges. When we hauled explosives from the freight yard, we would stop for a twenty minute swim in the ocean. Tokes did favors for the base brass (officers), and this gave him free reign to operate.

We had two nights to spend on the base, and Tokes liked to plan some activity for the night. Often it would be a poker game, but sometimes something more active. Several different nights we went "fishing" in the evening off North Island. When there were no classes taking "Hellweek", North Island would be deserted from about five to eight in the

evening. After the hour of eight, either or both of the Demolition crews or Scout and Raider crews might be training in night operations. Under the leadership of Chief Tokes, we would check out a weapon's carrier from the Motor Pool, and all six of us would drive up to North Island. We would go to the rubber boat hanger, pick up a rubber boat, go to the magazine and pick up several ¼ pound blocks of TNT with fuses and caps, and then drive the equipment over to the beach. The weapon's carrier had a four wheel drive, and we parked it off the road and on the dune line above the surf. We would take the rubber boat and the explosives about a half mile out to sea, and using the ¼ pound TNT blocks, we would fuse them and throw them into the water. When the blocks fired, stunned fish would come to the surface, and we would gather them into the boat. Now of course this was illegal, but Tokes sold the fish to a fish market operator in Fort Pierce who asked no questions - more of his connections.

There are three incidents related to the "fishing expeditions" that I will write about. First is the incident of "the big fish". One evening, we had made our usual preparations and were throwing out the ¼ pounders to stun the fish. I do use the word stun because if we did not gather the fish in quickly, they would wake up and swim away. That night our luck was poor and for some reason there were few fish surface after each shot. The sun was just going down when we threw out our last charge. Then suddenly this monster surfaced near the boat. It was the largest fish I had ever seen, and I figured there was no way we could get him into the boat. Tokes became all excited, and he grabbed a line, and told us to row the boat close to the floundering fish. He took the line and somehow shoved it into the fish's large gill. We were right along side the fish, and Tokes was half in the boat and half in the water. He ran his arm with the rope ahead of it into the gill, and pretty soon the end of the rope appeared in the water. It had came out the fish's mouth. Tokes yelled for someone to grab the end of the rope. Someone did and we had the fish trapped on the line.

The fish was much too big for us to pull into the rubber boat. We did the best next thing, and pulled the fish until its giant head was out of the water resting on the stern end of the boat. We tied the line very securely to the center beam of the rubber boat. This put the stern almost under water and the forward end of the boat was about three feet in the air. Tokes was giving all the instructions, and we were following them. He told us to start rowing towards shore. Remember we were about a half mile at sea, and when we rowed, it seemed we hardly moved. It must have taken us over two hours to finally reach the shore, and it had become completely dark when we beached the boat. We drug the fish to the waters edge, but when the

water did not help float him, we could drag him no farther. He must have weighed nearly three hundred pounds. Someone ran up to the weapons carrier and turned on the lights. With the scene lit up, Tokes started to think, and this was his plan. We would winch the fish to the top of the dune, turn the weapons carrier around, back it up to the dune on the shoreward side, and lift the fish into the back of the carrier. The plan worked, and by running the tow cable through the gill and mouth of the big fish, we drug the fish to the top of the dune. But then another element entered the situation. Just to the north of us, we noticed several rubber boats coming in from the sea. It was a Scout and Raider "sneak and peek" training mission. They were supposed to come into a darkened beach, and instead they faced the headlights of a weapons carrier. Our safe time between the scheduled training activities had ran out. The Scout and Raider crews paid us no heed, and went charging over the dune across the road and into the jungle and swamp beyond. I guess they though we were some native fishermen. We turned the weapons carrier around, backed up to the fish, and with some driftwood timbers the six of us managed to load the fish into the box of the weapons carrier.

The fish turned out to be a black sea bass, also called a "jew fish". Tokes sold him to the fish market, and I have no idea how much he received for the fish. Another incident occured on one of our fishing expeditions that I call the "blasting accident". One evening, we were about ready to wrap up the fishing operation, and we threw out our last ¼ pounder. When you throw a charge into the water, you can see its location by a steady stream of rising bubbles from the burning fuse. We always threw the charges 10 or 20 feet from the rubber boat, and waited until the charge exploded before moving in to recover the fish. On this occasion something different happened. The stream of bubbles was moving rapidly moving towards the rubber boat. An undercurrent had started and was moving the ¼ pounder. Someone yelled, and we started to row. A rubber boat with six men paddling frantically still has little acceleration, and about the time the boat seemed to start moving the blast went off under us. The rubber boat was lifted into the air, turned over, and threw us all into the water. I had a big toe suspended in the water, and the concussion felt like someone had hit it with a ball bat. By the time we righted the rubber boat, many of the fish we had in the boat swam away into the ocean.

The third and last incident was what I call the "lister bag" incident. Our trip to North Island was a fishing failure, and for our work, we had one 15 inch grouper. Tokes said it was not worth stopping at the fish market to sell, but he new what it was good for. We had a detachment of Marines taking Demolition training at that time, and their tent quarters were right behind or east of our tent.

Most everyone who had came from Camp Peary disliked Marines, and Tokes was no exception. He took the fish and put it in the 30 gallon lister bag which was the drinking water for the Marine detachment. At muster the next morning, Mr. Simpson, the Officer of the Day, announced that an investigation was underway to determine who put the fish in the Marine's lister bag. They never found out who the culprits were, but I will always think that Simpson knew. For days, everyone was talking about the Marines and their fish water.

So much for the carpenter crew. Wynola and I had five nights a week together and usually one full day each week. I was usually home be six in the evening or shortly after, and our evenings at Hornbeak's were somewhat of a problem. We felt that we could not stay in their living room, and our room was quite confining. So we would often walk down town or down to the Indian River water front. We went to about three movies a week, and once or twice a week, if we could afford it, we ate in a small restaurant down town.

One night we were eating in the restaurant, and it was very crowded. We had a table that would seat four, and this large Naval officer asked if he and his friend could sit with us. We said yes, and they sat down. He was a Commander and the friend was a Chief Petty Officer. I recognized them both. The Chief was physical training instructor for the Scouts and Raiders, and I had seen him many times when I went to the ocean for my afternoon swim. The Commander was Gene Tunney the former heavy weight boxing champion of the world. I had read about him being at the base in the base newspaper, so I recognized him also. Commander Tunney was the top Naval consultant for physical training during World War II. They sat down and were very friendly. They told us that the Chief had been Tunney's sparing partner many years before during his boxing career.

One night when we were walking down town, we ran across Bob Dunsmoor, and I introduced him to Wynola. Bob and I had been separated into different crews when we arrived in Florida, and we did not see each other to often. Bob had dropped out of Demolition because of injury or illness, and was also in Ship's Company. Later, he and I would go back into active Demolition at the same time. Wynola also met Malone one night when we were walking.

One Sunday in April, Wynola and I decided to hitch hike to Vero Beach, which was 14 miles north of Fort Pierce. She wanted to see the Ocean, and at Fort Pierce civilians could not go to the beach because of the Naval Base. We walked down to the north end of town on U.S. Highway #1, and tried to catch a ride, No one would stop. I could not understand why, because I never had that problem before, in or out of the service. Later I realized that maybe no one wanted to

pick up a sailor and a young girl. Wynola did look pretty young, even though she was nineteen years old. After trying for about an hour, who should come along but Mr. and Mrs. Hornbeak, and they were on their way to Vero Beach. They dropped us off in downtown Vero, and then we tried hitch hiking out to the beach which was a couple of miles. A policeman stopped and took us to the ocean, and he was a very nice guy. He pointed out interesting landmarks and cautioned us about swimming in the ocean. Wynola had purchased a new swimming suit, and we played in the surf for an hour or so. We gave up hitch hiking on our return trip, and took the bus back to Fort Pierce.

On another Sunday, Mr. Hornbeak took us down to Jensen Beach, which was about 18 miles south of Fort Pierce. To get there we had to cross the Indian River on a half mile long rickety wooden bridge. We had a good time, and once again went wading and swimming in the surf.

About the first of May, we learned we had to move because Hornbeak's daughter and grandson was coming down from Virginia. Fortunatey, Wynola rented a room in the house next door to the east of Hornbeak's duplex. She still helped Mrs. Hornbeak keep house and cook, and she still received her meals for the effort. I cannot remember the names of the people we rented from, but they rented another room to another Navy wife, and she and Wynola were already good friends.

School was out in late May, and that ended Wynola's part time job. On June 7, she started to work at the Coco Cola bottling plant that was only a few blocks from where we lived. The work was full time, and was much harder than the cafeteria work, but she did make much more money. The work kept her busy, and I believe she was happy with the job. She only worked there about three weeks, because that was when she had to return to Iowa.

Sometime in June, I received word that I would either have to go back into a Demolition training class, or I would be put on a list for an outgoing draft. Tokes told me to forget about going back into training, and he maintained that while I was in the carpenter crew, I would not be sent out in a draft. I did not believe him, and I decided to go back into Demolition. Tokes was wrong, because the carpenter crew except, for Morrison and me, was shipped out of Fort Pierce the following month. I had been faithfully practicing swimming, and passed the swimming test with no difficulty.

I requested a forty eight hour liberty and it was granted. Wynola and I went to Miami by train, stayed over night in a hotel, went swimming on the beach, and had a real great time. She bought me a wrist watch in Miami from the money she had saved from working in the Coco Cola plant.

Our time together at Fort Pierce was running out. By the end of June, I had been assigned to a crew in Class 7, and had already been interviewed by my new officer, Ensign Cleveland. On July 2, 1944, I put Wynola on a train for Iowa via Chicago, and I believe she was home by July 5. Wynola often said she had a good time in Florida those three months, and it was one of the happier times in my life.

Demolition training started in early July, and I went through the rigors of "Hellweek" again. This time I was a good swimmer, and I can remember very little about it. The first time is vividly implanted in my memory, probably because I always felt the only think between me and drowning was that old "Mae West" life preserver. My Naval Combat Demoltion Crew was as follows: Ensign Edwin Cleveland (officer), George Gregory (Petty Officer), Edward Deringer, Glen Frey, Ralph Grimes, John Lynch, and Marvin Cooper. I would serve with all these men for the remainder of the war in Fort Pierce and later in Underwater Demolition Team 13. With the exception of Gregory, the rest of us stayed in the same crew and platoon until the end of the war. My old friend, Bob Dunsmoor went back into Demolition training the same time as me, but he went into a different crew. The normal Demolition crew was five men and an officer, but we had six men, and we could train either way. The crew's size was determined by the rubber boat. With a six man crew including the officer, the officer would be one of the paddlers, and with a seven man crew the officer would sit astern and direct or steer the boat.

I was the only man out of Camp Peary, and the only one that had worked with explosives. At Camp Peary, we learned how to cap and fuse dynamite, and we would light a stick of dynamite in our hands, and then throw it like a fire cracker. At Fort Pierce, we used tetrytol, composition C, and TNT, but the techniques for preparing charges was much the same as dynamite. Because of my experience, I became sort of an instructor within the crew, and usually led the others when we set our first charges in assigned problems. Those first problems were on land, and there everyone had to learn the hands on methods of working with the explosives.

The training after "Hellweek" at Fort Pierce revolved around the rubber boat, blasting problems, swimming and physical training. It was still a "separate the men from the boys" philosophy, and we put in long days on the beaches of North Island. Many of the things we did during "Hellweek" we repeated during the regular training, but the eighteen to twenty hour days were replaced with ten to twelve hours. We had plenty of time to sleep but no liberty. Our training was on North Island, and we would ride there on trucks each morning.


Ed Barrow
Sam Jones
Ralph Grimes
Glen Gray
Marvin Cooper
CLEVELAND
INDIANS

I will try and remember some of the blasting activities that we performed. We blasted obstacles out of the surf. Some were called "horned scullies" which were pointed railroad rails embedded in concrete and pointed seaward serving as obstacles against landing craft. Others were barrels of sand in the surf. And still others were concrete walls. Those were day and night operations. Usually we performed an assignment during the day, and then repeated the same job after dark. We used both electrical and fused caps for blasting, but anything in the water was set off with fused caps. Ashore we removed barbwire entanglements, blasted simulated mine fields, blasted concrete walls, and used shape charges for cutting steel beams and wooden posts.

For taking out a wall or a "horned scully" we would load the TNT or tetrytol on the seaward side and blow it towards the beach. The minefields were removed by bangalore torpedoes. These were pipes filled with explosives and shrapnel. Each unit was about 30 or 40 inches long and they telescoped together forming a long pipe that could be pushed through a mine field or under barbwire entanglements. When it exploded, it would clear a path ten or twelve feet wide. We were trained to stay close to our charge when it went off, but just far enough away to avoid injury. I remember one time when my crew blew a wall on the beach. We planted about a ½ ton of TNT in front of the wall, and a few feet away we lay in a covered slit trench, and using an electrical detonator (hellbox) we set off the explosive blasting the wall to pieces. The concusion was terrible, but it was planned by the instructors, and the operation was safe. Everyone in the crew had to perform all the training activities at one time or another.

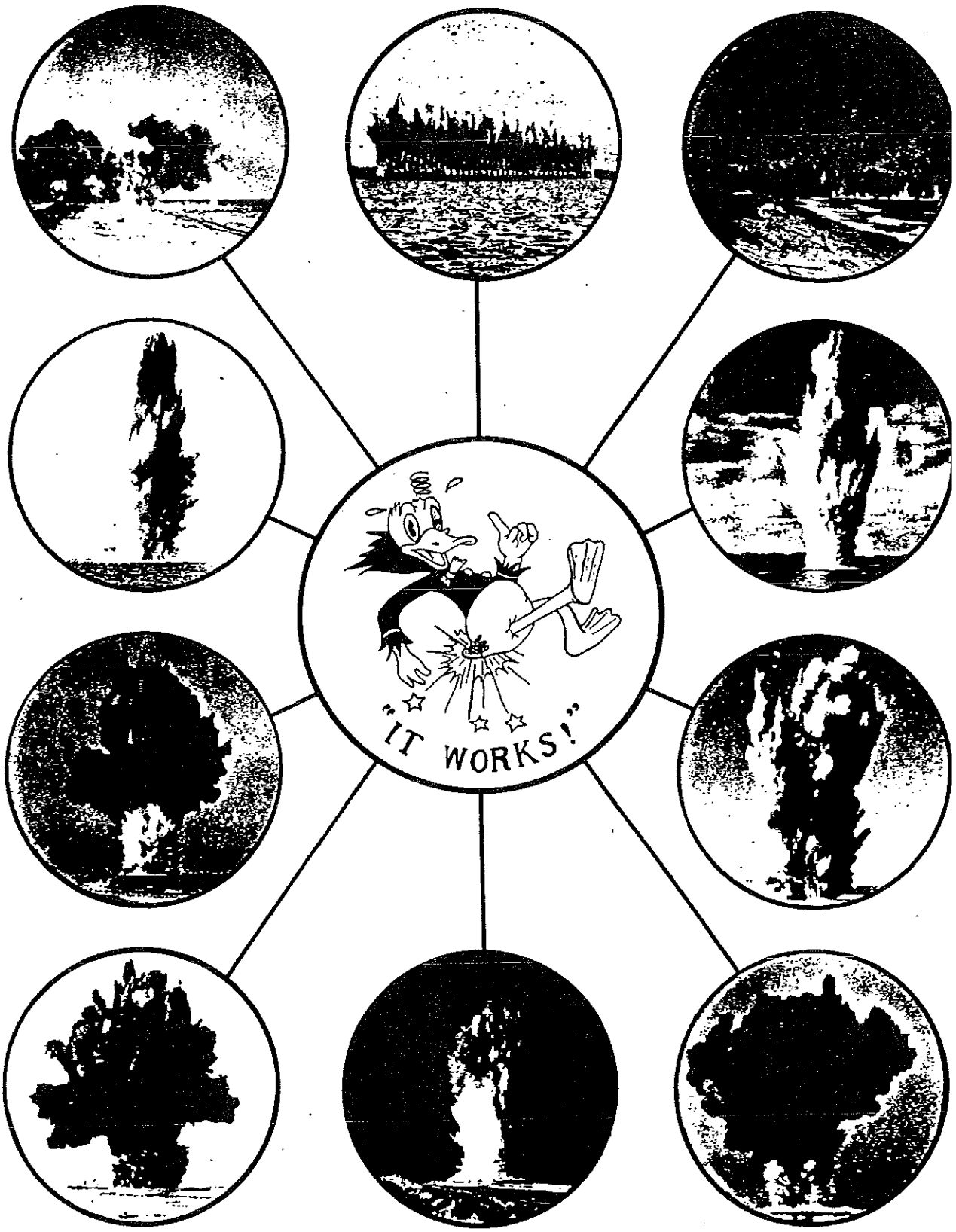
The blasting operations in themselves were strenuous physical training, but an entire portion of time was set aside for combat conditioning. This involved the usual hour or two of calisthenics, a 440 yard swim in the ocean every morning, and an occasional run through the obstacle course. The conditioning exercises were a part of every day training and it kept everyone in top physical condition.

There was one other phase in the Fort Pierce training program that I will call miscellaneous training. This training was meager to say the least. Everyone was required to use deep sea diving equipment and dive in the 16 feet deep diving tank on North Island. Everyone was required to send and receive semaphore. Everyone had instruction on basic hand to hand fighting with knives. We had one day of rifle range at the Camp Murphy an Army base, and one day of shooting fifty caliber and twenty millimeter machine guns at Navy flight targets. This is an outline of the Naval Combat Demolition Training presented at Fort Pierce. The training extended over about six weeks, started with "hell week" and ended with "payoff week".

Shortly after August 1, we finished the regular training and were ready to finish our training with the special week of training called "payoff week". That week is embedded in my memory because of what happened. "Payoff week" training was little different from the regular training except there was less instruction, increase of tempo in the operations, and more night work. It could be considered a sort of final examination. There were assigned problems which had to be solved by the crews and their officers without the instruction from training staff. These problems included removing beach obstacles during the day and night, infiltrating inland - "sneak and peak" - during the day and night, and doing inland blasting during the day and night. These training missions would all originate from a landing craft at sea, and all involved the use of rubber boats with no swimming involved.

This also was the routine of the regular training, but now everything was put together in a series of simulated combat experience. The last night of "payoff week", we had a reconnaissance infiltration exercise, where we had to crawl several hundred yards inland, plant charges on a wall, and blast it down. The training staff had set charges along our pathway which they exploded after giving us adequate warning to get our butts and heads down. We wore our steel helmets and we felt we needed them because one could hear the shrapnel whistling overhead. During one of those blasts, I felt a pain in my leg, and during the remainder of the night the mild pain persisted. We completed our assignment of removing the concrete wall, crawled back to the beach, found our rubber boats, and returned to the landing craft. Everyone was happy because our Fort Pierce Demolition training was technically over. When I got back to South Island and our lighted tent, I looked at my leg, and just below my knee cap was a slight puncture.

The next morning everyone felt great, our training was officially over, and everyone was planning on liberty, and some of us were hoping for leave. My knee was a little sore, but I could walk without a limp, and that night a bunch of us went into Fort Pierce on liberty. About three days later, it became infected and my knee swelled up to about twice its normal size. I went to sick bay, and they put me in the hospital. They X rayed my leg and there was a piece of steel or other foreign object lodged deep under the knee cap. A surgeon probed for it, and got most of it out. But he said there was a small fragment, that he had to leave because of the danger of losing the fluid from the knee. He put in a drain, and I had to stay in the hospital for nearly a week. My buddies came to see me and laughed at me for getting shrapnel in my leg in the states where I could not receive the purple heart. The doctor had called it shrapnel because he did not believe that the puncture could have come from a penetration other than a piece of flying steel.



Photographs of Demolition charges - Fort Pierce, FL

As near as I can calculate, this hospitalization was during the first 10 or 12 days of August. A sweaty time in south Florida before the days of air conditioning. About this time right after we finished training, we had some dissension among the crew. The guys did not like Gregory, and while I was in the hospital they went to Ensign Cleveland and requested that Gregory be dropped from our crew, because they did not want to go into combat with him. Gregory was the Petty Officer and in several occasions, he did not do what we felt was his share. Now, this is the way it was in Demolition. If the men did not want to serve with someone, they could either drop out or demand that that person be dropped from the crew. Ensign Cleveland felt about the same way as his men, so he dropped Gregory from the crew. Gregory stayed in Demolition with our larger group but was assigned to a different officer. I was in the hospital and took no part in the dispute, and was thankful for that. Ensign Cleveland came into the hospital ward just before I was to be released, and told me that he had put me in for a Petty Officer rating, and that I was his new Petty Officer. Shortly after that, I received notice that I had been promoted from Seaman first class to Gunner's Mate third class - now I was to wear a "crow". When Gregory left, our crew then had five enlisted men rather than the previous six.

About a week after we finished training, everyone in Class 7 received a seven day leave plus some travel time. We left Fort Pierce on the 16th of August by train. I took the train to Chicago, and can remember very little about the trip. At Chicago, I transferred to the Milwaukee Road and took the Hiawatha to Sioux City arriving there on August 19. My folks had moved to the new place two miles east of Moville, and Carroll had moved to the old home place. It seemed strange to go home to a different place. The house was much smaller with only two very small bedrooms, and they had been made out of one large one. Wynola and I stayed most of the time with her folks north of Moville, but did stay with Dad and Mom part of the time. Wynola had signed a contract to teach the school just north of my folk's place. I believe it was Arlington #6.

I was home about seven days, and Wynola and I did something different every day. We visited with Carroll and Mona, Vernon's family, Wynola's grand parents, and my folks and her folks. One night we had dinner with Aunt Flossie and Uncle Emery. Both Alice and Wynola were on summer vacation, so we did a lot of things together. One day Wynola and I went to Sioux City, spent the day, had a good dinner, went to a movie, and then spent the night in the Warrior Hotel, Sioux City's finest at the time. I have often thought that this was the most enjoyable leave of them all, but it was short lived and on August 25, Wynola took me to Sioux City, and I boarded the Hiawatha for my return trip to Florida.

