

HELL WEEK!

Welcome to the US Navy SEALs. SEALs are the elite Naval Special Operations unit of the US Navy. **The U.S. Navy's SEA, AIR, LAND (SEAL)** teams are one of the most respected commando forces in the world - they are often cited as the most elite, flexible and highly trained Naval Commando force. When it comes to Maritime Special Operations and Anti / Counter-Terror operations the SEALs are hard to beat.

Formed in 1962 by President J. F. Kennedy as a maritime counterpart to the U.S. Army Special Forces (the "Green Berets"), the SEALs have amassed a remarkable history of successes and have become legendary in their exploits. The Teams have operated in every hellhole known to modern warfare and come away with many victories, some bruises and a vast history of achievements. Most SEAL missions are unreported and unknown to the general public. Due to focus, dedication and training, the missions have been very successful.

SEALs are trained to operate in small units of one or two men up to platoon strength of sixteen. However, they work best in squads of eight or fewer. Most missions are clandestine in nature, planned in exacting detail and executed with precision and swiftness. During peacetime, SEALs find themselves with the same rigorous training as during war. Training remains strict to enforce the belief that the more you sweat in peacetime, the less you will bleed in war.

During Vietnam, SEAL Teams One and Two amassed a combined kill ratio of 200:1, with only 46 deaths resulting mostly from accidents and poor intelligence, rather than enemy direct fire. See: <http://www.navyseals.com/community/navyseals/history.cfm> for an in-depth look at SEAL operations in Vietnam and other conflicts. You can learn more about SEAL operations from the numerous books available in the NavySEALs.com Official SEAL Store: <http://www.navyseals.com/community/store/main.cfm>.

This short e-book is offered to you free to introduce you to the unique Navy SEAL training program called BUD/s...an acronym for "Basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL"

training. BUD/s is the first or a lifetime of advanced special operations training programs that prospective SEALs undergo. It lasts for 30 weeks including pre-training – if you do not “roll-back” and is extremely arduous both mentally and physically. If completed – which only 20% of those who start do – the new SEALs go on to a career in the “SEAL Teams” conducting special operations around the world and supporting the war on terror at the pointy edge of the spear.

A unique aspect of Navy SEAL training is HELL WEEK. Originally named “Motivation Week” when the training was held at FT Pierce, FL, the week was designed to mentally and physically test the recruit beyond any “normal” means – in a simulated combat environment – to determine who would have the “True Grit” to be a SEAL. The resulting sense of accomplishment and awareness of an individual’s innate ability to accomplish significantly more, mentally and physically, than one’s previous perceived limitations, is a stated outcome of Hell Week. I call this “The 20X Factor.” Everyone – whether a SEAL recruit, or an assembly line worker at the local GM plant – is capable of accomplishing at LEAST 20 times what they perceive themselves capable of accomplishing. They just need to take some action to unlock this “hidden” potential.

The entire e-book from which this is extracted is available at: http://www.navyseals.com/community/store/kraus_book.cfm . The book, titled “You Want Us to do WHAT!” by Jeff Krause, is an excellent read. Jeff is a rare individual who has succeeded at Navy SEAL training, Army Ranger training AND US Army Special Forces (Green Beret) training. His experiences, recounted in this book available only from NavySEALS.com, are hilarious and enlightening. Enjoy and thank you very much for visiting NavySEALS.com. I hope that your experience was enjoyable, exceeded your expectations and that you will return to join our community as a subscriber.

Sincerely,

Mark Divine

US Navy SEAL

HELL WEEK!

Phase I of Navy SEAL Training is eight weeks long. The first three weeks are meant to tear down an individual physically. The goal is complete physical fatigue. The fourth week, affectionately known as “Hell Week”, is designed to rid the class of any who were on the verge of quitting by the end of the first three weeks. The final four weeks is an attempt to rebuild the individuals who stayed with the program through the first four weeks. Training during the final four weeks is designed to make the class physically stronger and harder.

Phase I for Class 123 began on a Monday in January of 1983. It began at 0400, as it did every day, with PT. This first PT consisted of the SEAL P.T. Qualification Test, again! We had taken that same test during boot camp to qualify for SEALs Training, but more recently we had done it once a week during pre-training. Everyone, with four notable exceptions, was ready for the test.

The four notable exceptions were four students from Kenya, Africa who showed up for that first day of Phase I training. The PT test brought out the fact that two of the Kenyans couldn't swim. There was no way those two could continue in BUD/S training.