I arrived back at the Naval Combat Demolition Base just before the first of September. It was the first of September before all Class 7 returned to the base, because of the longer traveling time for the people who went to the far west. Seventeen crews out of Class 7, had their travel orders waiting for them, and the first week of September, they boarded a troop train bound for San Francisco. Those seventeen crews would later become Underwater Demolition Team 15.

Everyone expected to ship out right away, but that did not materialize, amd we stayed in Florida nearly a month. Throughout the summer we had suffered the heat, humidity, mosquitoes, and the infamous sand flies; but the month of September, I really noticed those things more, probably because we were not training, and spent more time in the tent area. We had calisthenics each morning followed by a long swim in the ocean. After the swim, I would take a cool fresh water shower. Usually in the afternoons when there was nothing planned, I would take another swim followed by another shower. We had mosquito netting over our cots, and before we went to bed, we would spray the netting with mosquito repellent. Without the repellent, the sand flies would fly right through the netting. The repellent would last only about four hours, and then the sand flies would start eating us. Whoever woke up first from the attacking sand flies would spray everyone's netting. It was nothing to wake up in the middle of night being sprayed in the face with the insect repellent.

September 1944 was not too exciting, our regular training was over, and we had just enough physical training to stay in good shape. There were a few events that I want to write about. The first was a deep sea diving exercise in the Atlantic Ocean. The term deep sea is a little ambiguous because we only went down about 15 or 20 feet. We took a landing craft and went out throught the channel to the sea, and under the leadership of Ensign Cleveland, we took turns wearing a diving suit and walking on the ocean floor. We had a hand operated pump to maintain the pressure in the suit and furnish air to the diver. We also took turns operating the pump. Each crew member stayed down about 10 or 15 minutes, and this was long enough for me. I always developed a feeling of claustrophobia when I was down in a diving suit. This operation was Ensign Cleveland's idea, and he included only his own crew. We had all been down in the tank on North Island, but it was much different in the Ocean.

About twenty miles south of Fort Pierce, is another inlet from the ocean into the Indian River. It is just below Jensen Beach and is the inlet to Stuart, Florida. Across the seaward end of the inlet, sand had built up

making the entrance so shallow that the waves would start breaking during low tides. The Coast Guard and other powers that be made an agreement with the Navy to have the Demolition Crews deepen the channel. Several crews were assigned to take several tons of tetrytol and blast a channel about 30 feet wide through the opening from the sea. My crew worked one full day placing explosives, and helping to blast the channel deeper. It was similar to what we would later do in the coral reefs in the Pacific.

One morning in early September, a Navy Hellcat fighter plane crashed in the Ocean off of North Island. The Navy requested Demolition Crews to try and locate the plane. Several crews were taken by landing craft to the approximate crash site, which was marked by a buoy after an oil slick had been sighted. There must have been 50 or 60 swimmers in the water all afternoon looking for the plane. They had us swim in a grid pattern controlled by marking the search area with buoys, so all the complete area could be searched. The water was 40 to 60 feet deep, but it was clear, and we could see the bottom plainly in the deepest water. We searched for a long time but never found the plane.

One weekend, Ralph Grimes, Ed Deringer, Glen Frey, and myself went to West Palm Beach, Florida on a weekend liberty. Johnny Lynch the other crew member may have went with us, but I cannot remember. We rented a car in West Palm Beach and cruised around the area. Palm Beach is separated from West Palm Beach by a bay, and there are several causeways with draw bridges crossing the bay waters. We had the car for about eight hours one Saturday, and I believe it was furnished with four gallons of gasoline. Gasoline was rationed during the war so we could not buy any extra. I cannot remember very much about what we did, but I remember Grimes wanted to drive the car most of the time.

In late September, we received orders to ship out, and the remaining crews out of Class 7 boarded a troop train for San Francisco, California. It is about 3000 miles from Fort Pierce, Florida to San Francisco, and it took us 6 days to make the trip. I can remember a few things about the trip. We went through Jacksonville, late in the afternoon of the first day and by the following afternoon we passed through Birmingham. On the third day, we approached St. Louis, and I remember the Browns were playing the Cardinals in the 1944 World Series - one of the earlier "freeway series". Some of the guys thought we might stop and see one game of the series, but that did not happen. We stopped for breakfast off the train in Dodge City, Kansas and stopped for supper in Denver. There was a short stop in Ogden, Utah, and we engaged in some calisthenics to keep in shape. I remember eating supper in the dining car as we crossed the north edge of Great Salt Lake.

NAVAL COMBAT DEMOLITION UNITS
(crews that later became Underwater Demolition Team 13)
August 1944

(Names underlined are 1993 members of the Black Cat Team)

FIRST PLATOON

Ens. J. L. Moore

TENT: D-22

Gregory, G.	MoMM3c
Bier, P. J.	SC3c
Miller, R. E.	F1c
Phillip, R. G.	S1c
Dollinger, K. J.	S2c

Ens. A. C. Allan, Jr.

TENT: D-24

Allen, T.	S2c
Bryson, E. R.	S2c
Presson, D. J.	S2c
Blackwell, E. P.	S2c
Emerson, R.D.	Phm1c

Ens. R. E. Gleason

Tent: D-1

Taylor, D. P.	MM2c
Musick, F. J.	S1c
Matson, F. E.	S2c
Phelan, P. J.	S2c
King, R. E.	S2c

Ens. E. R. Cleveland

TENT D-3

Fore, S. P.	S2c
Cooper, M.	S2c
Frey, G.	S2c
Grimes, R. R.	S2c
Deringer, E. S.	S2c

SECOND PLATOON

Ens. D. H. Murray

TENT: D-5

Jordan, H. E.	CM2c
Lazarr, C.	MM3c
Barrett, J. A.	SF3c
Patterson, J. F.	F2c
Evans, A. E. S2c	

Ens. H. Gardner

TENT: D-7

Rudy, C.	SM3c
Brummett, C.	F1c
Broome, J. H.	S1c
McElhannon, R. J.	S2c
McElwee, T. L.	S2c

Ens. M. F. Smith

TENT: D-9

King, A. C.	SF2c
La Rocque, M. P.	Cox
Fontenot, J.	Cox
Hoffman, J. L.	S1c
Sulik, M. J.	S2c

Ens. R. V. Hehli

TENT: D-11

Cran, W. J.	CM3c
Moser, J. C.	S2c
Foreman, W. D.	S2c
Gannon, R. J.	S2c
Gunshetski, S. J.	S2c

THIRD PLATOON

Ens. H. J. Rendell

TENT: D-15

Cusimano, A. A.	Cox
Berryann, C L.	S1c
Wilkinson, R. M.	S1c
Lynch, J. T.	S2c
Pittman, C.	S2c

Ens. Huddleston

TENT: D-19

McCaw, R.	Momm2c
Delgrosso, D.	S1c
Bracken, R.	S1c
McIntosh, D.	S2c
Owens, T. E.	S2c

Ens. Hamman

TENT: D-23

Rush G.	BM2c
Price, G. L.	S2c
Prince, S. G.	S2c
Butler, L. H.	S2c
Goode, L.	S2c

Ens. R. J. Moran

TENT: D-17

Stone, J. E.	S1c
Taylor, E. H.	S1c
Morrow, R. J.	F1c
Moore, J. C.	S1c
Kinsaul, K. A.	S2c

Ens. J. Long Jr.

TENT D-21

Johnson, L. A.	SK3c
Hyde, B. B.	MoMM3c
Rice, B. M.	F1c
Ward, R. D.	F2c
Taraborelli, V. G.	S2c

The following men and officers were in Team 13 during Iwo and Okinawa, but are not listed in the NCDU crews.

Lt. Donald Walker (Able)
Ensign L.S. Robinson
Ensign R. Harlan
Barte Allen
William Baker
Karl Behrendt
Robert Carlson (Able)
Oakley Cline (Able)
William Crandell
T.E. Crowder
Raymond Edwards (Able)
Stuart Eisentrager (Able)
Tauren First
Walter Flathers
Daniel Holihan (Able)
Arthur Magee
E. Marietta (Able)
Ed McIntieer
Walter Miller
Keith Moore
Donald Patton
Gilbert Reimer
Howard Rice
Ed Robinson (Able)
Paul Shoemaker
Paul Toy
Orbin Tuttle
Duryee Van Wagenen
Frank Walker
William Whelan
Arnold Willardson (Able)

The following officers and men were listed in the NCDU crews but not in Team 13.

Ensign J. Moore
Ensign H. Rendell
Ensign R. Moran
J. F. Patterson
M. P. La Rocque
J. Fontenot
R. J. McElhannon
R. J. Gannon
C. Pittman
D. McIntosh
B.B. Hyde

The following morning, we arrived at Camp Shoemaker, California just outside of Oakland. A reader of this essay may note that I write down what appears to be exact dates, and then in other instances they are called approximate dates. Wynola kept a diary through the war years, and this furnished many of the dates, while in the States. In the Pacific, I have many exact dates from the Command File of UDT-13, and will use them in this essay. The period of time from September through October was a period of travel before my crew became part of UDT-13, and Wynola did not know where I was at any given time, so the dates must be approximate as they come from my memory. I believe it was about October 3 when we arrived at Shoemaker.

From Camp Shoemaker, we had a one night liberty, and I and a couple of friends went to see the sights of San Francisco. We went by a base bus, and about all I can remember is a wild ride over the hills east of Oakland in a bus with a lady driver. That gal really highballed that old bus. The following morning, we moved to Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. We were given shots for all the many diseases awaiting us in the South Pacific.

I believe we were served one meal while at Treasure Island, and without further delay we boarded the APA-151, the U.S.S. General Patrick and sailed out under the Golden Gate Bridge. We were headed for Pearl Harbor. The attack transport was nearly new and was carrying mostly Marine personnel. It took about five days to reach the Hawaiian Islands, and there are a couple of events worth mentioning. The sea became very rough. I was quartered forward near the bow of the ship. I woke one morning, and it seemed like the bow of the ship would rise slowly about 20 feet and then literally fall the same amount. My stomach soon was churning, and I became violently seasick. Every time I left my bunk, I would have to run to the head and vomit. For a couple of days, I had a friend bring bread from the mess hall, so I would have something to eat. Gradually I got better and the storm subsided, and soon the sickness left. One night we were called to general quarters with everyone to report to their battle stations. Of course, I did not have one but was ordered to stand watch with a gun crew. The sonar had picked up something that could have been a submarine, but later I was told that it probably was a large whale.

Before we arrived in Pearl Harbor, Ensign Cleveland had received word that his crew had special orders awaiting it in Pearl Harbor. He called a short meeting before we docked and told us that we would probably be split from the rest of the group, but that was all the information he had. When we arrived in Pearl, we found the answer to that question right away. Six or seven crews were separated from the remainder of class 7 and taken to Ford Island Naval Air Station. We

boarded a plane, which I believe was a DC-3, and took off for Guam. Lt. Moore, one of the crew officers, was put in command of our group, and he had our orders. Before we left, Moore briefed us on what he knew. We were to meet a ship at Guam, and then join some battle force in the western Pacific. I was pretty scared, because I had never been on a plane before, and I could remember the bomber crash south of Moville and the Navy plane we looked for off the coast of Florida less than a month before.

After we were airborne and leveled off at a cruising altitude, I sort of quit praying and enjoyed the sight of Oahu growing smaller behind us and a few ships moving below us with their wakes trailing behind. We stopped to refuel either once or twice, but I believe only once. I believe it was at either Midway Island or Kwajalein. It took less than 24 hours to reach Guam, and it was early morning when we landed there. At the airstrip a bus was waiting for us, and we were taken straight to the bay. We boarded a ship called an APD, the U.S.S. Waters, which was an old World War I four stack destroyer converted into an Assault Personnel Destroyer (APD). Remember, all this time we were lugging all our possessions in seabags. This happened so fast, it is just a blip in my memory.

The Waters left Guam as soon as we boarded, and shortly after we had a briefing and we found out what was going on. We were headed for the Philippines, which were to be invaded soon. I have some trouble establishing the date of our arrival in Guam, but it must have been between October 10th and the 15th, because it was almost the first of October when we left Fort Pierce. We were told that we might take part in the initial invasion of the Philippians. The Waters was a fast ship, and we made good time over a sea that was like a sheet of glass. We soon had more information on our assignment. We were to serve as a standby group in case additional Demolition people were needed in the initial invasion of Leyte. Now as I think about the situation there is much I do not remember or understand. The invasion of Leyte commenced on the 20th of October 1944, and the Underwater Demolition Team operations were before that, and when we arrived off the Philippines, we were probably too late for the invasion. Anyway, I do not remember seeing any land. We stayed a few days in the area with a great number of other ships, and then received orders to leave for the Hawaiian Islands. We first went to Manus in the Admiralty Islands, which are not too far from New Guinea. Our stay in Manus was short, and we moved eastward across the Pacific. I remember the crew of the Waters were anxious to return to the Hawaiians. They had been in the western Pacific for a long time, and had been headed east, when they were stopped at Guam to pick us up. They took us directly to the Island of Maui, where we left the ship. I had traveled over half way around the world since leaving Fort Pierce, Florida.

It was after the first of November when we reached Maui. Maui is the second largest Island in the Hawaiian group. It is located between Molokai and Hawaii the largest island. Maui is about 60 miles southeast of Pearl Harbor which is on Oahu. Maui has two mountain systems. The smaller in the northwest reaches an elevation of about 5000 feet. In the south and east part of the island,where it is the widest, is the second, and it is an extinct volcano rising to an elevation of near 10,000 feet, and is called Mt. Haleakala. Haleakala slopes to the ocean on all sides except its northwest which is a narrow plane separating the two mountain systems.

At the foot of Haleakala on the west was the location of the Underwater Demolition Training and Experimental Base, the home of the Underwater Demolition Teams of the Pacific Fleet during World War II. The base and its activities were top secret, and no newspaper people were allowed in its compound. Maui at that time was lightly populated, and there was only one family living south of the base. They had special permission to go through the base. A group of natives ran a hamburger and fruit juice restaurant on the base, and they also had special permission to enter and leave the base. It was a top secret base with no apparent security, no fences, and no armed guards except on the road leading north towards all the populated areas.

The men of Class 7 out of Fort Pierce who had not gone to the Philippines were already in training, and were now called Teams 11 and 12. The group that had left Florida a month before we did were just about finished training, and they were Team 15. The forty or more people who came back from the Philippines on the Waters were mixed with residuals from earlier classes and specifically about twenty people from Team Able. This group was Team 13. I have some confusion in my mind as to when we were commissioned as Team 13. Our address after we started training on Maui was "Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen, Fleet Post Office, Navy 900", but before it was different. Wynola had written in her diary that the first five or six letters she had sent me, using the address I had sent her in San Francisco, were all returned by the Navy labeled insufficient address. I believe this was all connected.

Like Fort Pierce, Maui was a tent town. Our quarters were located about a quarter mile from the ocean. We had no electricity or lights. The heads (toilets) were located on the north edge of the tent area, and the showers (with only cold water) were located on the south edge of the area. The streets and walkways were natural dirt consisting of the broken down bits of lava debris deposited thousands of years before. Between the tent area and the ocean were located the drill area and the amphitheater where movies were shown nightly. A blacktop road ran parallel to the beach, and

between the tent area and the beach. The mess hall and the administration area were located west of the road and close to the beach.

The training at Maui was much different than that experienced in Florida. Instead of six man crews, we were divided into platoons of about 18 men and 2 officers. The Team was divided in to Platoons Able, Baker, Charley, Dog, and Headquarters. The Headquarters Platoon included the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, Pharmacist Mate, Yoeman, Photographer, Platoon Officer, and the boat crew. It was also smaller than the other platoons. Every man from my old NCDU crew went into Platoon Charley, so we all stayed together in training and until the end of the war.

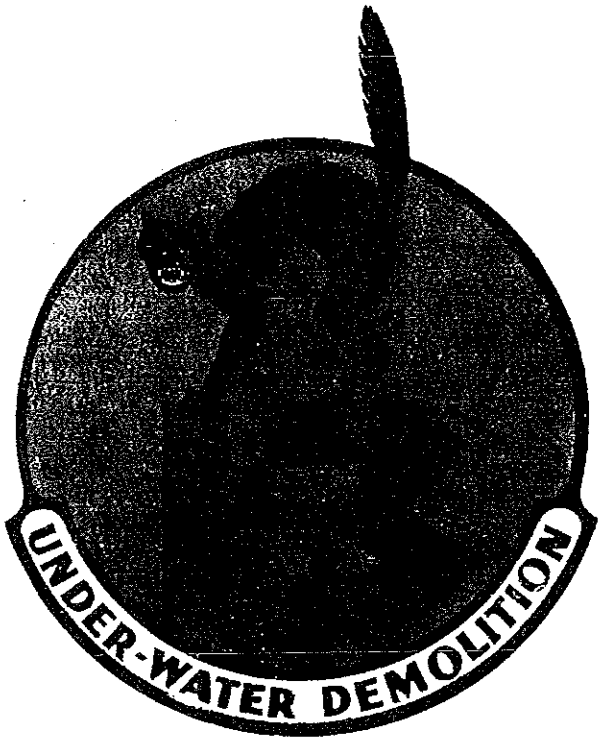
The members of Charlie Platoon were as follows with the members of my old crew in bold print. There were Ensign Allen, **Ensign Cleveland,** E.J. Marietta (CPO), Karl Behrendt (CPO), **John Lynch, Ralph Grimes**, Thomas Owans, **Glen Frey**, Paul Shoemaker, **Marvin Cooper, Edward Deringer**, Paul Beir, Etoise Blackwell, Edward Bryson, R.N. Wilkenson, Tom Allen, Roy Braken, Patrick Phelan, Raymond McCaw, and Walter Flathers. As I write this and for the past year, I have been searching for veterans from UDT-13, and have located about twenty. Until last week on February 15, 1991, I had been unable to locate anyone from Platoon Charley. On February, 15, I received a letter from Ed Deringer who lives in Florida.

A week or two before Thanksgiving, we started our Underwater Demolition Training. During World War II, all the Navy special forces, involved with demolition activities, were called Naval Combat Demolition Units when serving with the Atlantic Fleet, and Underwater Demolition Teams when serving with the Pacific Fleet. The Maui training reflected the difference in the combat operations of NCDU and UDT. I will explain the training activities in Maui, and later I will write about some events that I remember about my own experiences, while taking the Maui training.

As stated before, the organizational structure was changed from the five man rubber boat crew to the eighteen to twenty man platoons. Rubber boats were still used, but only as a transportation extension of the LCPR. The letters LCPR is the acronym for Landing Craft Personnel Reconnaissance. Each platoon was assigned its own LCPR, and the platoon furnished its own boat crew. For example, Platoon Charley during training and combat had two or three Coxswains to steer or drive the boat, two Motor Machinists to keep the diesel engine operating, four Gunners to man the fifty caliber machine guns, and two Signalmen to operate the two way radios. There were at least two men for every crew assignment, and they would rotate positions, because

Charley Platoon -- UDT-13
1944 - 1945

Glen Frey, John Lynch, Ralph Grimes, Walt Flathers
Ed Deringer, Marv Cooper, Paul Beir, P. Shoemaker, R. Braken
Pat Phelan, Ed Bryson, Karl Behrendt, E. Blakwell, Tom Owens
E. Marietta, R. McCaw, Ens. Allen, Ens. Cleveland, Tom Allen



The above print was the official insignia of Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen. One source has indicated that it was designed by Ensign Donald Murray a Team 13 platoon officer in late 1944 or early 1945. The original insignia had a black cat, a red number 13 on a blue background. It was not recognized by the Department of Navy and could not legally be worn on any dress uniforms when off ship or base. From this insignia, the Team became known as the "black cat Team."

everyone was trained as a Demolition and reconnaissance swimmer. Everyone in Platoon Charley was a petty officer, and rated in the above classifications. Ralph Grimes and I were the only two Gunner's Mates, but two Coxswains also served as gunners on the two guns. The two officers were Ensign Cleveland, Platoon Officer and Ensign Allen, Assitant Platoon Officer. One of these officers always stayed on the LCPR during operations, and the other usually went into the beach on the mission. On Maui, the LCPRs were kept in a boat pool and checked out to the various Teams for training exercises.

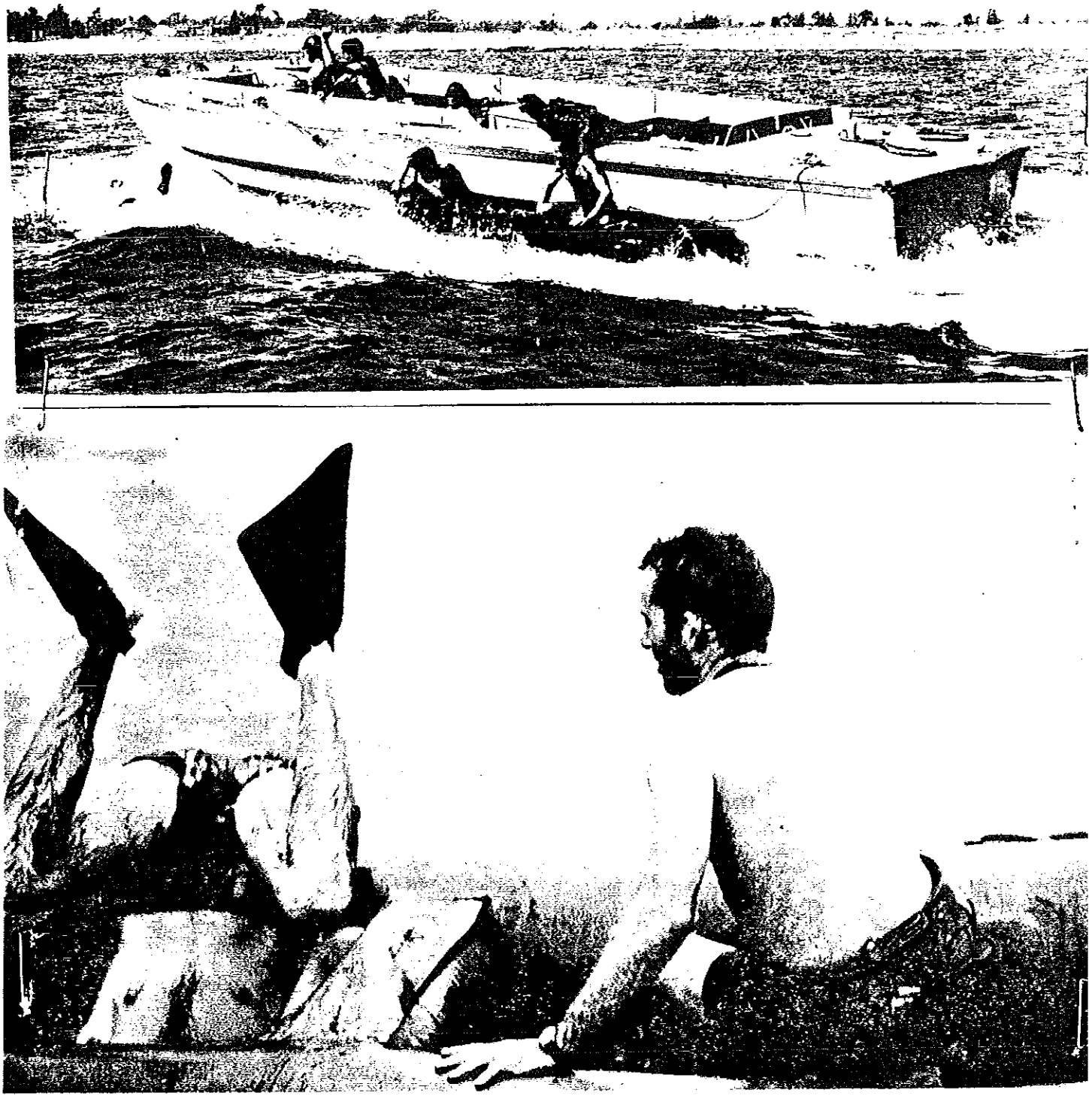
The Maui training could be divided into demolition, physical conditioning, and reconnaissance training. Most of the demolition and reconnaissance training missions were embarked from the LCPRs. The physical conditioning was of two parts - calisthenics on the drill field and long swims in the ocean. Probably the largest difference in the Maui training was its concentration on swimming. When we arrived at Maui, we were issued swimfins, facemask, and special swim shoes. The shoes were made of thin strong canvas and were worn under the swimfins. They protected our feet from cuts made possible by the coral and lava rock predominate in some of the Maui beaches. Usually our swimming and calisthenics training was in the morning, with the calisthenics beginning right after our morning muster. It usually lasted an hour or two followed by a short break or rest period. The remainder of the morning was spent in swimming off the beach in front of the base area. There was usually a one mile swim using swimfins and face mask, and this was accomplished by following a marked route in the ocean. We had at least one test swim where we had to swim four miles in three hours.

The reconnaissance training was the most interesting, and we devoted many hours in executing the activities of this training. It was either afternoon or night training, and both were much the same except for the darkness of the night operations. The recon training operations started from the base, where each platoon would take a LCPR and move to some assigned beach area off Maui. This was where we received our training for our boat crew assignments as well as the reconnaissance swimming assignments. We were to learn several unique procedures which were used in simulated combat experiences. The assignments involved dropping swimmers in the water from the LCPRs about one half mile from the beach. The swimmers would swim to the beach and inspect the beach for mines, obstacles, reefs, water depths, gun emplacements, and any other feature that might hinder the landing of troops on that beach. This involved writing the information on a plexiglass plate strapped to the swimmers thigh. After the swimmer, finished his mission he would swim back out to the boat, where he would be retrieved from the water.

This operation, as stated above, seems rather simple, but remember if this was to be accomplished on an enemy beach, it could become a very hazardous arrangement. So a special method had been developed to minimize the dangers of dropping and retrieving the swimmers. A rubber boat was tied along side of the LCPR, so that it was in constant contact with the LCPR. To drop swimmers the LCPR would move to the required distance from shore, and at high speed (twenty to thirty knots) move parallel to the beach with the attached rubber boat on the seaward side of the LCPR. The swimmer on signal would roll over the gunwale into the rubber boat and on into the water. The LCPR would continue moving parallel to the beach until all the swimmers were spaced in the water, and then it would move out to sea away from enemy gunfire. The merits of this procedure were proven in combat. When dropped a half mile from shore, the swimmers went into the water practically undetected, and the LCPR offered a rapidly moving target and was in enemy mortar range a limited time. For daylight reconnaissance missions, this method probably saved many lives, and led to many more successful missions.

The retrieval of swimmers from the water required a slightly more complex method. The swimmers would swim back our to sea after accomplishing the requirements of their mission, and line up in approximately the same location. The boat crews would bring their LCPRs back into the "swimmer pick up area", and move their boat at high speed so that the rubber boat would be within a foot or two of each swimmer it approached. This was a critical procedure which required the LCPR Coxswain to maneuver precisely or the swimmer would be missed in the pickup attempt. A man with a "life ring" would be seated forward in the rubber boat, and he would hold the ring in such a manner that the swimmer could grasp it with both hands and be swung into the rubber boat. This procedure was completed in a couple of seconds, and by the time the swimmer was climbing over the gunwale of the LCPR, the next swimmer would come flying into the stern of the rubber boat. Swimmers spaced at twenty yards could be retrieved from the water one by one at speeds up to thirty miles per hour.

The method just described was mainly used for daylight missions. For night reconnaissance missions, this method was seldom used because of the darkness. At night, the swimmers would be dropped at night farther at sea with the LCPR's diesel engine at full idle and the boat nearly stationary to avoid enemy detection at the beginning of the operation. Swimmer pickup involved the swimmers swiming back to the pickup site. The boat crew would use a weak light turned downward so they could not be seen from the shore, but visible to the swimmer as he neared the pickup area. Another night operational method was the same rubber boat "sneak and peak" method used in Fort Pierce.



A graceful reentry, circa 1945. (National Archives)

The high speed swimmer pickup or retrieval was perfected at Maui in 1944. The above pictures were made at a later date and at a different base.

I enjoyed the reconnaissance training missions. By this time, I was a good swimmer, and a two mile swim into the beach and back at night was almost like recreation. The sensation of dropping off into the warm Hawaiian water from the high speed boat was an experience worthy of remembering. I have mentioned that every underwater demolition member engaged in all phases of the training, but there were a couple of exceptions to that statement. Only a rated and specially trained Coxswain could handle the LCPR during swimming drops and pickups, and the radio was always handled by the Radioman or the Signalman. Those people had to be swimmers, but could not replaced by people with different ratings because of the special skills involved. My duty when not a swimmer was manning one of the 50 caliber machine guns.

The demolition or blasting training at Maui was similar to the Fort Pierce training, but was coordinated in a platoon and a team method in contrast to the six man rubber boat crews used at Fort Pierce. The typical demolition training operation would proceed in the following manner. Each platoon with their LCPR would take a required amount of explosive material from a barge anchored several miles seaward from the base. From there, we would proceed to within a half mile of the beach blasting site. If this was a daylight mission, we would use one of two different methods to accomplish our goal. If our instructors said heavy enemy gunfire was expected, we would swim our explosives to the shore. Each swimmer could swim with two twenty pound satchel charges, also called Hagenson packs. Tetrytol weighs about the same as water, so its buoyancy in the ocean made in nearly weightless. If the instructors said enemy gunfire was not expected, we would place the tetrytol in rubber boats and row our explosives to the blasting sites. Obviously, the use of rubber boats made our work much easier because they could handle several hundred pounds of tetrytol.

Which ever method of transportation of explosives were used, the next portion of our training mission would be critical with timing a very important element in its execution. The explosives would be placed appropriately on the obstacles, and all charges would be tied together with primacord, an explosive line about ¼ inch in diameter. This involved up to four platoons tying their explosives in to a main trunk line. Team work was essential. The charges were fused at both ends, and those fuses were lit at a predetermined time. Everyone carried watches, and we knew that a few minutes after the fuses were lit, the whole beach would blow. We had to be a safe distance out to sea when that happened.

Those training missions were executed both in daylight and at night. We always used rubber boats at night, and

this helped balance the extra difficulties associated with working in darkness and in a heavy surf.

The above descriptions fairly well describes our basic Underwater Demolition training. There were some other minor training activities during the morning hours such as instruction in hand to hand knife combat, firing range using small arms, wrestling instruction, and viewing instructional movies.

There were a few events or incidents that occurred during our Maui training that I can remember, and they are worth mentioning. One night, we were having a night "dry run" blasting exercise on one of the beaches about five or ten miles south of Lahaina where most of our blasting occurred. Teams 11, 12, and 13 were involved in a joint operation. A "dry run" exercise was using only primacord with no tetrytol to simulate a blasting operation. The training experience was nearly the same as using tetrytol, but economically it saved the tetrytol, and preserved the man made obstacles for use at another time. The timing and precautionary measures were nearly as important with the "dry run" as when using tetrytol. The primacord was an explosive, and the difference was that the swimmers could be closer without receiving injuries because of the much smaller explosion. That night several Team 11 swimmers did not watch the time, and were still on their section of the beach working with primacord when the trunk line and all the primacord exploded. There were several people seriously injured and one Team 11 officer had his leg cut off from the exploding primacord. I do not know why they did not know the time, but I was told they were having some problems working in the surf in the dark, and did not realize the "fire in the hole" time had arrived. "Fire in the hole" was a cry used to communicate that the fuse pullers had been pulled and that the detonation was imminent. The cry was usually ineffective when working on the beach because of the roar of the surf. In one way, the people involved were lucky, because if we had been using tetrytol six or seven people would have been killed.

Another incident involved me and three other swimmers in a night reconnaissance mission. I cannot recall who all were involved, but they were from Platoon Charley. The training mission involved swimming into the beach from an LCPR, reporting to an instructor, and then swimming out to the LCPR for the swimmer pick up. We floated around yelling at the LCPRs who never seemed to get close enough to pick us up. The Coxwain and Boat Officer should have stopped the boat and used the light method, so we could have swam to the boat. I believe they thought we were in trouble and had possibly drowned so they kept looking for us. We were in the water from four to six hours, and were not found until nearly daybreak.

A third incident involved me and Glen Frey. Frey was a Boatswains Mate and was the regular Coxswain of our LCPR, but he also had to train as a swimmer. One afternoon, he and I were swimming reconnaissance in and out of the beach south of Lahaina, when I swam into a portuguese man of war. The portuguese man of war is a large purple colored jelly fish with long tentacles. The tentacles are very poisonous, and when contacted the pain resembles being stung by a wasp. They can paralyze a swimmer and cause him to drown. A tentacle spiraled around my left arm and over my shoulder. The pain was instant and severe, and I yelled for Frey for help. I knew what it was because I had been stung slightly by smaller ones. I managed to brush the tentacle away, reverse my swimming direction, and then swim around the jelly fish. When I looked for Frey, he was swimming rapidly away. Frey was not a good swimmer, and when I overtook him, I asked him why he had not helped, because that was why we swam the buddy system. I cannot remember his answer.

Our training period on Maui lasted less than three months, and during that period Thanksgiving and Christmas were days of feasts and no training. I cannot remember the number of days when we did not have training activities, but they were few in number. I do not believe that I took a liberty during the entire time. I received frequent mail from Wynola and Mom after my address was finally corrected. I also received some food packages around Christmas, but even the candy was dried out by the time it reached me.

Some time during the month of December, we were told that we could have electricity in our tents, if we would dig the holes for the electrical poles. It so happened that a pole site was adjacent to the northeast corner of our tent. My old Fort Pierce crew had taken the same tent when we moved in probably from habit, because we were not a unit at Maui but a part of Platoon Charley. So Grimes, Frey, Lynch, Deringer, and I took it on ourselves to dig the hole for an electric pole beside our tent. Problems developed. After digging down about two feet we were digging in so much lava rock that progress was extremely slow. To solve the problem we kept some blocks of TNT from one of our training missions and brought them back to the tent. We took the TNT and carfully packed it in the hole, filled the hole with dirt, packed the dirt and set off the charge. The idea was to break up the lava with the explosion so we could dig the hole with shovels. It worked pretty well, except we used a little too much TNT, and its force broke through to the surface and did considerable damage to the wood floor of the tent. I expected some official repercussions from this, but we never told anyone about the tent damage, which we repaired immediately. Others had used TNT to help dig other holes, but I believe no one else blew up their own tent. By Christmas, we had an electric light suspended from the peak of our tent.

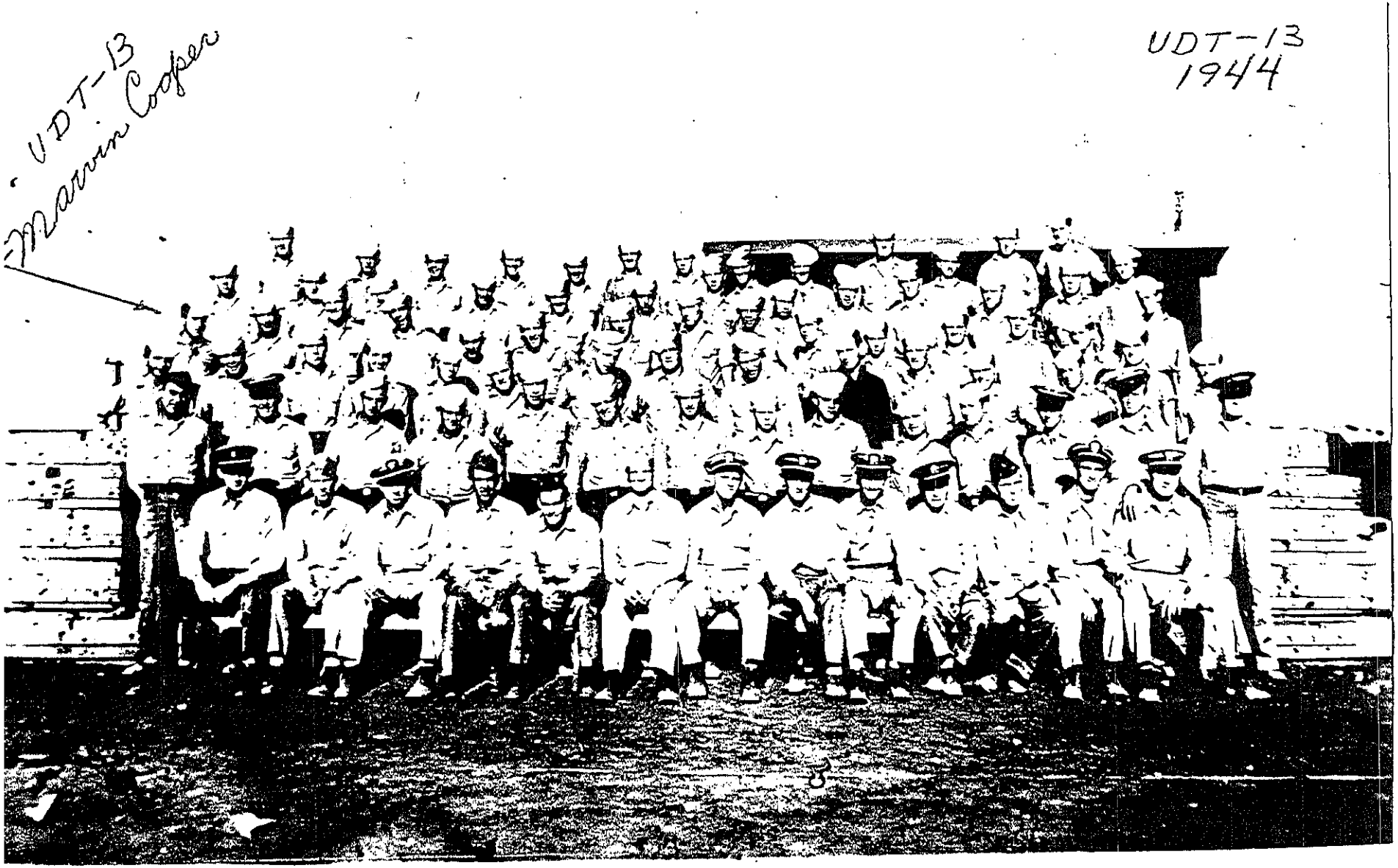
Robert Dunsmoor was training with Team 12, but we kept in touch. Our tents were not too far apart, and we would visit occasionally. Robert had a good friend who was his swimming buddy in training and later in combat. The friend's name was Bill Hickman, and he and Bob both came from Seattle, Washington. I corresponded with Bill last year, 1990, and he told me of Bob's passing several years ago. After we left Maui, I only saw Bob twice, and then lost touch with him completely.

The exact date of our departure from Maui eludes me. I have one source that says it was December 29, 1944, and another that gives the date January 3, 1995. Anyway it must have been some time in that five day interval. We were assigned to the U.S.S. Barr (APD-39). APD is the acronym for Assault Personnel Destroyer. The night before we went aboard the Barr, the Hawaiian Islands were put on alert because the Navy had reported the possibility of Japanese submarines in the area. This meant a total blackout with all lights extinguished on the base. In the black of night, a signal flare rocket suddenly was shot into the air from our base. The culprit was Sherman Prince, a good friend of mine. He was immediately apprehended and put under arrest. Prince was a nice guy about my age and never had a malicious bone in his body. When we went aboard ship the following morning, Prince was with us. The submarine alert had evidently been a false alarm.

I had forgotten about this incident until a couple of weeks ago, February 1991. I had written several letters to different UDT-13 people using their 1945 addresss. Two of those letter were answered by old teammates. Sherman Prince was one of them, and he phoned me from West Virginia. We talked for nearly an hour about the old days, and I suddenly remembered the signal flare incident. I asked him what really happened, and as he related the following story to me, I could remember most of it.

I have written that our showers were located at one end of the tent area, and that they were cold showers out in the open. According to Prince, that night he was taking a shower, when Harold Jordon shot him with a signal flare, while he was taking a shower. He chased Jordon back to his tent where Jordon had several flares. He grabbed a flare and fired at Jordon, but instead of hitting Jordon, the flare went arcing skyward. So what amounted to horseplay, ended up as a serious offence. Prince also told me that Commander Moranz gave him a Deck Court Martial, and he was broken from GM2c to GM3.

Anyway about the first of the year, we left Maui on the Barr loaded down with equiment, supplies, many tons of explosives, and ammunition. UDT-13 had 94 officers and men aboard the Barr. Our Commanding Officer was Commander



Underwater Deamoltion Team 13 just before they left Maui in 1944

Vincent Moranz, and our Executive Officer was Lt. Donald Walker a former Team Able man. I have recently corresponded with Don Walker, and he has furnished some written materials and pictures that have helped me recall some of the events of this essay.

From Maui we took the short cruise to Pearl Harbor, where we joined a convoy heading to the western Pacific. I cannot remember when we found out our destination, but sometime on the journey, we were told that we were heading for Ulithi. I had never heard of the island, so the knowledge of our destination did not mean too much to me. The cruise from Pearl Harbor to Ulithi was probably between three and four thousand miles, and we had no refueling stops. I can remember the Barr refueling from a battleship at least once during the journey. In convoy we moved slowly, and our average speed was probably about 12 knots. The Waters on our trip back from the Philippines probably averaged almost twice the convoy speed. The convoy had several APA transports and other slow moving vessels, and plus the fact that we cruised in zigzag led to the slow rate of movement.

The sea was generally placid, and I remembered learning in school why that ocean was called the Pacific. A couple of times we noticed dolphins swimming along side of the ships bow. They would swim along with the ship for miles, and it was almost like they were racing the ship, or wanted the ship as a swimming companion. I remember when we passed within a few hundred miles of Truk that we were warned of the possibility of air attacks by Japanese fighter planes. Truk was bypassed along with Yap as the Americans invaded the Japanese held islands throughout the Pacific.

It must have been late January when we finally arrived at Ulithi. Ulithi is an atoll in the Carolina Islands. An atoll is a circular pattern of small islands surrounding a lagoon. The are commonplace in the south and central Pacific, and are formed by the growth of coral in the ocean. I believe Ulithi has 30 or 40 small islands in a near circle, and its lagoon must be 30 or 40 miles across. After it was taken from the Japanese, it was used as an anchorage and staging areas for the many invasions in the western Pacific. The Barr dropped anchor in the lagoon near the Blessman and the Bates, APDs that carried Team 15 and Team 12 respectively. The USS Bull carrying Team 14 may have been there also, but I cannot remember.