The other two, Njenga and Kabui, managed to pass the swim with considerable difficulty, and were marginal, but the Commanding Officer of BUD/S decided to let them continue through training for as long as possible.

Njenga and Kabui would not only be with the class at graduation six months later, but they turned into some of the best swimmers in our class. They were not THE best, but they were solidly in the top half. That's pretty impressive considering their performance on the first PT test.

In Phase I one quickly learns that the instructors are looking for “motivation” both on an individual basis and as a class. We learned to sing all kinds of songs! When the going really got rough and a student started feeling sorry for himself, or his buddy started

feeling sorry for himself, he would start singing and the class would join in. We'd sing songs as a class to pick up everyone's spirits. This helped motivate everyone to keep going.



If the instructors saw an unmotivated class feeling sorry for itself they knew how to turn up the pressure to make things twice as bad as they already were. We either started singing or things got very very bad in a hurry. We found it to our advantage to act motivated even when we weren't. No matter how bad it got, we learned that things were only half as bad as they could be. That's enough to motivate almost anybody.

For the next six months we would double-time, as a class, everywhere we went. Double-time is a run faster than a trot but not as fast as a sprint. We double-timed to each meal, to each evolution, to everywhere we went.

We would greet every instructor, as a class, with the traditional, "Hoo-yah Instructor So-and-So" (whatever his name). Failure to do so, or a mix up in seniority of instructors, and the class would "get wet." As I mentioned earlier, every BUD/S class wants to stay dry for as long as possible every day. For winter BUD/S classes, such as Class 123, this I particularly important.

The words, "Sunny Southern California," go so well together that they conjure up visions of a tropical paradise. Sure, there are palm trees and the climate in San Diego is probably the best in the continental United States, but that does not mean that the air and water remain warm all year round. Of course, it never gets as cold as Michigan in January, but the temperature often is in the thirties or low forties at 0400 hours in January and February. The water temperature stabilizes in the low fifties. The constant ocean breeze, which is heavenly for most of the year, brings on uncontrollable shivers for the cold and wet. Even air temperatures in the fifties could be exceptionally cold when we were wet and the strong breeze blew right through us.

"To get wet," was to become cold and wet and shiver for as long as it took our clothes to dry out. There were only two possible sets of clothes to get wet in. One was

the navy swimming trunks. The other was the fatigue shirt, fatigue trousers, and combat boots. There was NEVER, a time when jackets were allowed.

Cold and wet is a tradition with the winter classes. It is inevitable. There is no way to avoid it. You WILL be cold and wet during BUD/S training. I expect that summer classes have their own nemesis, but for Class 123 the cold and wet was responsible for more



dropouts than any other single condition. Only those who wanted to be SEALs above all else were able to tolerate it.

The regimen during the first three weeks of Phase I followed, more or less, the following routine:

0400-0600 PHYSICAL TRAINING

Dawn is usually the coldest part of the day, so the program is designed to get the blood pumping with two hours of grueling PT and general harassment from the instructors. There was always a garden hose hooked up at the PT site which the instructors would use to hose us down as they walked through the ranks while we did PT. Everyone was thoroughly soaked every morning during PT.

0600-0730 BREAKFAST & CLEANUP

We changed into dry crisp inspection uniforms and spit shined jungle boots and we cleaned the barracks for morning inspection.

0730-0800 UNIFORM INSPECTION & BARRACKS INSPECTION

To flunk either inspection was to “get wet” again and probably stay that way for the rest of the day.

0800-0900 CLASS

First Aid or some other subject. This was a pleasant hour if we weren't wet.

0900-1100 PHYSICAL EVOLUTIONS

1100-1200 LUNCH

1200-1400 PHYSICAL EVOLUTIONS

Physical evolutions could be anything physically stressing. Common evolutions included long distance soft sand runs; a trip or two around the obstacle course; a two mile timed run; a two mile timed swim; surf passage; and, some type of pool training.

1400-1630 PHYSICAL EVOLUTIONS

More of the above. A description of these evolution follows this schedule.

1630-0400 LIBERTY for all non-duty section students. Those students on duty would spend all night at the BUD/S compound.

A "conditioning hike" was a long-distance soft sand run on the beach in class formation led by an instructor. The class would have to sing constantly to show the instructor that it was motivated. As we ran up and down the sand berm, mile after mile, we sang traditional BUD/S songs:

I want to be a SEAL Tem Ranger:

Live a life of sex and danger:

or C-130 rolling down strip:

SEAL team going on a one-way trip;

Stand-up, hook-up, shuffle to the door;

Jump right out, and you're off to war.