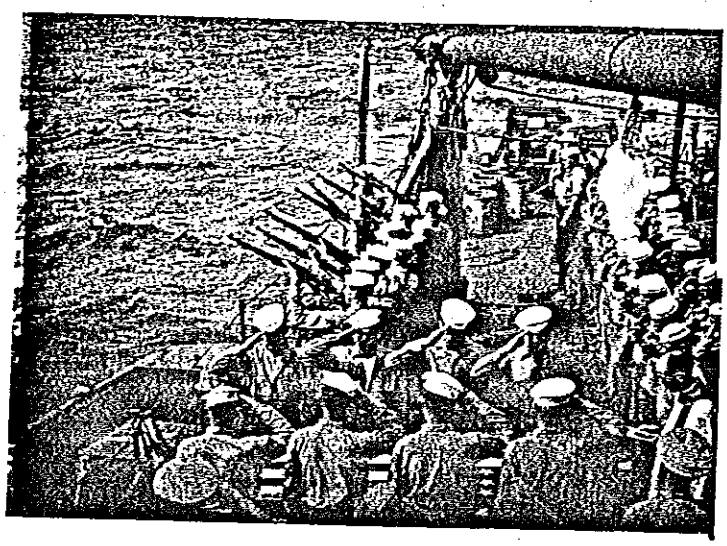
We were anchored at Ulithi for about ten or more days, and there are some events that I want to write about. The first one was a tragic happening. We had been hearing that the Japanese had resorted to the use of suicide planes during the invasion of Luzon earlier that month, and the planes had crashed into many ships causing great damage and

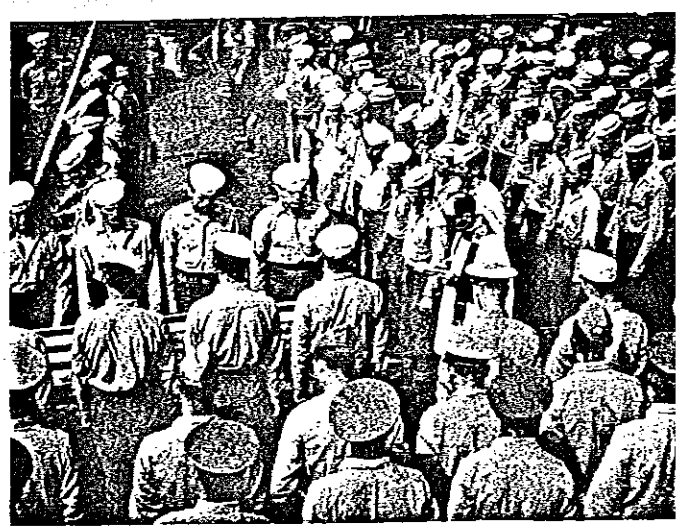
sinking many. It was decided that we should mount 50 caliber anti-aircraft machine guns along the rail of the fantail of the Barr to add firepower to the ship's gun batteries. Ray Leblanc, one of the men who had come out of Team Able, was a welder, and he was assigned to weld the gun mounts to certain rail posts. It involved building up the posts with reinforcing steel, and building the mount on top of that. Ray was welding on a post when a wave splashed up on to the fantail and on to the electric welding machine. Ray fell into the water and never surfaced. Shipmates jumped into to help him, but he drifted under the ship and was pulled out by swimmers on the opposite side of the ship. Ray died either by electrocution or drowning. The ships Doctor and Team 13's Pharmacist Mate worked until after dark trying to revive him, but to no avail. Ray was buried on Asor Island in Ulithi, and Team 13 had lost a good man. The project of installing the guns continued, and I believe we had eight mounts when the installation was completed.

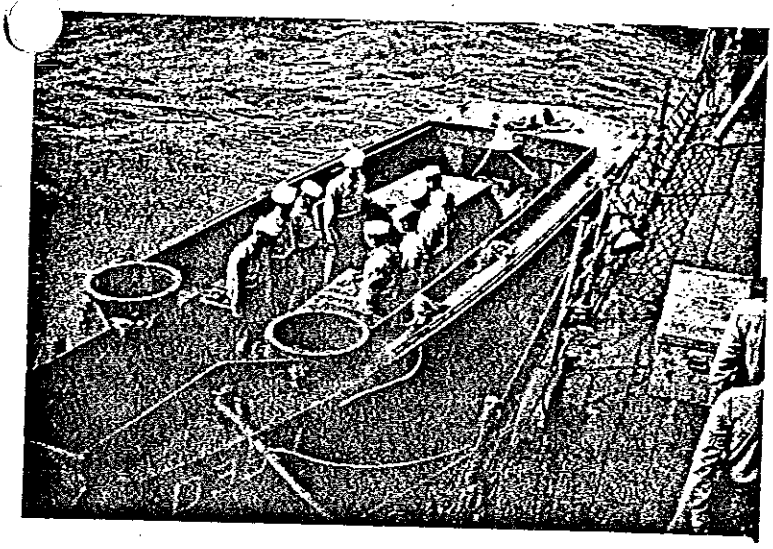
Ulithi was a unique place. The small islands were very small - a square mile or two - and were covered with coconut palms. From where we were anchered, we could see the east side of the lagoon, but to the west and much of the south and north the islands were too far away, and the lagoon looked much like open ocean. When looking in those directions, there were ships as far as you could see. We spent much of our time swimming, keeping in shape, and maintaining our tans. Aboard ship, we had to make sure that we remained in a condition where we would not sunburn, when exposed to long periods of the tropical sun, and the uniform of the day for UDT personnel often was swimming trunks.

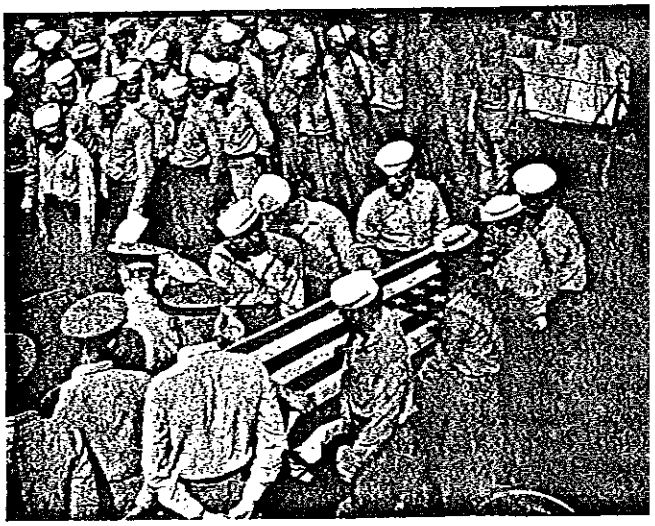
Several times, during our stay at Ulithi, I and some friends would take a rubber boat and row into some of the small uninhabited islands two or three miles east of us. As we approached the islands from the lagoon side, we would have to cross a reef. The water was undescribable in the lagoon and especially over the reef. The water temperature was between 85 and 90 degrees, and the surface was a beautiful greenish blue. The water over the reef was loaded with various types of sea life, including many kinds of shell fish and beautiful colored tropical fish swimming in all directions. There was no surf on the lagoon side of the islands, but if you walked across any of the small islands, giant breakers came crashing in out of the east. I liked to skin dive in the waters on the reef, and this also supplied training for what was to come in future combat. One time as we rowed towards the beach, a native outrigger about 20 to 30 feet long moved between us and the beach. The people in the craft looked like they wore no clothes, and some of them were women. We tried to get close to them, but they were much faster in the outrigger and quickly moved away from us.

Between the islands ringing the lagoon, there were









Funeral services for Ray Le Blanc on January 29, 1945. Shipmates watch as his body is moved to an LCPR. He was moved to Asor in Ulithi for burial.

Pictures were furnished by Donald Walker in January of 1991.

coral reefs which made the lagoon an isolated anchorage. I believe there was only one ship entrance to the lagoon, and that was protected with submarine nets. We made one trip to one of the connecting reefs. On the seaward side, high surf rolled in from the ocean, and we found a two man Japanese submarine lodged on the reef. We swam and waded out to the submarine. It appeared to be abandoned, but we could not really tell because its hatch was closed. It had been there a long time, and we knew that if there was anyone inside they had to be dead a long time.

While at Ulithi aboard ship, we played cards, went swimming off the fantail, and during the supper hour we listened to Tokyo Rose, whose program was piped over the loud speakers. During the day, we often would swim under the ship to build up our abilities to swim holding our breath. The Barr was anchored in about 100 feet of water. We had one team member who was a deep sea diver, and a couple of times, he dived to the bottom and walked around. The water was so clear, he could be seen as a miniature man walking a hundred feet below us. Letter writing took up some of my time. I had received many letters from home, and I knew that when we left Ulithi, it would be awhile before we could receive or send any letters.

Early in February, we were briefed and received our assignments for our first combat mission. We were told that our mission would be at Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands. The names were new to me, but we were told they were located less than 800 miles from Japan. I was in Platoon Charley, but was assigned to swim with John Barrett in Ensign Gardner's Platoon Baker. Platoon Charley had received standby duty, and as far as I know, Ed Marietta and I were the only Platoon Charley men assigned to Ensign Gardner's swimming crew.

Before we left Ulithe, we had a training mission in preparation for the Iwo Jima operation. We used the LCPRs to leave the lagoon and go to the deep ocean water on the east side of Ulithi. From there, we were dropped into the water and swam into the east beaches of the atoll. We were warned to stay outside of the breaking surf, which was estimated as being up to fifteen feet. It was feared if any swimmer got inside the surf, he probably would not be able to get back through it. Barrett and I swam to the surf and back out for swimmer pickup. Before we left the water, Barrett motioned for me to look in the water below. Below us was this giant sea turtle, and he looked like he was about 12 feet across his shell. He swam out over the edge of the reef, into the deep purple of the deep water, and out of sight into the depths. I have recently located John Barrett, who now lives in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and a few weeks ago we had a nice phone conversation about our swimming experiences over forty five years ago.

In early February, we joined with a bombardment task force at Ulithi and left for Iwo Jima on February 10. With no APA transports to slow us down, the task force took two days to reach Saipan, and another two days to reach Iwo. We arrived at Iwo Jima at about 0600 February 16. I cannot remember much about those four days while moving with the task force, but I do remember the two battleship, some cruisers and a great number of destroyers. I can only remember the name of one cruiser and that was the Pensacola.

During the day of February 16, we observed the bombardment of the island. The Navy's guns poured a continuous fire upon the island all day long, and about noon a bomber group from Saipan dropped bombs on the length of the island. The Barr was probably 3 to 5 miles from the island when the aerial attack began. I watched the Japanese anti-aircraft fire tracers reach up into air to about two thirds of the distance to the planes. The tracers would then curve downward failing to reach their target by over a thousand feet. The B-17 Flying Fortresses were flying far above the enemy fire. Iwo Jima had been bombed for 60 consecutive days before the invasion.

Team 13 conducted its first combat mission late in the afternoon of the 16th. Two rubber boats crews put a navigational light on a group of barren rocks on the north edge of Iwo Jima. About 14 UDT-13 men had to beach the rubber boats crawl onto the rocks and place the light assembly where it would flash a warning to the invasion fleet during hours of darkness. The men also erected a sign with the approximate following quote. "Welcome Marines complements of Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen." I am sure the Marines never got to that rock, but the guys had heard of Team 4's famous welcome Marine sign on the beaches of Guam, and they thought it was a good idea. Technically UDT-13 men were the first Americans to set foot on Iwo Jima three days before the invasion.

I was on one of the 50 caliber fantail guns during the operation. The Japanese started lobbing artillery shells at both the rubber boats and the Barr. Two shells landed a few yards from the Barr, and they seemed more inclined to fire at the Barr than the rubber boats. Commander Dickie captain of Barr opened up with the Barr's 5 inch gun, and the Pensacola and two destroyers poured fire into the enemy gun positions. In a few minutes the Japanese ceased their firing, and the mission was completed with no casualties. All rubber boat crews received the Bronze Star Medal for their part in the mission.

Our first day off Iwo had been an eventful day, and by nightfall we received our next assignment of cruising in a picket line for enemy submarine and plane screen. The screen was a line of ships around the Island which cruised a

few miles apart running their radar and sounding equipment to protect the ships closer to the island and later to protect the entire invasion force. On the night, of the 16th, the invasion force had not arrived, but was on its way from Saipan. This endeavor was usually called cruising the "picket line".

The following morning was the 17th of February 1945, and was also D-2. Underwater Demolition Teams 12, 13, 14, and 15 were scheduled to conduct reconnaissance missions on to the east and west beaches of Iwo Jima. I was scheduled to swim with John Barrett in Platoon Baker and under the leadership of Ensign Gardner Platoon, Baker's Platoon officer. Roger hour for the east beaches was 1100 (11:00 AM) and Roger hour for the west beaches was 1615 (4:15 PM). I was to swim with Platoon Baker in the afternoon.

Team Able swam to the beach in the morning operation, and I stayed on the Barr during the hour and a half mission. The Barr stayed between one and two miles from the beach, and from the ship we could see very little except smoke and the roar of many guns. I have much documented information about that mission, but will only relate briefly what happened. Team 13 with one LCPR dropped 10 reconnaissance swimmers into the water at the scheduled time. Teams 12, 14, and 15 did like wise, and by 1115 hours 40 UDT swimmers were swimming into the east beaches. They were backed by tremendous fire power from battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and 12 LCIG gunboats. The LCIGs were the inner ring of fire support, and they ranged to within 1500 yards of shore.

The LCIG's poured a deadly rain of rocket projectiles into the beaches. At first the Navy bombardment looked very formidable, but then the Japanese shore batteries commenced firing at the entire bombardment forces. In a few minutes nine of the LCIGs had been hit by enemy fire, several were sinking, and the remaining ships were forced to make a fast retreat. The LCIG disaster was the worst their groups had ever experienced in World War II. The swimmers moved into the beaches with only light casualties. They experienced heavy rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire, but all 10 Team 13 swimmers returned to their LCPR. Aboard the Barr, I was aware of the LCIG disaster, and I awaited to talk to the returning swimmers.

The swimmers were very cold when they returned to the Barr. I did not have a chance to talk to them immediately, because they were rushed into the briefing room to inform the intelligence officers the information gained in the reconnaissance. Later I talked to some friends, and they told me about the cold water the gunfire, and the long swim to the beach and back.

After the return of the swimmers, the Barr pulled out to sea, and gradually proceeded around Mt. Surbachi to position itself out from the west beaches. Much was going through my mind. I was about to do what I had been trained for over the past year. We were told to write a letter to our loved ones to be sent only in case we did not return from our mission. I wrote my letter to Wynola, and gave it to Commander Moranz to mail if I was lost in the operation. We all had much concern because in the afternoon mission we would not have the support of the LCIG gunboats. As the afternoon wore on, much of the overcast still hung in the skies and the air was cool.

After a very light lunch, the swimmers prepared for the afternoon operation on the fantail of the Barr. We rubbed a heavy grease over our bodies, and me being a farm boy, I thought it was the same old axle grease we used on the farm. Our attire consisted of swimming trunks, swim shoes, webbed belt, knife, several mine detonators, plexiglass plate, face mask, and our swim fins. When we embarked into the LCPR, we carried our fins and had a "poncho" to keep us warm during the cruise to the swimmer drop off area.

At 1600 hours, our LCPR moved towards the swimmer drop off area. We sat huddled in our "ponchos" waiting the order to go over the side. As I waited for the command to leave the LCPR, I had a "gut fear" of what was to come. The orders to dispatch swimmers finally came at 1615 hours (4:15 PM), and one by one we rolled over the side of the LCPR, into the rubber boat, and on into the water. When I went into the cold water from the fast moving LCPR, I almost forgot about the Japanese and their gunfire, I looked at the rapidly departing LCPR, I looked at the smoking shore line over half a mile away, and I really believed that I would perish in the frigid water. It seemed almost unbearable, and the grease seemed to have little effect in combating the cold of the water.

As written earlier, my swimming buddy was John Barrett from Baker Platoon. John and I swam about twenty yards apart, and about twenty yards away from another team of swimmers. There were ten of us from Team 13, and thirty more from Teams 12, 14, and 15. Team 13's beach was called Purple Beach #1, and we were the closest to Mt. Suribachi which was just to the right or south of Purple Beach #1. After swimming a couple of hundred yards, I began to feel warm from the exertion. Watching the beach, we could see little of the shore because of the smoke screen laid down by Navy fliers. The smoke screening, I believe, was added to the operation after the LCIGs were hit and forced to leave the operation. The smoke hung heavy over the land above the beaches ahead of us, but Mt. Suribachi to our right was mostly above the smoke.

As we swam closer to the beach, we could see flashes from enemy guns through the clouds of smoke, and at different times bullets would skim the water close by. Soon we could see the surf ahead of us, and Mt. Surbachi towered to our immediate right. We swam underwater as much as possible, and kept vigilant for the first sign of bottom. Just as we were on the outside of the breaker line the bottom became visible, and was steeply inclined. It appeared the beach and the adjacent ocean bottom had a grade of about thirty degrees. This made the approach very steep, and the waves were right on the shoreline when they broke. We swam parallel, and underwater most of the time, just outside of the breakers. The beach had only a few mines and no obstacles and we estimated that 10 or 15 yards from the highwater line the water was over ten feet deep. The beach was clear of smoke at the highwater line, but further up was shrouded in heavy smoke. We placed the mine detonators on all the anti-boat mines, and pulled the timers on each detonator - two per mine. We marked all pertinent information on our slates, and John waved his hand, motioning seaward, and we started swimming rapidly away from the beach. Our mission was complete, and we swam westward away from the beach.

After swimming some distance, we could see the LCPR boats. We were supposed to line up for the boat to pick us up in its high speed run, but by this time, the swimmers were far apart, the sea was rough, and the pickup part of the operation did not work according to plan. I was picked up by a Team 12 LCPR.

When I was hooked out of the water and climbed into the LCPR, I announced my name and team number. The Team 12 crew had completed their swimmer pickup, and the swimmers were lying fatigued around the bottom of the craft, and sort of looking like a bunch of half-drowned rats. One guy reached over and shook my hand. It was Bob Dunsmoor my old buddy that I wrote about earlier in this essay. The Team 12 LCPR took me to the Barr, and then proceeded on to their ship, the Bates.

The operation was concluded at 1743 hours (5:43 PM), and by the time I left the Team 12 LCPR, it was near nightfall. We gathered in a debriefing room after the reconnaissance mission. We were all chilled, tired, and I cannot remember too much about the meeting. We were given a shot of whiskey or brandy to warm us up. I believe the reports that were developed indicated that the beach was free of obstacles and mines. We had mostly small arms fire directed at us, and Barrett and I could not have located any gunfire sources from the smoke covered high ground above the beaches. I believe that most of the rifle and machine gun fire came from Mt. Surbachi, and we were unable to pinpoint its source.

All swimmers received the Bronze Star Medal, except the officers who received the Silver Star Medal. I received my medal and a temporary citation at Pearl Harbor in September of 1945. The temporary citation only mentioned that I was a member of an assault unit with no mention of the type of activities. In March of 1946, I received a permanent citation which described the swimming reconnaissance mission as a part of an Underwater Demolition operation. I can only assume that the delay in the more descriptive and permanent citation was because of the top secret classification of the Underwater Demolition Teams during World War II. Page 47-A and page 47-B are copies of those two citations.

That night of February 17, 1945, we resumed our job of cruising the "picket line". I cannot remember any thing about that night, but I believe I slept well after being in the cold water for over an hour and a half.

February 18 (D-1) is almost a blank in my memory except for two events. In the afternoon, a Team 13 rubber boat crew had to replace the navigational light on the north end of Iwo, because shore batteries had hit the first one put there two days before. I was not involved with this mission and stayed aboard ship. I cannot remember if there was any Japanese fire directed at the boat crew. On the night of the 18th, we continued cruising the "picket line" along with many other ships. Late in the evening the Barr's radio received word that the U.S.S. Blessman had been hit by a bomb. We could see a large glow in the distance caused by the resulting fire from the bomb. Team 15 was on the Blessman, and they suffered heavy casualties. When the ships cruised the "picket line", they were not on "red alert" unless radar or sounding efforts picked up evidence of enemy submarines or aircraft. The Japanese bomber that bombed the Blessman was not detected by radar by any of the ships. I knew at least one of the Team 15 members that was killed on the Blessman. His name was Adrian Runnels, and I trained with him at Camp Peary, and we moved to Florida together by train just a year before.

The following morning was D-day, February 19, 1945. When I went out on the fantail that morning, I could not believe my eyes. Transports and supply ships surrounded Iwo Jima. The invasion forces had arrived.

H-hour was 0900 hours (9:00 AM). The 4th and 5th Marine Divisions were aboard those transports - between twenty and thirty thousand Marines. Team 13 worked with the 5th Division, and we had four Marine scouts with us during the entire operation. All UDT swimmers were assigned to ride in with the first wave of landing craft to offer any information to the landing craft crews about the beach condition. At Iwo this was almost a formality. There were no obstacles, the mines had been removed, and the water was deep to the surf line.

Flagship of the Commander
AMPHIBIOUS FORCES
United States Pacific Fleet

In the name of the President of the United States and by direction of the Secretary of the Navy and the Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet, the Commander Amphibious Forces, United States Pacific Fleet, takes pleasure in presenting the BRONZE STAR MEDAL to

MARVIN COOPER, GUNNER'S MATE THIRD CLASS,
UNITED STATES NAVAL RESERVE

for service set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For distinguishing himself by meritorious achievement in February, 1945, as a member of an assault unit during the assault and capture of Iwo Jima Island. In the face of enemy rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire, he bravely prepared the way for the operations of combat troops and by his courageous devotion to duty contributed greatly to the success of this hazardous mission. His courage and conduct throughout were in keeping with the best traditions of the naval service."