Everyone was expected to stay in formation and the formation was expected to keep up with the instructor. If an individual failed to keep up with the class formation, the instructors trailing the formation would take him somewhere away from the class to become part of the dreaded “goon squad”.

As a member of the goon squad one would still have to run, but only after getting wet and rolling in the sand, stuffing sand into his pants and down into his crotch, and massaging sand into his scalp to become a “sugar cookie”. The “sugar cookies” would then have to finish their sand run. They would finish well after the rest of the class and would often have no time to get cleaned up before the next evolution. It paid to keep up with the formation. During the first three weeks, there was usually a conditioning hike everyday. Sometimes the “hike” was in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, and sometimes right before we went home in the evening.



The obstacle course consisted of about fifteen different obstacles. We were required to run it as fast as possible. If an instructor thought someone wasn't putting maximum effort into the course, that person would have to get wet and start over.

There was always a timed obstacle course run each week. The penalty for failing to complete the course in the maximum time allowed was to receive a “deficiency chit.” If an individual received enough deficiency chits, it was cause to be dropped from training.

Each week, each member of the class would be timed on a two-mile soft sand run. The run was made in fatigues and combat boots. Again, failure to complete the run within the specified time limit resulted in a deficiency chit.

Each week each member of the class would be timed on a two-mile ocean swim (with fins). For these swims students were paired for safety. Students were never allowed more than six feet away from their swim buddy at any time. Failure of a swim

pair to complete the swim within the maximum allowed time, or if the swim pair separated by more than six feet, both students would receive chits.

Surf passage was an interesting physical evolution. Upon starting Phase I, our class was divided into “boat crews.” Each boat crew consisted of six or seven people and one IBS (Inflatable Boat, Small). The object of surf passage is for each boat crew to paddle out from the shore, through the surf zone, and back again. That sounds easy enough!



During January and February of 1983 the coast of southern California was affected by a severe storm. During the worst of it the surf in some areas reached ten and twelve feet measured on the backside of the waves. The faces of the breaking waves can sometimes be twice the height of the surf. Several piers were destroyed by the pounding surf. The surf at BUD/S averaged six to seven feet. Bulldozers had constructed twelve foot sounds of beach sand between the BUD/S compound and the ocean. The surf was booming! Near the beach the ground would shake when the huge breakers pounded the beach. Even from where we stood inside the BUD/S compound, we could hear the surf and see the white water splash over the berm. The big breakers were affectionately known as “Kahunas.”



We spent hour after hour, day after day, paddling out through the surf zone. Everyday, there were spectacular “wipe outs.” Sometimes boats were thrown onto other boats. Students thrown from their boats would be tumbled around and around in the white water and sometimes wonder if they would ever get back to the surface for a breath of air.

There was a hard and fast rule that during a wipe out each student was to hold onto his paddle. Invariably, someone would lose his during a wipe out. Some students had teeth knocked out, others had large gashes inflicted on their faces or elsewhere from free paddles.

The instructors were quick to capitalize on any situation which could be brought to bear on the psyche. The large surf was one of these situations. They would have the entire class stand silent in the compound for thirty minutes before surf passage so we could listen to the booming sound of the surf pounding the beach. The instructors enjoyed playing with our minds and they were good at it. Members of the class quit rather than face the surf again. Just when the rest of us thought we had mastered our fear of the big kahunas, the time came for class 123 to do “Rock Portage”.

For rock portage we would again paddle out through the surf zone, but this time, instead of coming straight back in to be slammed onto the nice sandy beach behind the BUD/S compound, we would paddle several hundred yards down the beach to a place where there was a large formation or rocks in lieu of the sand. The idea was to paddle in through the surf, which was still booming, and land on the rocks.

You don’t have to be an expert in occupational health and safety matters to recognize that this is a dangerous thing to do. Even the instructors recognized the potential for injury to students. To help avoid unnecessary injury, we were instructed to keep our bodies out from in-between the IBS and the rocks, “for our own safety.” They failed to tell us how to do that, however.



During the course of our rock portage, people were slammed into and on top of the rocks. Boats were slammed into and on top of people. The rocks were very slick and the waves breaking onto the rocks or withdrawing off of them tends to wash ones feet from under him. Then, while he is off balance, the next one hits. It’s total chaos! Utter confusion! Everyone got pretty cut up and, yes, we lost some people to injuries.

Surf passage and rock portage was just one of the daily evolutions. Pool evolutions were never any fun either. Besides being cold, we were always training. Training included interesting and useful activities like “drown-proofing”, breath holding, life saving, and panic control. When we did get a break from training the instructors would have us stand under cold showers.