R.K. TURNER,
Admiral, U. S. Navy

Temporary Citation

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the BRONZE STAR MEDAL to

MARVIN COOPER, GUNNER'S MATE THIRD CLASS
UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as se forth in the following

CITATION:

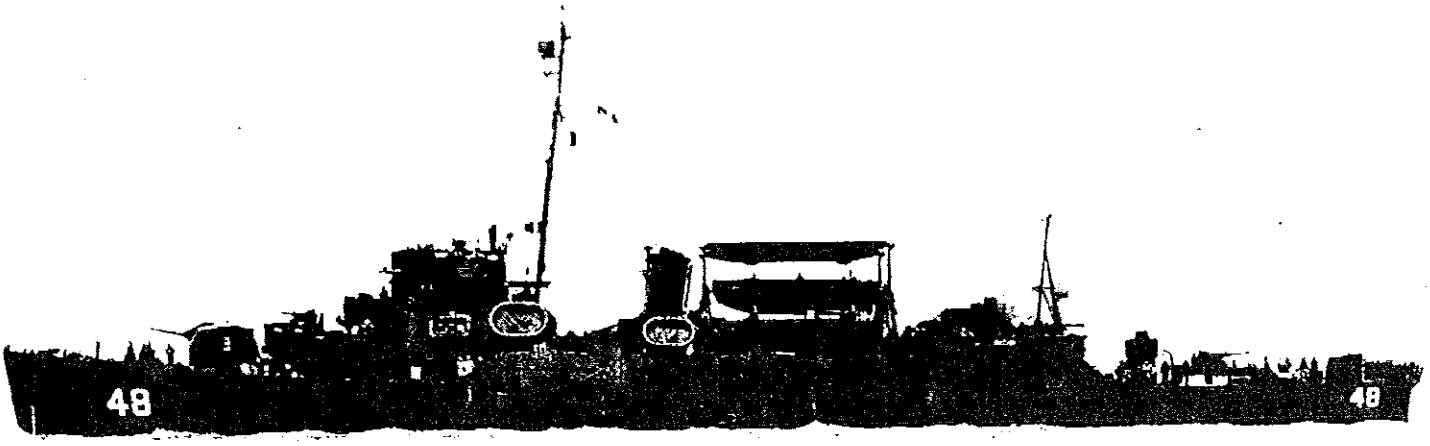
"For heroic service as a Member of an Underwater Demolition Team, in action against enemy Japanese forces during the assault on Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, February 17, 1945. Courageous in the face of enemy rifle fire, machine gun and mortar fire, COOPER swam close inshore to destroy underwater mines and carry out a search for enemy-emplaced obstacles which might present difficulties for the operations of our combat troops. His courage and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

COOPER is authorized to wear the Combat "V"

For the President

James Forrestal

Secretary of the Navy



U.S.S. Blessman (APD 48), following repairs at Mare Island Navy Yard, 4 August 1945. (National Archives)

This is a picture of the Blessman nearly six months after it was struck by a bomb at Iwo Jima. The bomb had hit amid ship, and had wiped out the boats, boat deck, stack, and destroyed the mess hall on the starboard side of the ship. The Blessman was repaired at the Mare Island Ship Yards east of San Francisco. After the repairs, the Blessman went to San Diego, and was Underwater Demolition Team Seventeen's APD for the pre-occupation operation in Japan in September of 1945.

After the decimation of its ranks by the bombing of the Blessman, Underwater Demolition Team Fifteen was given leave, reorganized, and took part in the pre-occupation reconnaissances in Japan.

The earlier boat waves of troops had few problems with enemy gunfire. The Japanese concentrated their fire on the slope up from the beach to the airstrips and devastated the Marine infantry. They worked out some kind of a grid procedure with their heavy mortars, and whenever a tank went into a particular grid, they would fire a mortar. Later in the day, they started hitting landing craft before they reached the beach, and many of the craft were destroyed with heavy losses of life. We were not involved with any of amphibious operation on February 19, after the first wave of landing craft hit the beach.

I was back on the Barr by 1030 hours, and along with many others listened to shortwave radio conversations between Marine combat units and their command units. Some of those conversations were very somber and ominous. I remember one tank crew, that had moved north along the beach, desperately calling for help. They had been cut off and were under heavy fire. Suddenly, their radio went dead, and one could suspect that they had been wiped out by the Japanese.

UDT operations were divided into pre-assault, assault, and post-assault missions. The reconnaissance swimming missions and the rubber boat missions to place the navigational light on the north shore of Iwo Jima were pre-assault missions. Leading in the first wave of landing craft was an assault mission. There were some assault work during the first day that I know very little about, and I was not involved in any of it. According to the Report of Action of Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen, which was sent to me by Donald Walker last month, several officers and men worked as "spotters" from a few close in destroyers. Using the maps and information furnished by the swimmers, they worked with the four Fifth Marine Scouts in dispatching information to the ground forces.

We were in the Iwo Jima area from February 16 to February 28, a period of 12 days. Every night during that period the Barr cruised the "picket line". During the nine day period after D-day, Team 13 took part in many post-assault operations. Our assignments were received from the Beachmaster of the Navy Amphibious Forces. I took part in some of those activities, but I will mention others that I can remember.

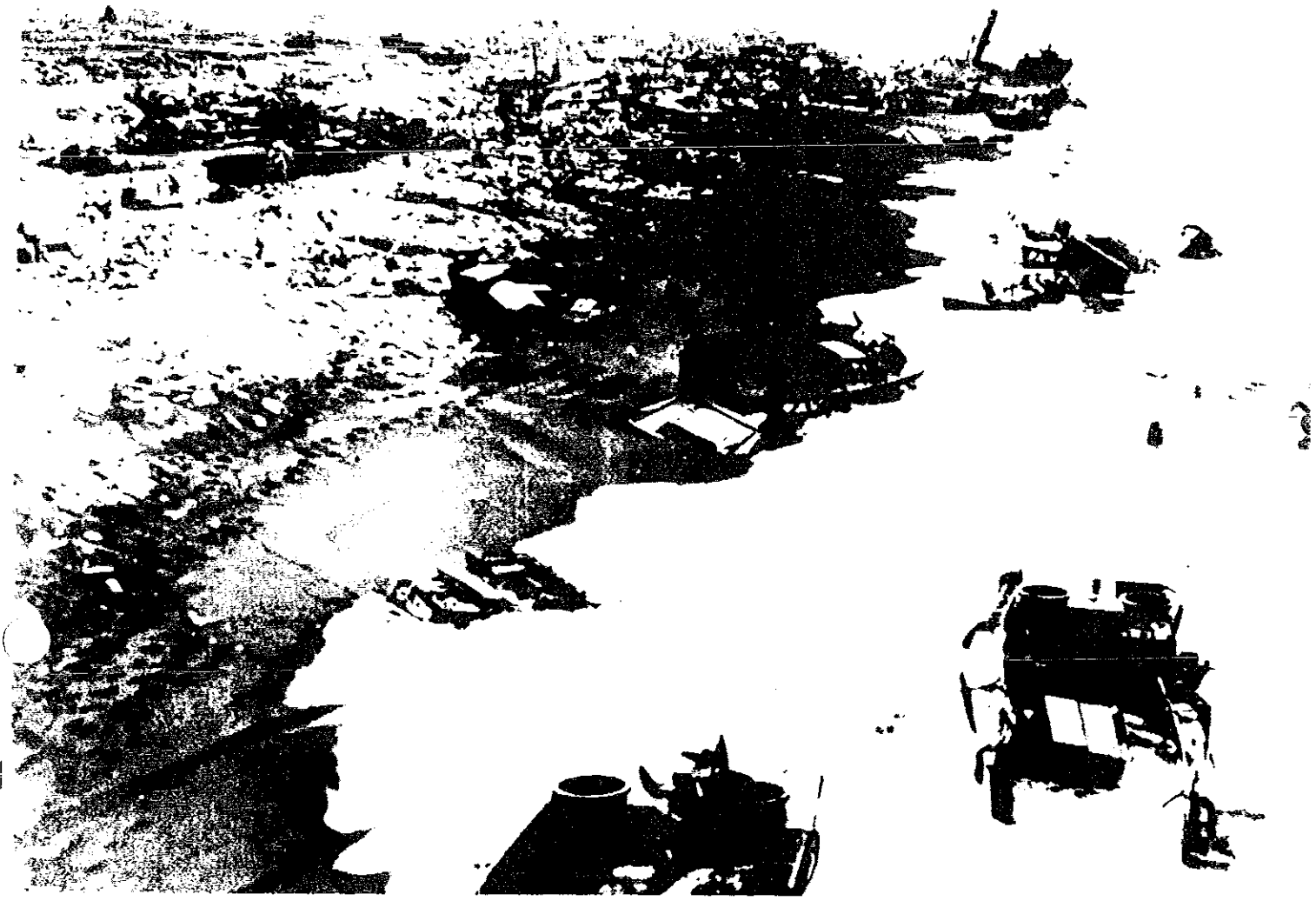
We had no pre-assault demolition missions at Iwo Jima. The Barr had over 100 tons of tetrytol in its hold. The Beachmaster requested much of this tonnage be brought to the beach for the Marines to use in their demolition activities of blowing up Japanese caves. For about three days, I helped load tetrytol into LCPRs at the Barr and unload it on the beach. I believe this was D+2 through D+4. One morning

we were unloading tetrytol on the beach, and a bull dozer was pulling a steel net up from the water to make a road to unload tanks over the soft black sand. The Japanese started a mortar attack probably intended to prevent the tank landing facility from being constructed. Mortars started exploding around, and about the fourth one landed directly on the bull dozer. Where seconds before there had been a man and a tractor, now here was only a pile of twisted steel. I believe this was one of the most horrible sights that I witnessed during the war.

There was one assignment that was strictly for volunteers. Sometime between the 3rd and 5th day after D-day, the bodies of troops and boat crews who were hit moving into the beach started surfacing. I saw one of them on one of our trips into the beach, and the body was swollen twice or more than its original size. The sight was horrible. The beachmaster requested volunteers from UDT, ship personnel, and boat crews to sink the bodies. I believe a couple of guys from Team 13 and a crew member from the Barr volunteered for that duty. It involved working from a rubber boat, finding the bodies, removing their identification (dog tags), and wiring a small piece of railroad rail to the bodies, so they would sink. This was one assignment that I passed up, and the people who volunteered were only good for one day.

On February 23, D+4 during the afternoon, the Barr was sitting a mile or two off the invasion beaches. The ship's radio received a message, and it was passed on to the crew by inter-com speakers. There was a flag flying on top of Mt. Surbachi. Someone acquired some binoculars, and we all had a chance to see the flag waving proudly on the crest of the mountain. The Marines had put the flag there that morning, and that was the source of the famous picture, we are all familiar with.

The beach and the surf area accumulated wrecked tanks, landing craft, and other equipment from D-day onward. See the picture on Page 49-A. This was a major post-assault operation for UDT. The equipment in the water created a problem for beaching of additional men and supplies. The Beachmaster assigned UDT to help remove the equipment in the water. We took our LCPRs to just seaward from the wrecks. Swimmers would then swim to each wreck with a line (rope) which would be tied to the landing craft, and then the LCPRs would try to pull the landing craft out to sea. Sometimes the LCPR could not move the landing craft, and LCIs were used to pull them out. If the landing craft sank in deeper water, that was fine, but if it did not, we would set a charge in its bilges and sink it. During this operation, we did receive some artillery fire, but I believe by this time the Marines had pushed the Japanese back to where their mortar fire was ineffective.



Iwo Jima. Blue Beaches One and Two. (National Archives)

This picture show the east beaches of Iwo Jima. It was probably taken about 3 to 6 days after D-Day. Purple Beach where I swam ashore was less than a mile west of this beach, and was on the opposite side of the Island. The view in the picture is looking north, and Mt. Surbachi is to the left and behind the site of the camera man. The larger craft with the high stack at the top of the picture was a Japanese Lugger. It was beached long before the invasion started, and was one landmark which showed up on intelligence photos when we briefed for the invasion at Ulithi. The wrecked landing craft in the water were some of the wrecks removed by Underwater Demolition Teams. This picture was sent to me by a fellow member of the UDT/SEAL Association of Fort Pierce , Florida.

One day when I was on the beach at Iwo, I noticed something in the sand. It was a 45 caliber Thompson sub-machine gun almost completely buried in the sand. It was covered with fresh rust and its stock was burned and slightly chard. I took the gun back to the Barr, and later removed the rust, refinished the stock, and re-blued the barrel and metal parts. I had planned on sending it home, but I kept thinking about the signs I used to read in the post offices about the penalty for possession of sub-machine guns. When we returned to Maui that spring, I sold the gun to Ralph Grimes for twenty five dollars.

There was another post-assault operation by Team 13, but I did not take part in its execution. On D+5, a UDT-13 crew with the four Fifth Marine Division Scouts made a reconnaissance on the beach at the foot of Mt. Surbachi and at the extreme south end of Iwo Jima. The purpose of the mission was to determine if it was feasible to send a Marine attack force into the south slope of Mt. Surbachi. The decision for the attack was negative, but I never knew why. The south slope of Surbachi was very steep, and this may have been the reason to negate the landing attempt.

On the morning of the 28th of February, Team 13 and the Barr left Iwo Jima bound for Guam. Team 15 had already departed, and I believe Teams 12 and 14 left on the above date. From my recent research, I have some statistics about UDT casualties at Iwo Jima. There were between 360 and 380 UDT personnel in the total operation. This included the boat crews, medical people, and administrative personnel such as our Yoemen, Photographers, and Command Officers. There were 21 men killed in action and 26 men wounded. The total number of casualties were 47. These numbers are the ones I have verified by records, but there may have been more that I cannot verify. Team 13 fortunately had no casualties in their twelve days at Iwo Jima.

We arrived in Guam on March 7, after a trip of eight days from Iwo Jima. We anchored in a bay on the southwest section of the island. We stayed there four days, and I can remember going on one liberty, a beach swimming party, and some swimming in the bay along side of a jetty. The water was so warm compared to that at Iwo, and it seemed good to be back where it was enjoyable to swim. We left Guam in the early morning of March 11 and arrive back at Ulithi on March 13.

It had been over a month since we left Ulithi, and on our return there were stacks of mail awaiting us. I believe I had 15 or twenty letter waiting for me. I had mailed letters at both stops at Guam, so my mail going to the states arrived there more frequently. Of course, I never wrote letters at sea where they could not be sent, and hence my letters were less in number.

We stayed about a week in Ulithi. Team 13 moved from the Barr to the Island of Asor, which I believe was the Administrative Headquarters for Ulithi. While on Asor we did calisthenic to keep in shape, and some of us swam in the lagoon side of the island. Some of the guys played volley ball and softball. Team 13 had a very good softball team, but since I was never inclined to be athletic, those guys were out of my class. I remember visiting Ray La Blanc's grave at a military cemetery on the island. Asor was small, maybe a couple of square miles of palm covered terrain. It had a hospital, a post office, a cemetery, a Seabee unit, and some administrative buildings. While there, Team 13 stayed in a quonset hut. There must have been no women on the Asor, because scattered at convenient locations were funnels on pipes running in the ground. Those were urinals out in the open. I believe our showers were in the same buildings with the regular toilets. Remember that I have written about the open air showers on Maui.

We stayed on Asor for about 3 to 5 days, and then we returned to the Barr. What a surprise. The Barr had been painted a drab amphibious green camouflage, but when we returned it was painted the "battleship gray" of the line Navy. While we were on Asor, the Barr's crew scraped and painted the entire time, and made the Barr look like new. I was never told the reason for the change, but I believe as long as the Barr had UDT people aboard, they would be moving with a bombardment force consisting entirely of line ships, which were painted gray. Anyway when we left Ulithi, we did not stand out like a "sore thumb" anymore.

I cannot remember any swimming off the Barr this time, but we were only there a day or two before we left. There was one incident that I can remember about one night while anchored at Ulithi. We were viewing a movie on the fantail, when suddenly we were called to battle station - condition red. The ships at Ulithi were being attacked by Japanese planes. Several miles from our location we could see anti-aircraft fire and several explosions, which appeared to be bombs. The air raid was short and no planes got near our ship, and after an hour or so, we finished watching the movie. We were told the planes probably came from Yap, which was only about 100 miles from Ulithi. Yap along with Truk had been bypassed by U.S. forces as they pushed west through the Pacific.

Early in the morning of March 20, we left Ulithi with a large bombardment task force and headed northwest. Our destination was Okinawa, another Island that I had never heard of before. We traveled fast and arrived off Okinawa late at night of March 23 or early morning of March 24. I remember when we sighted the Island, we could see lights, and in one area, it looked like a rather large city. Soon the battleships and cruiser started firing, and the lights soon disappeared.

Team 13 had two main assignments in the Okinawa area. The first was at Kerama Retto, which was a group of small islands lying about fifteen miles west of the main island of Okinawa. I do not know how many islands are in the Kerama Retto group, but they are so located that they forma body of still water about six miles long and a mile or two wide. The body of water was completely open to the ocean at its north and south end. It could be described as a bay with two openings, and we called it Kerama Retto Bay. Our other assignment was at Keisa Shima, and I will write about that later.

The islands of Kerama Retto are large hills or small mountains protruding from the ocean and are covered with trees. UDT-13 was assigned to make a reconnaissance for a Marine landing on Tokashika Shima one of Kerama Retto's larger islands. We were to make this swim without fire support, because according to intelligence reports the Japanese army, although occupying the island, had not fortified it with artillery or heavy equipment. We had a couple of destroyers and the Barr behind us if we suddenly needed fire support. I cannot remember how many swimmers went into the beach, but my swimming buddy was Ed Deringer from Charley Platoon. Deringer is one of the people from Team 13 that I have located recently, and he now lives in Florida. The water was a little warmer than the water off Iwo Jima, and according to information I have now, it was about 70 degrees.

Our designated beach was in a small inlet with wooded hills on both sides. There were an abundance of coral heads in the inlet, and the tops of some of those were only two or three feet above the water. There was no evidence of man made obstacles or mines, but I thought the coral heads would require a demolition operation. We swam in and out, and I noticed no enemy gun fire. Some of the other swimmers reported some sniper fire. This entire mission probably took less than one hour, and we returned to swimmer pickup with all the needed information. Unlike at Iwo, the high speed dropping and pickup of swimmers was performed with perfection.

There was much debate whether the coral heads would have to be removed. After considering the tide differentials, the size of the operation, and the intention of using amptracks (amphibious tanks), it was decided not to waste the time that would be needed to blast the many coral heads. The following morning, I went with Ensign Cleveland to a small mine sweeper. We showed the mine sweeper where to place two buoys, which were to indicate the beginning of the inlet channel. From there, we boarded the amptracks and headed towards the beach. There was a Demolition swimmer on every amptrack, and I think there were only about ten. This was a small operation, and no problems were encountered. I

believe Platoon Charley handled this beach alone, and that other Platoons may have reconnoitered other beaches. I do know that Ensign Cleveland was in charge and was making all the decisions.

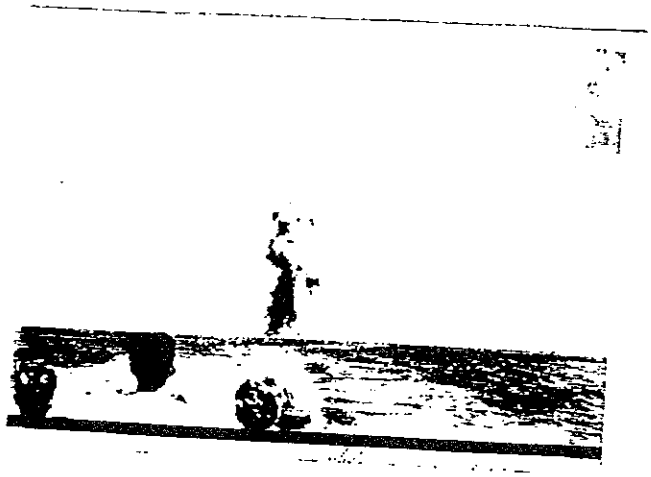
Every night the Barr would cruise the "picket line" as it did at Iwo. We kept receiving reports of suicide planes, but the Okinwawa operation was so large that all engagements with suicide planes seemed far away from us, and I do not remember seeing any until later.

We made our reconnaissance on Tokashika Shima on the morning of the 25th, and landed the Marines on the 26th. On the 27th we started an operation on Keise Shima. This involved clearing a channel about 30 yards wide and about 300 yards extending to deep water in the sea. This channel was to provide a way for the Army to land artillery on Keisa Shima, so they could fire on positions on Okinawa. At the seaward end of the proposed channel, the water was about twenty feet deep, but it had coral heads that had grown to near the surface. These coral heads could rip the bottom out of LSTs, LCIs, and smaller landing craft. Towards the beach the water became shallower and the coral heads became smaller. Near the beach the reef became very shallow, and the coral heads very small. We called the small ones "niger heads". This island of Keise Shima was small, flat like a sand dune sticking out of the water, and I cannot remember any trees of any size on the higher ground.

The most ominous aspect about Keisa Shima was its location just 1½ miles off the southwest coast of Okinawa and within sight of Naha the capital of Okinawa, and this operation was started four days before the initial invasion began on April 1. The result of our work enabled the Army to unload many 155 mm guns, which later persistently shelled the city of Naha.

All four Team 13 platoons worked on this operation, and it took us over two days to blast a suitable channel. Keisa Shima was not occupied by Japanese soldiers, and it appeared the Japanese forces on Okinawa did not know what was going on out there, or they cared less. We all thought that after the first charge went off, that we would start drawing fire from the shore. That did not happen, and we set off dozens of powerful charges, and used over 27 tons of tetrytol to blast the channel. I will relate some of my personal experiences, and I will relate some of the incidents which occurred during that operation.

Charley Platoon started working in deep water near the outer end of the proposed channel. We had about 2 tons of tetrytol aboard our LCPR (D39-3). We removed coral heads from water 15 to 20 feet deep. The procedure went something like the following description. We would swim down and put



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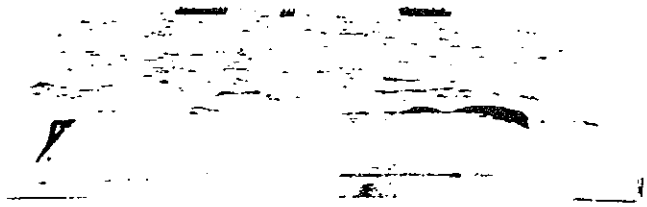

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-4-

Pictures of the Keisa Shima operation - sent by Don Walker January of 1991

1- Team 13 men, from their moving LCPR, watch an underwater blast erupt skyward.

2- Charley platoon, near the end of the operation, work in very shallow water near the beach. I believe the man to the left in the water is Marvin Cooper and the man to the right is Edward Deringer.

3- Platoons Charley and Baker work in deep water at the seaward end of the channel.

4- Kesia Shima as viewed from the sea.

20 pound satchel charges of tetrytol at strategic places around a coral head. As I remember, it would take about 5 satchel charges for the average coral head. We would set charges on several, connect the charges with primacord, and blow them to pieces. Explosions move towards the path of least resistance, and underwater blasting exceeds the destructive power of surface blasting because the water pressure tends to turn additional force against the materials being destroyed. Over a period of two and a half days, we worked our way into shallower water, the coral heads became smaller, and the job became easier. The last morning, D-2 March 29, we finished the tidal reef by blasting small "niger heads" out of the surf area.

While working in the water, I cut my leg on one of the coral heads. Coral is very sharp under water, and somehow I kicked my leg against the coral, resulting in a three inch gash in the back of my lower left leg. "Doc" Emerson, our Pharmacist Mate, bound the wound tightly, and I resumed my work. The scar from that cut is plainly visible today. I did feel fortunate that no infection developed.

Another incident occurred while we were blasting the channel. A Marine Corsair fighter/bomber came over the island, assumed we were Japanese, and dropped two bombs and strafed us with machine gun fire. Someone had left a poncho draped over the motor box which concealed our identification flag, and that might have been a factor in the error. There was no one hit, but we saw the danger of being hit by "friendly fire". I had thought the plane was a Navy Hellcat, but a recent conversation with John Barrett indicated it was a Corsair. Either way it had to come from an aircraft carrier.

We finished the demolition operation on the 29th of March, and had no enemy fire. The Navy had many ships near by, and the USS Pensacola, a cruiser hovered out at sea during the entire operation.

On April 1, 1945, Easter Sunday, the big invasion of Okinawa commenced. Team 13 was on standby duty, and was only to take part if needed. We really felt that we had already done enough. For seven days we had swam reconnaissance missions and completed the demolition operation. At Okinawa and the adjacent islands, there were many Underwater Demolition operations. There were eleven teams working in the area, and the Okinawa area invasions has been called the battle of a "thousand frogmen" Most of the teams in commission at the time took part in the many landings in the island group. I believe there were a couple or more post-assault assignments for Team 13, but as far as I can remember, I took no part in any of them. Our duty continued with our nightly "picket line", and we were receiving more and more suicide plane scares.

On April 3, 1945, D+2, on a Tuesday night, the Barr was cruising the Okinawa "picket line". We were at general quarters - condition red, and there were many reports of enemy planes in the area. For a couple of nights we had seen some, and several times we had fired at enemy planes. Those planes were all suicide planes - one way pilots from Japan. I was on one of the 50 caliber machine guns on the port side of Barr. I had fired a few rounds, but there had been no planes within range. We believed that we might have kept some planes away by a concentration of heavy fire. It was about 2200 hours, when our radar picked up a plane coming in at two o'clock. This meant it was coming into the starboard and forward side of the ship. The plane came through the Barr's forward gunfire, struck the 5 inch gun, and crashed into the water off the port side of the ship. I was stationed back on the stern of the ship and never saw the plane. There was a great flash of fire and a sound of explosion, and the ship seemed to shudder and shake.

I never did know how badly the Barr was damaged, but we thought it must be bad, because when the damage control units put out the fires, Team 13 was ordered to leave the ship. We took all our personal gear, but left all the Team's demolition equipment and supplies on the Barr. I still had the Thompson sub-machine gun that I had found on the beach at Iwo. We had to carry everything off the Barr, so I broke the gun down, and stowed it in my seabag. We were moved to a near by transport by the LCPRs. Later the same night the transport ship moved into Kerama Retto Bay, which had became a large anchorage area for damaged ships and supply ships. A couple of days later, we heard that a damaged APD had been sunk, because it was a navigational hazard. We thought that it probably was the Barr, but I have found out in my recent research, that the only APD lost at Okinawa was the Dickerson, Team 21's ship. I know there were casualties among the crew of the Barr, but I never new how many were killed or wounded. I would guess at least five or ten.

When I awoke the following morning, we were tied along side another transport or supply ship in Kerama Retto Bay, and that ship had a suicide plane's fuselage sticking out of its port side. Evidently the plane had struck the ship above the water line, and did no other damage, because it was not listing. We stayed on that ship for two or three days, and there are a couple of incidents of interest worth mentioning.

Kerama Retto Bay was about six or seven miles long and a mile or two wide, and I believe it had over a hundred ships anchored their. Many of them were damaged from suicide planes, and a few were even abandoned. There were also several tankers and supply ships in the anchorage. Our old friend the USS Pensacola was assigned to patrol the bay

from one end to the other to try and protect the ships from suicide planes. It seemed wherever Team 13 went that old Cruiser showed up there. She had supported us at Iwo Jima, Keisa Shima, and Tokashika Shima. The suicide planes would sweep low over the surrounding hills, pick out a ship, and then try to crash into it. The Pensacola was an Anti-aircraft Cruiser designed with lighter guns especially for combating aircraft. There was a crippled "baby aircraft carrier" anchored about 200 yards north of us, and the Navy was trying to move her planes to the carriers out at sea. One afternoon, the Pensacola was cruising in the center of the bay, when a plane took off from the small flattop. The Pensacola's gunners mistook the Navy plane for a suicide plane and shot it down. It crashed into the water, but after a minute or so, we saw the pilot floating in the water waiting to be picked up. I do not believe he was hurt.

One night while we were boarded on the transport in Kerama Retto anchorage, we were assigned to work on a nearby ammunition supply ship unloading ammunition for the ships of the fleet. I can remember working under lights handing five inch shells and projectiles from the deck of the ship down into LCTs. This was the period when the "Kamakazi plane" activity was at its peak, and the fleet needed all the ammunition it could get. I am sure this was an improvised method of transporting munitions and supplies to the Navy ships fighting the suicide plane menace around Okinawa.

I am having problems remembering exact dates and events during this period of time. The April 3 date of moving from the crippled Barr to the transport came from the UDT-13 Command File that I received from the UDT/SEAL Association, and I believe it is accurate. The dates of April, May, June, and July will be approximate, and they will come entirely from my memory. I believe it was about April 6 or 7 that we boarded the U.S.S. Wayne an APA. The Wayne was a troop transport that would serve the purpose of transporting wounded and survivors from Okinawa to Pearl Harbor. It has been referred to as a combination hospital and survivor ship. In some of my earlier writings, I have referred to the Wayne as an Australian ship, but that is incorrect. It only seemed like an Australian ship because of the amount of mutton and wormy bread we had to eat while aboard. Last fall, I received materials which furnished me the true identity and name of the APA.

When we boarded the Wayne, and left the Okinawa area there was a great relief to be moving away from the combat area. We did know that we were going back to Maui, and to the safety of the Hawaiian Islands. We had experienced and saw the vast damage caused by the suicide planes. And later I read some statistics about the extent of their success. There were over 200 Navy ships hit by suicide planes. The destroyers took the brunt of the onslaught as they cruised

the "picket lines", and there were over 60 destroyers hit. I have no information of how many ships were sunk, but I am sure that figure is also high. It had been just two months since we left Ulithi bound for Iwo Jima, but those were the longest two months of my life. Although casualties for UDT at Iwo Jima was high, and more were lost in the Okinawa area, the big unlucky **thirteen** had not lost a man since the drowning of Ray LeBlanc at Ulithi.

Although I did not realize it at the time, World War II was winding down fast in April of 1945. Germany was on its last legs, the battle for Okinawa was in progress, and it would be the last big battle of the war. After the Okinawa area operations, there was to be only one more invasion in the Pacific, and that was Borneo on July 1, 1945. In early April, those were concerns of the future, but the two or three weeks cruise to Pearl Harbor on the Wayne was my present concern, and it was my one of my worst experiences.

Every day right after the morning muster, we would stand attention for the burial of the sailors who had died during the previous 24 hours. Usually there would be one to three bodies that slid beneath the flag into the Pacific each morning. The Navy medics aboard ship were overwhelmed with their duties of taking care of the injured. The intercom system would request for volunteers to help. Bill Crandall and I volunteered occasionally. One time we were helping cut a cast from a burned sailor's arm. Our job was to hold the man's two arms so the medic could cut the cast. We were both sickened by the sight and smell of that ward. In an adjacent bed, laid a man who was burned over his entire body. His eyelids, lips, and genital organs were burned off, and he was almost all scab. The medic said later that everyone in that ward was in the process of dying, and were fed only morphine to minimize the pain. It was a horrible experience, and although we helped at other times, we never had that experience again.

Bill Crandall was a Radioman on one of Team 13's boat crews, and it was about this time that we had become good friends. Bill is one of the people from Team 13 that I have located in the past year, and in one of our phone conversations, we talked about our experience in helping the medic remove the cask from the man's arm.

We were only on the Wayne a few days, when the ship's radio received the message that President Roosevelt had died. This was on April 12, and I can remember that after this message was received, the flag was flown at half mast, and I wondered why all the men we were burying at sea did not deserve the same honor. I also realized that this was war, and with so many dying in all the theatres of war, death could not possibly be treated as we had remembered it back home.

Hawaiian Islands free of charge. One morning, Bill, Walt, and I boarded the mail plane bound for Ford Island at Pearl Harbor. This was the second time I had flown, the first being the long flight to Guam the previous fall. The mail plane was a DC-3, and it took off with a few bumps, jerks, and a lot of rattles. After we were airborne, I noticed the wings seemed flexible, and were contorting in the wind. Bill said that he had noticed fire coming from the engines. Maui valley was a beautiful sight as we soared skyward. Mt. Haleakala was ringed with clouds, and the valley stretched from it to the lesser mountains to the northwest. The cane and pineapple fields stretched out below us. In less than and hour, we arrived at Ford Island. From there, the three of us took a bus to Honolulu, which was a distance of about six miles.

Honolulu was swarming with servicemen and most of them were sailors. We found a cabin about six or eight blocks off the main drag of downtown Honolulu. We spent a couple of days walking around and seeing the sights, which were not so great. We walked out to Waikiki Beach, and it was officer's country. We did walk along the beach for a long ways, and some of the traditional Hawaiians were riding the six to eight foot surf. The water was beautiful, and the California and Florida beaches do not compare with the water at Waikiki. I remember going to a Hilo Hattie show featuring Hawaiian dancers. I doubt if this was the same woman of Hollywood fame, but it could have been. We spent a considerable amount of money on food, especially hamburgers and malted milk. Because we had no fresh eggs in the western Pacific, I craved eggs, and ate eggs for breakfast and egg sandwiches for lunch. I would not rate our leave in Honolulu to highly, but I at least got to see the place. We returned to Maui on the mail plane after the second night.

On the subject of mail, when I arrived in Maui, I had a whole bag of letters awaiting me. I even had a package of moldy easter candy to throw away. The mail in Maui came in regularly, and only took a few days to come from Iowa if mailed airmail.

Shortly after we returned to Maui, Platoon Charley's two officers, Ensign Cleveland and Ensign Allen reserved an off base dining room and treated the entire platoon to a steak dinner. They complemented everyone for a job well done in the western Pacific. As I think about this today, I believe we had excellent officers in Underwater Demolition. They trained as we did, and when we swam into beaches, there was no gold braid on their swimming trunks. The officers played softball and volleyball along side the enlisted men. I do not imagine that many officers in other outfits took their men to an expensive dinner after a tour of combat duty.

About the second or third week in May, we found out what our immediate future entailed. We were to be merged into the training staff. In a way, Team 13 was temporarily disbanded. We were each assigned individually into the many phases of training and experimental duties. I was assigned to the crew who instructed trainees in lava blasting at the south end of Maui. That was only a part time job, and the rest of the time, I spent working with the experimental diving crew. Even with both of these assignments, I had much free time.

My duties with the training staff had hardly begun, when it was interrupted by a serious event. One day, Ensign Cleveland and another officer were walking down the alley between the rows of tents in the enlisted men's area. Two UDT-13 men, Alton Evans and Harold Jordon, were intoxicated and started arguing with the two officers. Glen Frey and I were a few tents away, when we noticed the commotion. We saw Evans run into his tent, come out with a knife, and start towards the two officers. I, Frey, and some other guys ran to help the officers. We got there in time and took the knives away from the two enlisted men. No harm was done, but the two men were put on report, arrested, and taken to Pearl Harbor Naval Prison. Within a week, a bunch of us including myself, Frey, and Ensign Cleveland were flown over to the Submarine Base at Pearl Harbor, which was located near the Command Headquarters of the Pacific Fleet. We were witnesses at a General Court Martial for Evans and Jordan. We were called in one by one to relate what happened to the Court Martial Board. We had to testify in front of the two accused, and I am sure every witness related the same facts. The guys were drunk and threatened an assault on the two officers. The guys were found guilty, and I never saw them again. I believe they received a light sentence, because the officers involved tried to put in a good word for them. But John Barrett, in a recent telephone conversation, said that he heard they received five years in Portsmouth Naval Prison. We stayed at the Submarine Base for about a week.

The lava blasting crew was headed by a Lt. Wakefield who had came from Team 7. He had a chief petty officer and three other enlisted men including myself in his crew. I cannot remember any of their names, but I can picture them in my mind. The chief petty officer was the one that ran the show with this crew, and from now on I will refer to him as the the Chief. Our training instructions involved driving to the south end of Maui, meeting the trainees who came in from their LCPRs in rubber boats. We would show them how to place tetrytol on the lava cliffs to turn the cliffs into sloping ramps suitable for landing tanks, trucks and other equipment from the sea. I was just learning these techniques myself, because when I went through training at Maui, we did not receive the lava blasting experience.

Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen
Training Staff of Underwater Demolition Base at Maui
May until August of 1945

Assignment	Name	
Asst. to Executive Officer	V.J. Moranz	Lt. Comdr.
Asst. to Chief Instructor	D. M. Walker	Lt. (jg)
Training Chart & Photography	D. H. Murray	Lt. (Jg)
APD Instructor	R. E. Gleason	Ens.
Training Boat Dept.	R. V. Hehli	Ens.
Training Supply	C. F. Hamman	Ens.
Training Transportation	L. N. Huddleston	Ens.
Team Instructor	H. N. Gardner	Ens.
Team Instructor	L. A. Robinson	Ens.
Team Instructor	J. E. Long	Ens.
Experimental	M. F. Smith	Ens.
Range	A. C. Allen	Ens.
Base Safety Officer	E. I Cleveland	Ens.
Athletics	R. R. Harlan	Ens.
Base Carpenter Shop	Blackwell, E.P.	
	Bracken, R. M.	
	Brummett, C.	
	Cusimano, A.	
	First, T. A.	
	Foreman, W. D.	
	Miller, R. E.	
	Morrow, R. J.	
Medical	Emmerson, R. D.	
Steward's Mate	Walker, F.	
Training Transportation	Eisentrager, S. O.	
	Fore, S. P.	
	Presson, D. J.	
Training Boat Department	Baker, W. H.	
	Bryson, E. R.	
	Flathers, W. R.	
	Frey, G.	
	Goode, L. H.	
	Gregory, G.	
	King, A. N.	
	King, R. E.	
	McCaw, R.	
	Moore, J. C.	
	Rice, B. M.	
	Rice, H. J.	
	Shoemaker, P. S.	
	Sulik, M. J.	
	Taylor, D. P.	

Training Enlisted Instructors	Barrett, J. A. Butler, W. O Broome, J. H. Dollinger, K. J. Johnson, L. A. Lazarr, C. Price, G. J. Robinson, E. P. Rush, G. Stone, J. E. Taraborelli, V. G. Tuttle, O. J.
Training Obstacle Course	Jordan, H. E. McElwee, T. L. Rudy, C. Ward, R. D.
Training Supply	Edwards, R. J. Evans, A. E. Magee, A. W. Miller, W. R. Prince, S. G. Whelan, W. P.
Training Ordinance	Allen, T. Behrendt, K. P. Bier, P. J. Delgrosso, D. A. Grimes, R. R. Musick, F.
Training Chart & Photo	Cran, W. J. Wilkinson, R. M.
Training Communications	Crandell, W. R. Crowder, T. E. Reimer, G. A.
Training Lava Blasting	Carlson, R. N. Cooper, M.
NASP Bakery	Moore, K. R. Lynch, J. T. Patton, D. J.
NASP Laundry	Hoffman, J. L. Toy, P.

This blasting required massive charges of several tons of tetrytol to reduce the lava cliffs to rubble. We would retreat a half mile from the blasting site in our weapons carrier, and the trainees would paddle their rubber boats back out to sea before the charges went off. I have often blamed this episode in my UDT experience as the cause for my hearing deficiencies. We never used ear protection, and only held our hands over our ears to protect them from the concussion.

The road to the lava blasting site was interesting. It was about 15 to 20 miles from the Base to the lava flows at the south end of the island. The road was made by a bull dozer winding its way south parallel to the beach. The beach was at the foot of Mt. Haleakala, and from the water the terrain sloped steeply up the mountain. The further south from the base the road ran, the more barren the terrain became. At the southern terminus of the road, the vegetation was almost nonexistent having been replaced by the lava which had poured from Haleakala centuries before. Beyond the end of the road, was where we did our blasting.

A couple of miles from the blasting site and between the road and the sea was a one room shack, which I understood served as a fishing cabin for some men from Wailuku. The blasting at different times did some damage to the cabin's windows. It became our job to replace glass panes whenever they were broken. Lt. Wakefield did not go with us on those repair expeditions. The Chief would be in charge. There was one residence on the road between the base and the lava flow, and that was a native Hawaiian and his Portuguese wife. They were people in their early thirties, with no children, and they ran a hog farm. They were friends of the Chief. I believe the Chief had something going with the farmer's wife. She was quite pretty though slightly buxom, and I always thought she looked a little like Linda Darnell. Whenever we went to the lava flow without Lt. Wakefield, we would stop at the farm, and the Chief would socialize with the farmer and his wife, and drink vast amounts of "Kanakee Juice", which was an island rum made from local cane. If I remember right, I believe we would take trips to just check if there were any windows broken out of the cabin.

The Naval Underwater Demolition Training and Experimental Base, as the name implies, had experimental units working on different projects. One of those was the shallow water self contained diving research. The scuba aqua-lung was not invented until after the war by Cousteau, and the Underwater Demolition Teams had no way of keeping a swimmer underwater beyond the time that he could hold his breath. At Maui, one of the experimental crews was working with some diving equipment that one could swim with. I worked with that group testing underwater breathing

equipment. I remember there were two different kinds we experimented with. One was called the Victor Burg Lung and the other the Jack Brown Re-breather. These were both "Rube Goldburg" devices. They had several guys testing them and trying to become proficient swimming with them. We would put them on down by the Base pier, wade out intc deep water, and then attempt to swim with them. The Victor Burg suit had a compressed air tank with a hose running to a crude mouth piece. The mouth piece had a valve that the swimmer would control with one of his eye teeth. You would bite on the valve and air would flood into your mouth. We tried to learn how to take that air into our lungs, and then expel it through our nose. Of course, this is just the opposite of the modern SCUBA diving gear where one takes air in from a face piece through the nose and expels it through the mouth. The two big complaints about the Victor Burg Lung was the difficulty in drawing the air from the mouth piece without drawing water in the lungs. Also the air that flooded into the mouth around the eye tooth would cause extreme pain to that particular tooth. The Jack Brown Re-breather was no better, and it had the extra disadvantage of being very dangerous. With the re-breather, we would use the same air several times over, and as the oxygen supply dwindled, we would never realize it. The swimmer could just go to sleep from the lack of oxygen in the air supply.

I worked with those diving suits for many days and never did feel competent with them. The regular instructors who had been working with them for a year or more could do more with them than inexperienced people, but they still were never a practical swimming device in UDT.

I signed up for dental work shortly after we returned to Maui, and one day in May, I was given a pass to take a bus to the Naval Air Station about four miles north of our base. I left about noon and went to the dental offices at the Air Station. It must have been 1600 hours before I got into the dentist's chair. I had several teeth that needed filling, and the dentist proceeded to drill each cavity in both the lower and upper teeth. He did not use novocain or any other anesthesia, and I was in terrible pain. The procedure took so long that it was after 1800 hours when I left the dental offices. I was mad because he had caused me so much pain and discomfort, and the dentist was mad because he had to work late to finish my fillings.

When I returned to the bus pickup area, I found that the last bus to the Underwater Demolition Base had already left. I had no ride back to my base, and had no choice except to start walking. It was nearly dark when I walked through the guard gate at the UDT base. My pass had expired and the guard insisted putting me on report. I had thought about skirting the guard gate, because the base had no fences, but thought it might have been worse, if I was

caught sneaking on to the base. Anyway I was given a Captain's Mast for the violation. I had to go before Commander Koehler, the base Executive Officer, and when he heard my story, he dismissed the case.

Underwater Demoliton Team Thirteen was on the Maui Training Staff for nearly three months. Those were a good three months for me, and I would have welcomed staying there until the war was over. We had more liberty than we could afford. We had a lot of free time to do what we liked, and the Hawaiian weather was incomparable to any that I have known. It was warm but not hot, never too hot to sleep, low humidity, and no mosquitoes or sand flies.