The pool was outside, and so were the showers. We were in our swim trunks and the ever-present cold ocean breeze would blow right through us. The instructors would never let up on the mind games. We were always cold & wet.

During these first three weeks of Phase I, Class 123 lost a few people here and there. The majority of the class were still around to start Hell Week. The BUD/S Instructors, during these three weeks, were busy identifying which students would probably turn on, or abandon their team or buddy when the going got really tough. They had many ways of doing this of which I will mention one.

During physical training, while the class was doing high repetitions of some grueling exercise for over an hour, everyone would become thoroughly tired to the point of being in pain. In come the instructors with their mind games. They would pick out someone in the formation who was holding up



well despite the grueling exercise. They would gather around this individual and start shouting and hollering at him. They would tell the whole class in a loud firm voice that, “because Petty Officer so-an-so isn’t putting out and doing the exercise correctly, we are going to start all over again from the beginning.”

This simple, albeit sadistic, maneuver was very effective at bringing certain unwanted traits out into the light of day. Some guys would totally lose their cool. They would start screaming at the guy telling him they were going to beat his ass, etc. etc. The instructors just observed and made notes. They would increase their harassment of those individuals in the weeks to come and would, in most cases, succeed in getting them to quit. And they made quitting easy and honorable.

It seemed like every day the instructors would ask ten times, “OK, who wants to quit? Come on guys, you don’t have to put up with this shit! Just ring the bell and get back to a normal life.” As simple as this sounds, it was very effective. Hearing that all day, day after day, in the morning, before every evolution, after every evolution, while we were wet and cold and miserable, it took its toll.

Class 123 began Phase I with 86 students and ended the first three weeks with 70 students. Some were injured, some had quit, but there were ten, seven man boat crews ready to start “Hell Week”.

The WEEK



“Hell Week” refers to one week of BUD/S training (usually the fourth week of Phase I) when all students were pushed to their breaking points, both mentally and physically. This is a week during which the instructors are given carte blanche to deviate from the schedule as necessary to assure total demoralization of the class. This is a week when the majority of the class will quit or be forced out of training due to injuries. Going into Hell Week, all students are aware that managing to survive hell week does not guarantee graduation; twenty weeks of training remain afterward.

Hell Week begins at midnight on Sunday and ends at sometime on Friday afternoon. A student might get as much as five hours sleep during the whole week if his boat crew finishes a lot of evolutions first. He might not get any sleep if his boat crew continues to finish last during the evolutions. It pays to put out extra effort to win, or to cheat as much as possible without getting caught. Either way, fair and square or by cheating, it pays to come in first.

Everyone eats well during Hell Week. There is breakfast, lunch, supper and a midnight meal. The majority of the meals, though not all, are in the chow hall. This allows the students some time to warm-up a little, drink some hot coffee, drink lots of water to re-hydrate, and consume hot foot. Chow was a very motivating factor during Hell Week. We found ourselves trying to make it from one chow period to the next.

Class 123 began Hell Week in late January during one of the worst storms to hit southern California coast in many years. The temperature during the days reached the mid-40s. At night and in the early morning hours the temperature was in the high thirties.

It rained almost continually day and night and the ocean breeze was blowing hard. It appeared that Class 123 had virtually no hope of staying dry for the next week.

Large Army troop tents had been erected for the Hell Week students on the beach behind the BUD/S compound. Folding cots were assembled inside for “sleeping”. Everyone had been given a packing list of clothing to be brought in his sea-bag. We would live out of that sea-bag for the next week.

As we assembled in the large tents early Sunday evening during a blustery portion of the storm, we came to realize that everyone was thinking alike. We had all waterproofed all our extra clothes in plastic bags and stowed them in easy to get at places in our sea-bag. Without an exception we each had a “pogie-bait”, known as munchies in civilian life, stashed among our clothes. If a chance would come to put on dry clothes or grab some munchies, we’d be ready.



Inside the compound each boat crew’s IBS (Inflatable Boat, Small) was lined up ready to go. During the next week, everywhere we would go, to every evolution, to every meal, everywhere, we would carry our IBS on our heads.

At 1800 hours on Sunday we had a muster (took roll). Afterward we retired to our tents to await the start of Hell Week. Once in our tents we would not be allowed out until it was time to start.

During this waiting period, I went right to sleep. Some of the others couldn’t or didn’t want to sleep for anticipation of the dreaded ordeals to come.

If you’ve been following Class 123 through the first three weeks of training you already know that these instructors will not allow Hell Week to start with a whisper. Mind games would surely be the order of the day.

I remember waking up to a lot of whispering among the guys in my tent. “Someone’s moving outside, did you hear it?” “Yeah! There’s someone over on this side too!” “What time is it?” “15 minutes before midnight.” “Oh God, it’s getting ready

to start.” “I hear instructor Tullas saying something to another instructor.” All this in a crescendo of whispers.

Then, just about midnight, all holy hell broke loose. This was the start of Hell Week. The point referred to as “breakout”. Breakout came with a bang.

Instructors came into our tents firing M-60 Machine Guns (with blanks of course), throwing grenade simulators and smoke grenades, and yelling and screaming such pleasantries as, “Crawl you dickheads, get on your bellies and crawl into the compound now!! Crawl, “&&%\$! !&\$\$, crawl!!”

Eventually, through the smoke and the noise everyone crawled their way into the compound. We assembled before an instructor standing on the raised PT platform. We were given a few simple rules to follow for the rest of Hell Week. The rules, stated as one, said, “Do what you’re told, when your told, or you’ll be history.” Very simple, straightforward rules.

Right on cue, as the verbiage ended the rain began. Slowly at first, then increasing to a steady cold rain. Class 123 lost two students between breakout and the reading of the rules. They were direct victims of the psychological warfare involved in the training.

Upon returning to the tents we discovered that the instructors had gone through each of our sea-bags, pulled our clothes out and destroyed our waterproofed bags. Then we were forced to put all our clothes back into the sea-bag and carry them down to the beach and out neck deep into the pounding surf. It was impossible to maintain one’s footing with the white water rushing toward the shore or ripping out to meet the next breaker. It was cold, it was raining, the surf was pounding, everything in the sea-bag was thoroughly soaked, and we had the entire week of fun and games yet to look forward to.

For thirty minutes we were beat by the surf while the instructors complained to us about how cold and miserable it is outside. They were of course dressed in very warm clothing with waterproof coverings. They were sitting on the twelve-foot berm talking down to us in the water.

After a half hour in the cold pounding surf with wet sea-bags, one of the instructors yelled to us, “Hey guys, I’m hungry, I would really like a 3 Musketeers Bar. I know some of you people have buried candy all over this beach from Coronado to

Imperial Beach. If I get my candy bar within the next five minutes, I'll consider letting you guys get out of the water."

Fifteen more minutes go by. "Now come-on guys. I'm "f%\$ing hungry. I want my candy bar and I want it now! You guys will stay in there all "f%\$ing night! Do I make myself clear"

"How about M&Ms?", one student yelled.

"Plain or peanuts?", the instructor asked.

"Plain."

Long pause, "Okay!"

Out of the water charged a student. With water pouring out of his sea-bag he ran along the berm a little way, stopped, dug into the berm and pulled out two M&M packages. He ran to the instructor, handed him the M&Ms and ran back into the surf with the rest of us."

"Seeing as how M&Ms weren't my first choice", said the instructor with his mouth full of M&Ms, "you guys can just stay in there a while." A long while passed. How long I don't know, but, eventually we were allowed out to put our sea-bags on our cots inside the tent so they would be out of the rain. Then we were told to muster with out IBS.

"We are going to do night rock portage. Does anyone want to quit before you rack yourself up on those jagged rocks? Last chance! Okay, Let's go!"

Behind the compound we did our best to paddle out through the surf zone. Some boat crews were more successful than others. Then we paddled down to a point directly out from the rocks. I remember the paddle over there very well. It may sound dumb since this was not combat, just a rock portage, but one guy in my boat was saying the Lord's Prayer, and I was as nervous as the rest of the guys with the knowledge that there was a good chance that we were going to be hurt on this evolution. But there was also that excitement that comes with the anticipation of danger.

We reached our start position, but the boat crews were strung out for quite a ways due to some having had more difficulty making it through the surf. On the Instructors' command, white-flashing lights, two boats at a time would attempt a landing.

The instructors didn't wait for the stragglers to catch up. They gave the signal and two boats started for the rocks. As we watched, the first two boats disappeared behind a massive Kahuna. With the darkness, nothing else could be seen. Someone said, "Poor so and sos."

In the meantime, the last of the boat crews arrive. We were all bunched in a boat pool waiting for the signal to send two more boats in. Time passed. Everyone was talking back and forth wondering what had happened to the first two boats. Did they make it? Were they okay? How rough had it been?

More time passed. How much time I don't know but it seemed like a long time. Then, a red star-cluster flare exploded above us. That was the signal to abort the rock portage and land on the sandy beach to the right of the rocks. Everyone was wondering what had happened.