When I went on liberty, I usually went to Wailuku. It was the largest town on Maui and only about 10 miles from the Base. There really was not much to do in Wailuku, and about all I can remember about it was a placed where they served gigantic banana splits called "B-29s". Whenever I went to town, I would have to have one of those "B-29"s. There was a movie theatre that had a matinee feature, and there was a pool room, where I used to play pool. One time, I and a couple of other guys took the bus to Hana, which was a very scenic trip to the east side of Maui. I can remember the ride and that is about all. I later regretted that I did not go to a couple of places on Maui which probably would have been interesting. Most of the guys took a bus to the top of Mt. Haleakala. From there they could view the huge extinct volcanic crater, which may be the largest in the world. The other place was Lahaina on the northwest corner of Maui. Lahaina was a small town, but was a nineteenth century whaling town, and it had an interesting historical background. In those years, all these Maui towns were not much larger than Moville, Iowa, and some were smaller.

Most of my recreation was on or near the Base. We had a small library, and I did a good amount of reading. I even bought one book in Wailuku or Kahalui. That was the then best seller Forever Amber, and I still have it in my book collection today. When we were on Training Staff, there were no calisthenics or swimming required, but some of us did a lot of swimming. The experimental work with the diving gear required some swimming, but I did quite a little more on my own. We had rubber air mattresses available, and I and some of the other guys would use these to swim in and out of the surf south of the base pier. Earlier in the war, they were called "flying mattresses" and were used by Teams 5 and 6 to aid swimmers. For example, at Saipan, the platoon officers used them, but required the enlisted men to swim without them. Before the officers reached the beach, they realized they had made a big mistake. One by one they were being shot by Japanese riflemen. Several officer were hit, one killed, and they immediately sunk the mattresses by

piercing them with their knives. The enlisted men swimming low in the water were barely visible to the Japanese. The mattresses were lots of fun in the moderate surf of the western beaches of Maui. Anyway during the day, when I had time from my duties, I would spend many hours swimming in the warm waters.

I have mentioned before that Team 13 had a good softball team, and during our period of duty with the Training Staff they continued to play as Team 13's Softball Team. Two or three officers were on the team, and I am sure that situation would only by typical in UDT.

I have no exact record of the date, but sometime in June or July, I received a promotion to Gunner's Mate Second Class. The promotion came through without warning, and I assume that Ensign Cleveland had instigated the request. I believe this raised my monthly pay to $96 plus the amount Wynola received as an allotment.

Our duty in the Training Staff ended about August 1, and UDT-13 was re-organized. We had helped train Teams 27, 28, and 29, and their Maui training ended at that time. Those teams were the last Underwater Demolition Teams trained at Maui. During our duty in Maui, we had 25 or 26 men leave the team for one reason or another. Most of them were the Team Able people, who had been transferred back to the States for leave after their long service in the Pacific. These men represented over twenty five percent of the team complement. In the reorganization process, we added about the same number of new people. I have no record of where these men came from, but a few were from the teams we had just finished training.

A reorganized Team 13 left Maui on August 7, 1945 aboard the U.S.S. Burdo (APD-13). I looked at old Haleakala for the last time that day, and I still feel a little nostalgia, when I think of Maui. Our assignment was to take us to Oceanside, California where we were going to take special training for the invasion of Japan. I did not know it at the time, but every Underwater Demolition Team in the Pacific Fleet was moving towards Oceanside to train for the invasion of Kyushu, the southern most main island of Japan. This invasion had been coded "Operation Olympic" and was to commence on November 1, 1945 with UDT operations starting about October 25. This information was sent to me in late 1990 by the UDT/SEAL Association.

The Burdo was an identical twin to the Barr, and I claimed the same bunk as I had on the Barr. It was the first bottom bunk on the left side of the aisle on the starboard side of the ship. We were at sea a few days, when we received word of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and the second one on Nagasaki. Rumors of possible peace were

UDT'S ORGANIZATION FOR OPERATION "OLYMPIC"
Kyushu, Japan, October-November 1945

Compiled by Capt.D.E. Young, USNR-R
1986

3rd UD GROUP
CAPT. RODGERS--USS HOLLIS — DE 794
UDT-3-Marshall--USS SCRIBNER-APD-132
UDT-11-Welle--USS KLINE — APD-120
UDT-25-Cooper--USS KNUDSON-APD-101
UDT-27-Saunders--USS BUNCH — DE-694

5th UD GROUP
CAPT. WILLIAMS--USS BLESSMAN - APD-48
UDT-4-Lister--USS JEFFERY — APD-44
UDT-12-James--USS AMESBURY APD-46
UDT-18-Coombs--USS SCHMITT-APD-76
UDT-22-Chase--USS WOODS — APD-118

7th UD GROUP
CAPT. CLELAND--USS LANING — APD-55
UDT-7-Robbins--USS AUMAN — APD-117
UDT-21-Clayton--USS BALDUCK - APD-132
UDT-23-Deegan--USS HAINES -DE792
UDT-26-Horracks--USS INGRAM -DE-62

RESERVE BEACH UD GROUP
CAPT. McCLAUGHRY--USS GANTNER - DE60
UDT-5-DeBold--USS KINZER — APD-91
UDT-24-Gatlin--USS GANTNER — DE-60

WESTERN UD GROUP
CDR. KAUFFMAN--USS YOKES — APD-67
UDT-8-Young--USS WOLF — APD-129
UDT-15-Brooks--USS GRAY — APD-74

AREA RESERVE UD GROUP
LCDR. EATON--USS KLEINSMITH-APD-134
UDT-9-Eaton--USS KLEINSMITH — APD-134
UDT-17-Downes--USS CARL — APD-108
UDT-20-Herbert--USS BURDO — APD-133

SOUTHERN UD GROUP
LCDR. MORANZ--USS BULL — APD-78
UDT-13-Moranz--USS BULL — APD-78

This plan for the invasion of Japan was developed in July or August of 1945. The initial D-day was code named X-ray day and was to be on November 1.

UDT-13 was scheduled to make a reconnaissance on the small Island of Kuchinoe (see the back of this sheet)

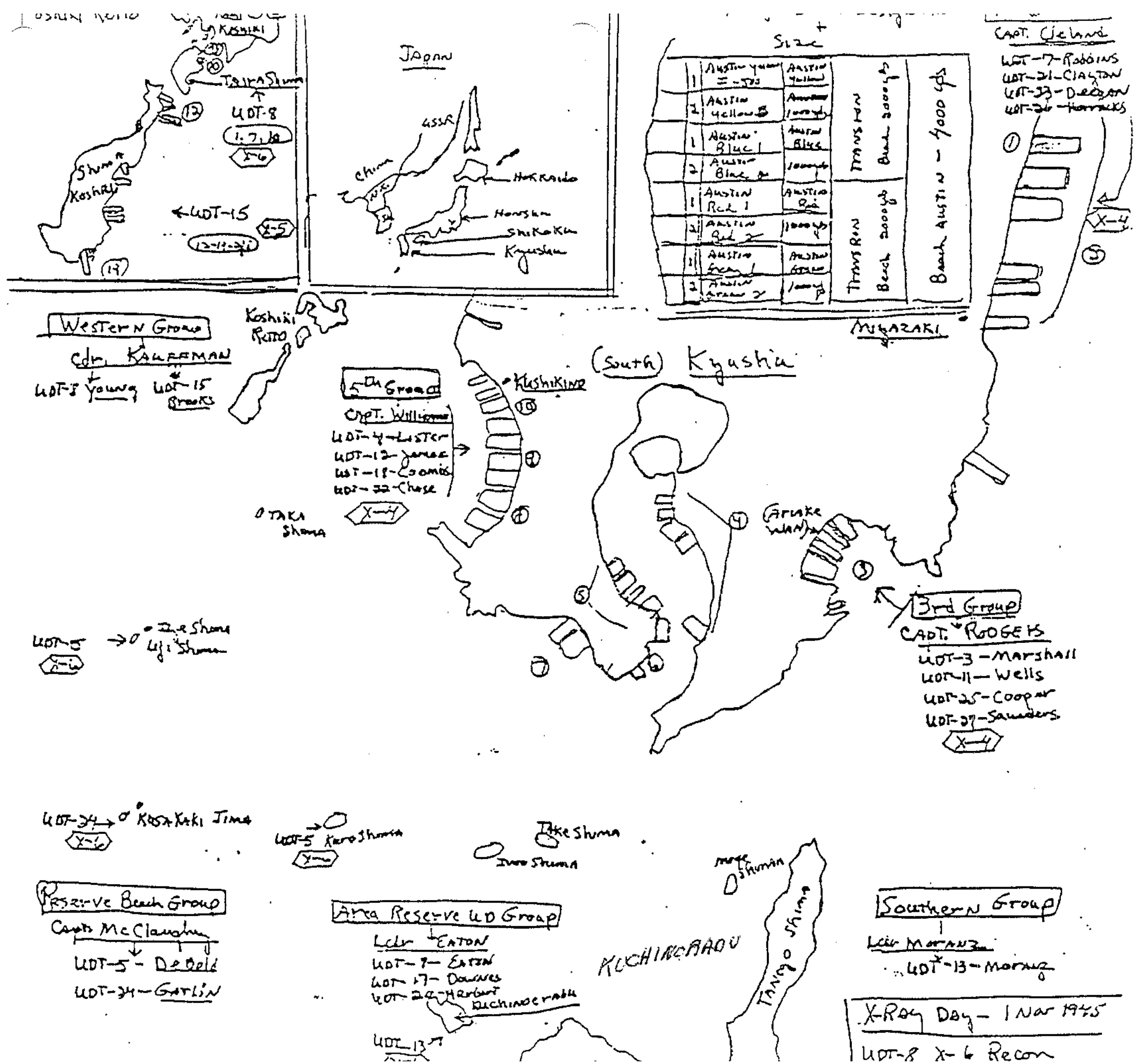
UDT-13 was assigned to the USS Bull, which had been Team 14's APD in the Iwo Jima operation.

UDT-13 was to be the Command Te under Commander Moranz for the Southern UDT Group.

Okinawa was called the invasion 1000 Frogmen, and Operation Oly would have involved over 2000 Frogmen.

I have received this informatio from more than one source, and copy was sent by **Moe Mulheren** o of UDT-3. Captain D.E. Young a the top of the page, I cannot identify, but he possibly was t Commander of Team 8.

Marvin Coope


Japan
USSR
China
Hokkaido
Honshu
Shikoku
Kyushu
Koshiki
Koshiki
Shima
UDT-8
UDT-15
X-5
Western Group
Cdr. Kauffman
UDT-8 Young
UDT-15 Brooks
Koshiki Retto
(South) Kyushu
Kushikino
5th Group
Capt. Williams
UDT-4-Lister
UDT-12-James
UDT-18-Coombs
UDT-22-Chase
X-4
Otaka Shima
Miyazaki
Size
Austin Yellow
Austin Blue 1
Austin Blue 2
Austin Red 1
Austin Red 2
Austin Green 1
Austin Green 2
Transian Beach 2000 yds
Transrin Beach 2000 yds
Beach Austin - 4000 yds
Capt. Cleland
UDT-17-Robbins
UDT-21-Clayton
UDT-23-Deegan
UDT-26-Horracks
X-4
3rd Group
Capt. Rogers
UDT-3-Marshall
UDT-11-Wells
UDT-25-Cooper
UDT-27-Saunders
X-4
UDT-5
Uji Shima
UDT-24
Kusakaki Jima
X-6
UDT-5
Kuroshima
Take Shima
Iwo Shima
Reserve Beach Group
Capt. McClaughry
UDT-5 - DeBold
UDT-24 - Gatlin
Area Reserve UD Group
Lcdr. Eaton
UDT-7- Eaton
UDT-17- Downes
UDT-24-Herbert
Kuchinoerabu
UDT-13
Kuchinoerabu
Tanego Shima
Southern Group
Lcdr. Moranz
UDT-13-Moranz
X-Ray Day - 1 Mar 1945
UDT-8 X-6 Recon

passed down from the officers to the enlisted men. When we reached Oceanside, we were only there for a few hours. But in that time, we lost Commander Moranz, our Commanding Officer, and Lt. Walker, our Executive Officer. From the Oceanside Amphibious base we gained Commander Douglas Fane as a new Commanding Officer and a few more enlisted men. Lt. Gleason Platoon Able officer became our new Executive Officer. With these changes, we moved about forty miles up the coast to Long Beach, California. I have never known why we went to Long Beach, but last year Doug Fane informed me in a letter, that we went there to await orders.

On the evening of August 14, I had liberty and was leaving the Fleet Landing near the "Pike" in downtown Long Beach, when suddenly sirens started, fire crackers began exploding, and horns blasted. The war was over. This was V-J day. Everyone was celebrating the news. I thought that this all fit into the puzzle of why we came to Long Beach. The training must have been canceled because of the near certainty of the war's end. I thought we would soon be going home on leave. I never had much money with me in those days because a good portion of what I earned I voluntarily sent home for Wynola to save. With a leave seemingly so eminent, I sent her a telegram request her to send me fifty dollars for train fare, in case I did get the leave. My buddies and I celebrated with everyone else all night, and about four or five o'clock in the morning, I went to the Western Union office, and my money was there.

By daylight, we were back on the ship, and a short time later I received some bad news. An order came over the inter-com to prepare to get under way, and that we were leaving for Pearl Harbor. So that afternoon, we pulled anchor at Long Beach and started back across the Pacific.

We arrived in Pearl Harbor about the 19th or 20th of August, and anchored in the Destroyer/Cruiser Basin. We stayed at Pearl Harbor for the better part of a week. While there, we had a couple of liberties. I only took one of one of them for one afternoon, and went into Pearl City. I had enough of Honolulu the previous spring. I remember a bunch of Team 13 guys coming back aboard ship very drunk and showing the effects of some brawl. Their faces were bruised, and some had cuts and torn clothes. There were two events that involved me that is worth mentioning.

Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen personnel were decorated for their service at Iwo Jima in a ceremony on the lawn of the Pacific Fleet Command Headquarters at Pearl Harbor. I received the Bronze Star Medal for my reconnaissance mission at Iwo Jima. Less than half the Team members received a medal, and there were some that felt cheated, because we all had done so much. The twenty reconnaissance swimmers and the two crews that put up the navigational light received the medal.

Underwater Demolition Men Decorated At Pearl Harbor

Six officers and 26 enlisted men of Underwater Demolition Team No. 13 were decorated here today for the heroic part they played last February during the assault on and capture of Iwo Jima Island.

The officers were presented Silver Star Medals, and the enlisted men, Bronze Star Medals, by Rear Admiral William H. P. Blandy, USN, Commander, Cruisers, Destroyers, Pacific Fleet.

Admiral Blandy, one of the Navy's top ordnance men and Commander of the Amphibious Support Force which carried out preliminary underwater demolition operations, bombing, bombardment and minesweeping in preparation for the landing at Iwo Ja, paid high tribute to the "courage and skill" of the officers and men who charted the ocean bottom off the shore before the assault toops plunged ashore. A few mines also were discovered and these were destroyed.

"I believe that no duty in this war required more personal courage than that of the underwater reconnaissance and demolition teams, which performed in advance of our amphibious attck, and that no group contributed more in proportion to its numbers, to the successful conclusion of the war," Admiral Blandy said.

"I am thoroughly familiar with your work at Iwo Jima because I was there. It was tough and dangerous, but through your efforts our landing craft were enabled to proceed safely through cleared waters to the enemy-held beachhead."

During the Iwo operation, the demolition team was carried in landing personnel boats to 500 yards from the enemy shore. Then they slipped quietly into the water and swam to designated areas immediately adjacent to the beach.

The begoggled and rubber-finned swimmers explored the ocean bottom for natural barriers and man-made impediments such as jetted rails and tetrahedrons designed by the Japs to blow up landing craft.

The team then returned to its ship and relayed information obtained to commanders planning the landing operations. Data obtained included information as to tidal currents, water depths, steepness of banks and mines which would need exploding before troops could be carried shoreward.

The team exploded the few mines discovered with charges especially prepared by the United States Navy, and soon the assault troops were launched on an attack that ultimately resulted in the capture of the "rock" 750 miles from Honshu.

There were no casulties among the officers or men of Underwater Demolition Team No. 13, although they were harassed constantly by heavy fire from mortars, machine guns and small arms.

The following officers received the Silver Star Medal:

Ensign Ralph R. Harlan, 22, USNR, of Sacramento, Calif.; Ensign Charles F. Hamman, 23, USNR, of Shawnee, Okla.; Ensign Lewis Alvin Robinson, 22, USNR, of Danville, Pa.; Ensign Harry Eugene Gardner, 23, USNR, of Waco, Texas; Ensign Joseph E. Long, Jr., 27, USNR, of Bayonne, N. J., and Lieutenant (jg) Robert E. Gleason, 27, USNR, of East Cleveland, Ohio.

The following enlisted men recieved the Bronze Star Medal:

Roger E. Miller, 19, electrician's mate second class, USNR, of Johnson City, N Y.; Coxswain John Edward Stone, 19, USNR, of Easley, S. C.; William Henry Baker, 23, boatswain's mate second class, USNR, of Akron, Ohio; Coxswain Edward Ralph Bryson, 19, USNR, of Delair, N. J.; Robert E. King, 32, boatswain's mate second class, USNR, of Roslindale, Mass.

Russell J. Morrow, 24, quartermaster third class, USN, of Oronoco, Minn.; Thomas Leroy McElwee, 38, machinist's mate second class, USNR, of Reading, Pa.; Marvin Cooper, 21, gunner's mate second class, USNR, of Moville, Iowa; Francis N. Musick, Jr., 19, gunner's mate third class, USNR, of Mount Holly, N. J.; Donald Paul Taylor, 31, machinist's mate first class, USNR, of Portland, Ore.

Thomas E. Owens, 19, Coxswain, USNR, of Clinton, Mass.; James Clifford Moore, 21, boatswain's mate second class, USN, of Milwaukee, Wis.; Kenneth John Dollinger, 20, gunner's mate third class, USNR, of Baltimore, Md.; Charles Rudy, Jr., 22, signalman second class, USNR, of New Hyde Park, Long Island, N. Y.; Donald J. Presson, 19, gunner's mate third class, USNR, of Chicago, Ill.; George N. Rush, 32, boatswain's mate first class, USNR, of New York City, N. Y.

Carl N. Lazar, 27, machinist's mate first class, USNR, of Lansing, Mich.; Gary J. Price, 20, gunner's mate third class, USNR, of East Jenkins, Ky.; Victor George Taraborrelli, 20, Coxswain, USNR, of Hempstead, N. Y.; Gilbert A. Reimer, 20, signalman second class, USN, of Chicago, Ill.; Lawrence Algot Johnson, 23, storekeeper second class, USNR, of Jamestown, N. Y.

Walter Robert Miller, 18, electrician's mate third class, USN, of Walden, N. Y.; William Owen Butler, 20, Coxswain, USNR, of Davenport, Fla.; John Adams Barrett, 22, shipfitter first class, USNR, of Shawnee, Okla.; Sherman G. Prince, 19, gunner's mate third class, USNR, of McWhorter, W. Va.; Stanley Joseph Gunshetski, 19, gunner's mate third class, USNR, of Barberton, Ohio.

Silver Star Medals also were awarded by Admiral Blandy to Lieutenant Commander V. J. Moranz, USNR, of Philadelphia, who led the team in the Iwo operation, and to Lieutenant (jg) D. M. Walker, USNR, of Woodstown, N. J., the team's executive. Both officers have returned to the United States.

Citations and awards will be forwarded for presentation.

This is as copy of a newspaper article in 1945 published by a Honolulu paper. Don Walker's cousin sent it to his parents in New York that year. Don showed me the article during our 1991 Florida reunion, and he sent me this copy a short time later.

The article seems to read that the swimmer drop was at 500 yards. This should read 1500 yards, I doubt if any of the LCPR boats would have survived if they had approached within 500 yards of shore. Our LCIG gunboat support was just inside the destroyer line at 2000 yards, and they were virtually wiped out within 15 minutes of the beginning of the operation.

The period between August 14 and November 1, 1945, is a period where all dates must come from my memory, and in this essay, they will be mostly approximate, but should be within 5 or 7 days of the true date. Our stay in Pearl Harbor was about a week, and I spent most of my time aboard ship. We watched a movie on the fantail every night, played cards during the day, and had the usual B.S. sessions. I can remember leaving the Burdo three times that week and those included my Pearl City liberty and the ceremonies at the Command Head Quarters. The other time is worth mentioning.

Ensign Cleveland, Glen Frey, Ralph Grimes, myself, and one other man from Cleveland's old crew went ashore at Pearl Harbor to requisition supplies. Cleveland had us taken by an LCPR to one of the piers of the Destroyer/Cruiser's Basin, and we proceeded to procure certain supplies. Soon we had more than we could carry, and we stacked them at a designated place along the pier. Cleveland assigned me to stand guard over the accumulation, because to leave them alone would be to lose them to some other ship. This suited me because I never liked to shop around for things. Throughout the afternoon, the crew would bring more items back to the pier and the accumulation grew larger and larger. About 1800 hours, they came back with what I thought would be their last haul, but no, Cleveland said he had one more requisition to fill. This time they were gone much longer than their earlier jaunts, and I was getting more bored and hungry by the minute. Darkness fell and the movies started on the fantails of the ships in the basin. I could see the Burdo sitting out there with a movie in technicolor being screened on its fantail. About 2100 hours (9:00 PM), those jokers came walking in with the last load of supplies. There was not a one of them who would reveal where they were gone for those three hours. I was really mad, and we still had to have an LCPR called from the Burdo, load the supplies, and unload them at the ship.

Ensign Cleveland was not our regular supply officer, and I cannot remember what we compiled that afternoon. I remember earlier in the western Pacific going with Cleveland to the U.S.S. Yosemite, a Naval supply ship, to requisition supplies. We went to the Yosemite a couple of times, and always managed to eat dinner while aboard. Supply ships served the best food in the fleet.

In late August, Team 13, aboard the Burdo, left Pearl Harbor with a convoy heading for Guam. By this time, we had been informed of our assignment, which was to prepare the Port of Sasebo, Japan for entry of American Occupation Forces. An event occurred on this cruise that will always be remembered by me.