We managed to land, one way or another, on the beach. There we saw a couple of ambulances parked near the rocks with lights flashing. We could see people being loaded into ambulances on stretchers. We were too far away to identify any of the guys but we knew they were some of our classmates.

Eventually we got word that four people were injured and unable to continue BUD/S. Rock portage would be canceled for the rest of the boat crews for tonight.

This now left two boat crews not totally manned. Since this would happen often, boat crews were shuffled around, an IBS was removed and now nine crews would continue into Hell Week. And this first night was still young.

Later we ended up at the Naval Amphibious Base, at the steel piers. Class 123 got into the water and treaded water while the instructors relaxed and watched us. Eventually, they had us remove our pants and inflate them the way we were taught in boot camp during ocean survival training. Then they relaxed and watched some more. This was not a difficult exercise but one guy lost his grip on his pants and they sank to the bottom. The water was black, oily, sickly looking, and probably 20 feet deep. His pants were gone, forever, and he knew it.

This guy did well. He treaded water until the instructors said it was time to get out of the water. Everyone climbed onto the pier, including the poor guy who was naked from the waist down.

The question eventually was raised. “Where the hell are your pants, son?”

“I lost them, sir.”

“You lost them?! You lost them!! You lost them in that shitty looking water?! Everyone back into the water, except for you with the rosy cheeks. You lay right here on this metal pier. And take your shirt off too.”

So while this poor kid is laying spread eagle and stark naked on that very, very cold steel pier, the rest of the class was in the water diving, trying to find the kids pants. Of course we had no luck but we kept trying until an instructor brought another pair of the kid’s pants from his sea-bag. Those pants were very wet and cold when they were delivered.

Dawn came. Breakfast came. We started a new day packed with the same kind of physically uncomfortable emotionally draining, and mentally abusive activities. I obviously can’t relate all of the experiences during Hell week but there are a few that stand out in my mind as worthy of print.

The first full night, Monday night, was notable for the number of people who quit. We had been doing some swimming back and forth along the shore and were now sitting neck deep in San Diego Bay. Three of the instructors were sitting by their pick-up truck watching us. It was cold! Everyone had uncontrollable shakes. The entire class was lined up sitting side by side and we were chilled to the bone.

I heard one guy say to another, “What rate are you?”

“I’m a yeoman!”

“A yeoman?! What are you doing here? You could be working in a nice warm office: with women!”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

As I looked at him I could tell he was thinking about it. Then he stood up and went running up to the instructors and quit. There must have been a lot of others thinking about quitting but didn’t want to be the first. As soon as this first guy started running up to the instructors, five others got up and followed him.

The instructors were all smiles. They wrapped the guys in warm blankets, got them each a cup of hot coffee, some jelly donuts, and sat them down where all of us

could see and envy them. That hot coffee looked good!! It was all mind control now. I can't begin to convey how cold it was in that water. The uncontrollable shakes are an agony in their own right. The instructors knew exactly what they were doing. They let us sit right there.

Twelve more people quit during that cold soak. Not all at once. One or two would go ashore. A little later three or four would get up and wander up to the instructors. Eighteen people during one small part of one evening. The instructors didn't have enough blankets and coffee for everyone. They kept apologizing to the guys who quit, and shuttled them back to BUD/S compound to ring the bell and get a hot shower. The instructors were so happy that we got to stay out of the water for about the next five or six hours.

On another occasion, during one of our boat crew evolutions, my boat crew was supposed to be paddling to a point near North Island Naval Air Station. It was dark so we figured we'd try cheating. We got into shallow water, jumped in, and started pulling out boat along. One of the guys yelled, "Hey, where's Woody?" Woody was our coxswain. We looked up on the beach and saw him running toward the city of Coronado. We thought, "Where the hell is he going?" We thought he might be coming back so we waited a while. Finally we realized he wasn't coming back.

We found out later that he had decided to quit and when we reached that spot on the beach, he was only two blocks from his girlfriend's apartment. So he spent the night in blissful splendor and then drove to BUD/S the following morning and officially quit. That sure beats coffee and donuts!

One Hell Week evolution is known by several names: Camp Swampy; The Mud Flats; The Sloughs. All these names refer to a place along the Mexico border where the Tijuana River empties into the Pacific. The river has deposited mud and sewage from the city of Tijuana into a perfect playpen for the BUD/S instructors. We would spend most of one day and an entire night at the mud flats.

We started this evolution at the BUD/S compound, then carried our IBS down the beach to the Tijuana River. That is about seven or eight miles of walking. We had a

strong head wind that kept trying to blow the IBS off our heads for the entire walk. And, of course, it's a race! The constant wind, and amazing lack of rain, dried our clothes, which was nice. But wrestling with the IBS against the wind while racing through soft sand was not at all pleasant.

Eventually, we reached the mud flats. And of course once the instructors saw that our clothes had dried off we had to go "cool off", or "get a bottom sample." We got wet again.

Finally we got to play in the mud. We had to roll in the mud and stuff mud into each others clothes. We spent hours that afternoon having various kinds of races through the mud, boat crew against boat crew, or just wallowing in the mud until we were all entirely covered with mud and chilled again to the bone. Again the uncontrollable shakes came upon Class 123 and people began to quit.



Everyone in the class tried to motivate the others. I heard a story about one class who stood in a circle, holding hands and singing that old gospel hymn, We Shall Overcome. That became that class' motivation. Together they would endure.

Night came upon the mud flats. The temperature fell. We were given box lunches to eat. Each box contained a sandwich, bag of chips, fruit, carrots and a canned drink. We were allowed to sit waist deep in the mud to eat our dinner. It is important to note that we were COMPLETELY covered with mud. Our hair, our faces, our hands, every part of our body was covered with mud.

To eat a box lunch under those conditions takes a lot of class. I wiped the mud away from my mouth as well as I could, and got my fingers as clean as was reasonably possible. Then I dug in the only way possible. I placed the food in my mouth, chewed a couple of times, and swallowed. I know I ate a lot of mud that day but some things just can't be helped.

After I had scarfed my meal I took the time to look around at my classmates. Perhaps one had to be there, but I found it funny to watch these guys eat. All I could see

of them was the whites of their eyeballs and the whites of their teeth when they opened their mouths.

With our meals we also received our new instructors for the evening. To make the prospects of a fun evening even more promising, Chief Tullas and his group would be our instructors for the night. There are some sets of instructors who are a lot more mellow than others. Tullas and his group were on the other end of the mellow spectrum. And they were keyed up to the max!

To make the evening complete, as night arrived it started raining again. In fact, it started pouring. Visibility was reduced to about 100 feet or so. It was coming down hard. And it was cold!

We played some “stealth movement” games in the mud flats. We would crawl from one side of mud flats to the other, from bush to bush, from ditch to ditch. Since we were right on the border we would occasionally bump into some illegal aliens sneaking into the U.S. by night. We must have looked pretty awful to them because many of them were startled beyond description. It’s probably a wonder that no one has ever been shot!

Tullas and company made sure we spent much time standing neck deep in water. No one could control the shakes any longer and the lack of sleep was having its effects. People had to help others walk to the water. Twenty-year-old kids walked like they were 95+ years old, bent over and barely moving. And it was still raining.

Later, our class was allowed to sit in some small bleachers put there in the flats for our use. The instructors told us that as long as someone from the class could tell them a funny story they would let us stay out of the water. The instructors had a large bonfire going just far enough away from the bleachers so none of the warmth could reach the students. When a student told a story he could stand near the fire to tell it.

When it is cold outside and one’s clothes are wet and he stands near a hot fire, the clothes have a tendency to steam. Now, when the instructors wanted to, they yelled out, “Fire! Fire! Student on Fire! Everyone back into the water!”

At that point the class would walk slowly toward the water. The thought of even touching it sent quivers through my body. We had to go in up to our necks. Everyone helped everyone else in. We tried to say something which would motivate our buddies

while our teeth were in an uncontrollable chatter. Looking around, all that can be seen are heads.

The instructors would call out, “On the count of three, I want to see all the heads disappear for five seconds and if anyone is slow, we’ll do it until we get it right! One! Two! Three!” Everyone submerged, counted to five thousand, and surfaced. But of course we were still playing mind games. The instructor would call out someone’s name for messing up and we would do it again. This could continue for a half hour before we were allowed into the bleachers again.

We had more stories and more fire drills. We had hot soup cooked over the bonfire that night, and more stories and more fire drills. And the rain kept pouring down. And it was cold.

Sometime around two in the morning we were allowed to go to sleep. That is, each boat crew could lay under their IBS, out of the rain. On the ground, which was wet, in our wet clothes, each member of the boat crew lays on top of the other, or huddles “nuts to buns” trying to draw warmth from each other. As cold as we were, it felt good to be out of the rain. But sleep? Not hardly!