When I was nine years old, I had broken a large corner off a front tooth in a roller skating accident in Moville.

Dr. Wirsag, the local dentist, suggested waiting until I was fourteen or fifteen years old before having it repaired. Those years came and went, and I had nothing done about the tooth. I was twenty one years old, and had just left Pearl Harbor, when I noticed a slight pain in the area of the broken tooth. The pain was persistent and gradually worsened. After a couple of days, I went to see the ship's doctor. He gave me a couple of aspirin to kill the pain. The aspirin gave some relief, but in a few days the pain worsened. The doctor noting that the gum area around the tooth was inflamed and starting to swell. He decided to pull the tooth. Not being a dentist and never having tried to pull a tooth before, he was unable to extract the tooth. "Doc" Emerson, our Pharmacist Mate and a good friend of mine, told me that he could and would pull the tooth, but that he did not dare do it.

After the attempted extraction, the swelling increased. The entire lower part of my face became enlarged with the swelling. The doctor realized he had to do something, and he made arrangements for me to be transferred to an APA transport traveling with the convoy. Although the sea was rather rough, someone strapped me in a "Boatswain's Chair", a line was shot across to the now nearby APA, and I road the chair across on the line. If I had not been in so much pain, this would have been an interesting event. I had never seen this procedure performed before, and have never seen it done since.

After dangling over the choppy water as I was pulled across to the APA, I was hauled aboard the APA, and confronted by a surgeon ready to cut my appendix out. Communications as usual were "snafu", and they thought I had appendicitis. When they found out I had a tooth ache, the crowd along the APA dissolved, and someone walked me to the dental office. For some reason, I can remember the dentist's name. His name was Cohen, and he was a big good natured person. He took a quick look at my infected tooth and informed me that he would have to pull it without the use of any anesthetic. It was infected so badly that it would have been dangerous to use novocain. Remembering my session with the dentist in Maui, I was beginning to believe the Navy did not have the stuff. I had suffered the extreme pain for so long, I told the dentist to do what was needed and do it fast. He put the forceps on the tooth, and I felt a flash of pain and the tooth was out. Almost immediately, I could feel the pressure and the pain subside. If the doctor on the Barr had did that about three days before, it would have saved me from much pain.

The APA was loaded with troops, and the only place they had for me to sleep was in the isolation ward. Within a day after the extraction, I felt well again. I was a Gunner's Mate, and they assigned me to work in the ship's armory for

the remainder of the voyage. I stayed on the APA about a week, and when we anchored at Guam, I moved back to the Burdo. I have one dispatch which indicates this rendezvous was at Saipan, but I believe it was Guam. Either way it was in the Marianas, and the two islands are only about a hundred miles apart.

The Mariana stop was brief. We refueled, took on some supplies, and started our journey to Japan. We left the convoy and proceeded alone through the western Pacific, through the Ryukyu chain of islands, and into the East China Sea. From there we headed northward heading straight for southern Kyushu, the southern most island of the Japanese mainland. We traveled fast unencumbered by slow moving transports, and soon we were approaching Sasebo, our ultimate destination.

A couple of hundred miles south of Sasebo, we came across a swamped Japanese fishing boat, its hull barely protruding above the water. Aboard were several (I believe four) Japanese fishermen. We rescued them from their craft, and when they came aboard the Burdo, they coward on the decks, probably expecting to be killed. They were in bad physical shape, and the ship's doctor put them on a special diet to insure their recovery. We had a Japanese interpreter with UDT-13, and he questioned the fishermen about their experience. They were out of Nagasaki and were struck by a typhoon, which swamped their boat a week or two before. Their deteriorated condition was the result of a lack of food and water during that period. One of the fisherman had burn scars over one side of his face and arms, and they were the result of the atom bomb attack on Nagasaki. The fisherman recovered and were turned over to the port authorities at Sasebo a few day later.

The Burdo tried to sink the fishing craft to eliminate it as a navigational hazard. They made a run past it and dropped depth charges, but the wooden craft just bounced to one side from the explosions. Next, their gunners tried to sink it with the five inch gun but with no luck. Finally a rubber boat crew from old Team 13 put a 20 pound satchel charge inside the boat's hull and blew it into fine pieces.

The following day, we entered the entrance to Sasebo, Bay. I remember viewing some high radio towers on the right side of the bay. Sasebo Harbor was about 5 to 10 miles back from the ocean, and the bay was surrounded by tree covered hills broken with patches of rice paddies and an occasional village nestled along the shoreline. It was quite scenic terrain on each side of the inlet. We did feel slightly uncomfortable, because everyone around us were Japanese, and we were going into one of their major seaports. There was a beached Japanese submarine resting on one section of beach, and it was obviously damaged and abandoned. In

The above picture shows the Japanese fisherman before we took them aboard Burdo. I believe they had weathered through a typhoon days before, and they were in bad shape from lack of water and food. They were found in the East China Sea south of Japan.

This picture was given to me by Robert Gleason in 1991, who was Team 13's Executive Officer on the Sasebo cruise.

another area there were several Japanese freighters in the same predicament with their rusty hulls run aground. The Burdo dropped anchor a couple of miles from the inner bay, where the main piers and wharf area was located. It is hard to describe the feeling I had as I looked at the Japanese ships, the activity in the harbor, and the movement of the people ashore. Those were the Japanese, who we had been fighting since December of 1942. The little Burdo sitting at anchor amid the remnants of the Japanese fleet with no other American ships around made us feel terribly alone. In recent research, I have found that the bay had been swept of mines before the Burdo arrived, and if I had known then that those little wooden hulled ships had been there ahead of us, I may have felt better that afternoon.

Our mission at Sasebo was to reconnoiter the entire area including close in waters, the wharves, the piers, and some areas inland from the waterfront. This included checking small boats, tug boats, and all non-military craft. We were to operate by platoons, and each platoon would have a different assignment. Since we had four platoons, my experience will represent only a portion of the accomplishments that were made. I will try to relate my experiences as I remember them.

I was still with Charley Platoon, and we were the only platoon who had its original complement with one exception. Ed Marietta, our Team Able man, had dropped out during the summer, and I cannot remember of any replacement for him. The other three platoons had adsorbed the entire replacement group of 26 people. On this operation, we all were issued guns. Each of us were issued a 45 caliber handgun, and in our LCPR we carried rifles, Thompson sub machine guns, and plenty of ammunition. We also received strong warning about not using these weapons unless it was a dire emergency. In other words, we would use weapons only if we were fired on by the Japanese. Technically the war was over, and the occupation forces wanted no problems. So the message to everyone of us was do not cause any trouble.

Our first assignment was moving the LCPR along a section of the wharf and pier area and taking measured water depths, which were recorded on to maps. I can remember that the water was swarming with jelly fish, and I was thankful that the operation was not a swimming operation. Our second assignment was a walking inspection of the wharf area behind the water we had sounded. There were a number of Japanese soldiers on the wharf, and as we walked by, they were lining up for a meal. They had rifles, and they did not act a bit friendly. There were a hundred or more of them and about four of us, and we knew if they were so inclined they could have made short work of us. We had no problems, and the wharf was clear of anything suspicious.

The second morning, we took our LCPR and went far up a drainage canal. This gave us a close view of the city and its people. Much of it was devastated by American bombers, and a vast area looked like the pictures, that I saw later, of Hiroshima. I noticed a five or six story hospital which had been cut in half by bombs. The beds could be seen in many rooms, where part of the room had been sheared away. Still there were people going somewhere to work, and they were all on bicycles. They crossed a bridge crossing the canal, and were all smiles, and this was a big contrast to the soldiers we had met the day before. Sasebo was about the size of Omaha, Nebraska, and it must have been seventy five percent destroyed.

Another assignment was checking many small boats along the waterfront. We were checking for caches of arms, ammunition, explosives, or anything that might be a hazard for the occupation troops. Most of the people around and on those boats were civilians, and they were very friendly, offering us saki and food. I declined everything like food and drink, because I was apprehensive of poison. The water front had an abundance of small shops, food stores, and places selling alcoholic beverages, which I suppose was saki. We were checking a small tug boat, when the Japanese owner or operator offered us something to drink, and this time I believe it was tea. I noticed the flag flying on the short mast of the tug, and I pointed towards the flag. He immediately brought the flag down and handed it to me. I still have the flag today. It was the non-military type without the stripes of the rising sun.

Our last assignment was reconnoitering a small village and the surrounding area. There were so many villages, wharves, piers, and boats to check, that the platoons had to split into smaller groups to cover all of the assignments. If I remember correctly, there were four of us on this village assignment. We checked every thing that looked like a commercial building. We found only one building that needed to be put on the report. A small building housed some furnaces and other equipment which Ensign Cleveland believed to be a place where they made explosives. There were blocks of cast materials which appeared to by TNT, and it was the substance that had been produced in vats in the building. It appeared to be in disuse for some time. We thought it was sort of a cottage industry to help the Japanese war effort. We snooped around the village, and looked into a building that must have been an elementary school. We went in one door and the kids and teacher ran out the back door. There was no shouting, crying, or even talking. The children just silently disappeared into some trees behind the building. I can imagine how they and their teacher must have felt. The Americans were their enemy, and here were a bunch of them carrying sub-machine guns entering their school room. We walked far up the hill above the

village, and from there we could look down on a large portion of Sasebo Bay. Transports and LSTs were now coming into the harbor, and I believe that occupation troops started moving ashore the following morning.

The village assignment was our last duty at Sasebo, and I believe we pulled anchor, left Sasebo, and headed stateside - U.S.A. the following morning. I cannot remember how many days we were at Sasebo, but I believe it was four or five, and I believe it was the last week in September when we left the bay.

A few days out of Sasebo, we encountered a typhoon. The captain of the Burdo decided to change his course more to the north and try to make an end run around the storm. I believe, he was partially successful in that maneuver, because we never had heavy rains and the extremely high winds that one would expect from a typhoon. However, we did hit the storm with very high waves and stiff winds. The waves ran 30 or 40 feet and when we were in a trough, it was like being in a valley between two hills, and when we on the crest, it seemed like one could see forever. This was by far the worst seas that I experienced in the Navy. We were cruising alone, and if we had capsized everyone would have been lost. The ship must have approached a 45 degree list at different times. It was a wild, wild ocean, and everyone was scared. One guy was wearing two life jackets all the time. The mess room was just forward of the quarters where I bunked, and one night a bench from the mess room literally fell back through the sleeping quarters and crashed against the rear hatch. One of the guys I am now communicating with has told me that the ship's captain became so sick, that Commander Fane, UDT-13's Commanding Officer took over the ship. I guess I really had my "sea legs" by this time, because I never became seasick from the storm.

We had two or three rough days, and I am sure we missed the main force of the storm. We were headed for San Diego, and I can remember very little about the voyage, but I believe we made three refueling stops - Guam, Enewetak, and Pearl Harbor. We arrived in San Diego about the middle of October. I had one report that it was October 29, but I know now that we had to be there earlier than that. I believe the complete cruise from Long Beach to Japan and back to San Diego took two months - August 15 to October 15.

After Underwater Demolition Team 13 arrived in San Diego Bay, we left the Burdo, and my experiences with the sea was over. We moved ashore to the Naval Amphibious Base on Coronado Island, which is just across the bay from down town San Diego. We were assigned quarters in some quonset huts, and I spent about two weeks there. It seemed great to be back in the good old U.S.A., and I was reasonably sure that I would receive leave this time.

The two or more weeks that I spent at Coronado was an interesting time of my life. The Naval Amphibious Base is located just east of the city of Coronado where the Island narrows down to a half mile wide strip called the "Strand". The base is still there, and now is the home of Seal Teams one, three, and five. In 1945, one had to take a ferry to go from Coronado to San Diego. Now they have a large bridge between the city and the island.

When I arrived in San Diego that October, I had several things that I wanted to accomplish. First, I went to the dental office on the base, and requested a new tooth to replace the one pulled in the mid-Pacific. The Navy would not build me a bridge, but took impressions and constructed me a partial plate. This process took about a week. After receiving the plate, I did have a problem getting used to it, but once I had it in my mouth, I never took it out except to clean it. I had the partial plate with one tooth until 1974, when I had it replaced with a bridge.

During my time in the Pacific, we wore only dress whites when we were ashore. I had lent my dress blues to a friend in Team 6, when he was going stateside for a leave. He, according to plan, sent the uniform to Wynola after he arrived home. I believe, my pea coat was sent home before I left San Francisco the previous year. Anyway, I had to have dress blues. Bill Crandall, who had become my best friend, and I went into San Diego, where we both bought "tailor made blues", and a black leather jacket. The jacket was "out of uniform" attire, but sailors ashore commonly wore them, and the Shore Patrol always seemed to look the other way. Now that the war was over, I anticipated no problem with the leather jacket.

So with the new uniform and my new front tooth, I felt presentable again. Bill Crandall, Bennie Rice, Walt Flathers, myself, and others took several liberties into down town San Diego. San Diego today has not changed too much. The downtown building have soared towards the skies, but the streets are the same, the Bay has changed little, and the water front is much like it was 46 years ago. Its population has increased from a half million to nearly two million, but that increase has developed out from the city, so when I go to San Diego today, it seems much like it was back then. I have located Bill Crandall and Bennie Rice within the past year (1990), and we correspond regularly.

I can remember one other liberty especially well. Bill Crandall and I decided to hitchhike to Tijuana, Mexico. We left one morning from the Amphibious Base, and proceeded to hitchhike on the road south down the Strand. We had no problem getting a ride to the main highway. The junction between the two roads was about 10 miles from the border.

The above picture was taken in San Diego in October of 1945, and the happy sailors are Marvin Cooper and William Crandell in their new tailor made dress blue uniforms. I also had just received my new front tooth, which probably accounts for the big smile and wide open eyes. I have neve figured why Bill closed his eyes for the picture.

When we reached this main highway, we had to start walking again, but soon someone stopped and offered us a ride. It was two middle aged women, who were supposedly going to Tijuana to buy nylon stockings. They said the nylons were not only available in Tijuana, but were much less expensive than in San Diego. They took us to Tijuana, and in the process they pointed out many interesting features of the city. I remember them showing us a bridge that had been in construction for about seven years. It was a bridge similar to what you would expect across the Little River in Iowa. We stayed in Tijuana until after dark that night, took a bus back to San Diego, and then the ferry to Coronado. Like other excursions, I can remember very little about the trip, but Bill and I always seemed to have had a good time.

During the last week in October, there was a time of decision for me. Underwater Demolition Team Thirteen was decommissioned, and every member had to make up his mind whether he wanted to re-enlist in the Navy or be reassigned elsewhere. The old question appeared in my mind. What was I going to do with my life? The Navy made an interesting offer. If we enlisted to stay in Underwater Demolition, we would be given a 60 day leave, a promotion of one rate, and duty at Coronado, which was to be the Underwater Demolition Base of the Pacific Fleet.

This offer led to much soul searching on my part. Paul Beir, a friend of mine since our days at Fort Pierce, was going through the same turmoil in his mind about re-enlisting. Paul was about five years older than I, and he was married and had four or five children. He was a first class petty officer, and the promotion granted for re-enlisting would make him a chief petty officer. He said that he could make much more money in the Navy with his family allotment than he could make in civilian life. In my own situation, I had no idea what I would do when I left the Navy. I was very apprehensive about going back to the farm life, and as a first class petty officer, I believed that Wynola and I could live well on my wages and other benefits. I was married and had that responsibility to consider. Paul and I finally decided to re-enlist. They had given us very little time to make a decision between the two choices. The officer to sign those "shipping over" papers was to be at one of the empty quonset huts at 1000 hours one morning. When Paul Beir and I went down to sign the papers, there was a sign posted informing us there was a delay of 24 hours, and that people who wanted to re-enlist be there the following morning at the same time. This gave me and extra day to think about the decision, and in that time, I changed my mind. I believe, Paul Beir stayed in the Navy, but I am not sure.

Several men from UDT-13 stayed in the Navy, but some of them did not stay in San Diego, and were transferred to

HUMAN BARRACUDAS — SPEARHEAD OF ATTACK

Adapted from *The Kansas City Star,* Kansas City, Kan.

Alvin S. McCoy

When the marines swarmed ashore at Guam under heavy fire, they spied this sign higher up the beachhead:

WELCOME TO GUAM,
U.S. MARINES
USO 2 Blocks To
Right UDT4

It was a jaunty welcome from Underwater Demolition Team 4, a unit of the "human barracudas," one of the most daring — and secret — American fighting groups of this war. Days before, the UDT's had made a "swimming reconnaisance" of Guam, removing 1000 obstacles to the Marines' invasion. Only now can the story of these incredible spearheads be told—of how they gave new meaning to the terms "amphibious operation" and "first wave ashore." They were literally both.

From North America to Normandy, from the Marshalls to Iwo Jima, they were the first invaders. They neutralized, diving deep and dodging enemy bullets, 3000 deadly gadgets which would have killed Americans at Okinawa beachheads.

Wearing only trunks and shod with rubber fins, armed with only sharp knives and explosives strapped to their waists, they went into action not hours, but days, before the marines and soldiers followed.

Their assignment was to blow precise passages through dangerous coral reefs; to take the sting from mines; and to destroy spikes, booms and nets set to impale and entangle ships and men.

Every man in the UDT was a volunteer from the navy, army, or "Seabees." The training was tougher then any commando course. The men learned to swim in warm or icy waters indefinitely (in some actions they did not touch bottom for 12 hours), to use explosives while ignoring enemy fire, and to keep their mouths shut.

So "hush-hush" was their work that members could not receive the extra "hazardous pay" granted airmen and submarine crews.

They were expendable: on Europe's D-Day, when they particularly distinguished themselves by blasting 16 fifty-yard gaps through three separate lines of defenses on Normandy beaches, they lost every other man.

Today, covered with honors, the greatest satisfaction felt by the remnant of that gallant group of 2500 men lies in the thousands of American lives they saved, and in the months by which they shortened the war. Those are estimates that only history can give in detail.

This short article ~~was published~~ in the Kansas City Star - date unknown. It was re-published in the Fraternal Order of UDT/SEAL news bulletin in 1990.

Although the accuracy of some of its contents might be questioned, the article gives a broad perspective of Underwater Demolition Teams during World War II. My recent research revealed that there were more Marines in UDT than Army personnel. The references to 2500 men in UDT has to be slightly in error. My research indicates that there were nearly 3000 men in UDT service, but less than 2000 actually saw combat. The difference in the two numbers of men signifies the build up for Operation Olympic, invasion of Japan, that never occurred because of the Japanese surrender in August of 1945. The last paragraph has great meaning to me as a veteran of UDT. Although there may be some exaggeration of the presented estimates, a belief that UDT saved thousands of lives and shortened the war by many months is rewarding to all who served in the teams.

Little Creek, Virginia just outside of Norfork to serve with the Atlantic Fleet. In the past year, I have corresponded with two of them, and they cannot remember what happened to Paul Beir.

All Team 13 men who had not re-enlisted were moved by bus to the Miramar Naval Air Station just north of San Diego. We stayed there one night, and the next day we were given leave papers and orders for our next assignment. I received a thirty day leave and orders to report to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station at Waukegan, Illinois. That day I said good-by to a number of friends.

Bill Crandall, Walt Flathers, and I took a bus back into San Diego. From there we went to Los Angeles by train. We had to wait several hours at Union Station, and then we boarded a train for points east. I left the train at Omaha, and Bill and Walt stayed on the train. Their destination was New York. It has been over 45 years since I walked off that train in Omaha, and I have not seen one UDT-13 team member since. In the past year, I have communicated with twenty of those people, and we plan to have a reunion sometime in the near future. I took a bus to Sioux City arriving there about mid-night November 3. Wynola was waiting for me at the bus station. I felt sort of like a stranger having not seen my wife or my folks for about 15 months.

Wynola was teaching the Cooper school just north of my folks' farm stead east of Moville. She alternated staying with her folks and mine during her teaching assignment. She had teaching duties to continue, but I will give some of the highlights of November 1945.

Wynola and I took a weekend trip to Omaha. We stayed over night in Eppley Hotel, had some good restaurant meals, and we and toured Boy's Town one afternoon. Emery Klingensmith needed somebody to haul corn from the field during his corn harvest. I worked for him for a week or more. I hauled the corn in with horses, and I had to use the horses to drive the turnstile mechanism used to drive the elevator. My uncle Jess Sadler, Mom's brother, was killed in a tractor accident that November. Wynola and I went to many movies, ate at our favorite places in Sioux City, visited friends in Moville on Saturday nights, and had a really good time.

Before long my leave was over and I had to leave. My papers required me to report to the Des Moines recruiting station for a possible change of assignment. I was interviewed in Des Moines by Bud Glover, a chief petty officer originally from Lawton, Iowa. He verified and signed my papers, and I was on my way to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. I knew my Navy career was really

over, and I was waiting only to have sufficient "points" to receive my discharge.

While at Great Lakes, I had a couple of 72 hour liberties, and I went home both times. On the first liberty, I had only enough money to get as far as Mapleton, and had to leave the train there about 40 miles short of my destination. I knew my new brother-in-law Ray Winneke ran the power plant in Mapleton, so I walked down to the plant hoping that he would take me home. He was on duty and said he would be glad to run me up to Moville after work. It was nearly mid-night, and he said I would have to go to the town movie and find his brother who was home on leave from the Navy and had borrowed Ray's car. This was the first time I met Harold Winneke, Ray's brother. Now he lives near by and we meet for lunch frequently. After he finished his work shift, Ray and I drove up to the farm east of Moville.

The other leave was for the Christmas holiday, and I also went home for a few days. That was my first Christmas at home in three years, and it was the first Christmas with Wynola since our marriage in 1943.

On January 10, 1946, I was discharged from the Navy at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.