One member of each boat crew had to run around our little camp yelling as he ran, “It’s hell week at Camp Swampy and all is well! It’s hell week at Camp Swampy and all is well!”, over and over again. One trip around the camp would take a maximum of one minute. After one trip around, he would have to wake a member of another boat crew.

If the instructors saw no one running around yelling, everyone had to get back in the water and take a bottom sample.

Finally, morning came. The rain had stopped. There was frost everywhere. It was COLD. Everyone was praying for the sun to come up fast and hot.

After a few more trips into the mud and a healthy swim in the ocean we were off on our long trip back to the compound. Camp Swampy had claimed some of our classmates! We had a few less boat crews. But for the rest of us, it was one more step

toward finishing Hell Week. We were beginning to understand the old SEALs adage. “The only easy day was yesterday.”

During the days and nights to follow, we would spend hours and hours paddling our IBSs from point to point, racing the other boat crews, of course.

Out of my original boat crew of seven, there were only three of us left. We merged with another boat crew which had an ensign for a coxswain.

Our new coxswain had been born and raised in Poland. He spoke with a very strong broken accent. His last name began with an S and had about 27 other letters in it. It was truly one of the classic alphabet soup names of the world. The instructors never called him by his name. They always referred to him as “The Commie.” “Hey, Commie, you and your boat crew come here!”

The commie was the nicest person to talk to in a non-competitive situation, but when competing in an evolution or race, that guy could swear like the entire American navy. I believe he received high marks in “Advanced Vulgarity I” at the University of Warsaw. I don’t want to belabor the point, but this guy was truly remarkable when it came to swearing! And then, the competition was over, he would make a Jeckyl and Hyde transition back to the nicest guy you would ever want to talk to. The other boat crews used to joke about it. They said they always knew where our boat was just by listening.

Lack of sleep, along with the physical evolutions was taking its toll on everyone. During some of the long evening paddles, guys would begin to hallucinate. They’d see Big Macs and Whoppers on the shore or in the sky. Some would start talking to themselves. Others would be paddling one minute and then just keel over into the water...SPLASH! They would have fallen asleep on the side of the little rubber boat. Some would fall in, wake up, get back in to the boat and then, five minutes later, fall back in again. I can tell you that as cold as we were, they were not doing it on purpose.

Mr. S, the commie, sat in the stern of the boat, steering. He once fell asleep at the rudder. But rather than falling forward, he fell over backward, and all we saw before he disappeared into the water were his feet going backward, up and over.

Our bowel movements were becoming really messed up. Usually, when someone had to go, he’d try to get into the water first. Sometimes, however, a guy would figure he

was just going to fart, but out would come the contents of his intestines. Shit all over. We were all so tired that we might laugh a little and then go back to paddling. The guy who had the accident would try to clean himself. This happened more than once. Sometimes it would be a real mess, but no one ever gave it more than a chuckle and then just kept paddling. Somehow it never seemed very important.

Another traditional evolution, toward the end of Hell Week, takes place at the outdoor pool on the Naval Amphibious Base. Late at night, and during the early morning hours, the Hell Week class holds a water evolution in the pool naked. I mean bar-assed naked.

At the pool, the water was warmer than the air, so everyone wanted into the water. Also the cold wind was blowing very hard on our evening at the pool. Having anything besides our hands out of the water was intolerable.

We played water polo and other games, half the class against the other. First team to 5 wins. The price for losing? A trip to the decontamination station. The losers would have to get out of the water and stand under the outdoor showers for five minutes with only the cold water on. Then back into the water for another game. Believe me, the games got violent!

We were told to bring an IBS into the pool. Only one IBS. Then we had to fit the entire class into the one IBS. At that time we had about 35 people in the class. In packing thirty-five people into an IBS, the guys on the bottom have the worst. That's not because of the weight but because, as the majority of the class gets in, the IBS takes on water. It won't sink, but the guys on the very bottom of the pile soon find their heads underwater. They start kicking and doing whatever it takes to get air. This causes the stack of bodies to go tumbling. Of course, then we had to do it again and again until we could finally do it, for at least a couple of seconds.

One other item of interest about this pool evolution. Every Hell Week class does basically the same thing. Now, the women's barracks is located right next to the pool so that the upper floors look right down into the pool. The girls always know when a class is going through Hell Week and many of them gather on the upper floor balconies, drinking beer and yelling at the BUD/S students in the pool below.

Knowing that the girls are watching has a tendency to pick up the spirits of some of the guys while others couldn't give a damn. Remember what I said about bowel control? Yes sir! More than one set of intestines had been emptied into that pool. Luckily for our class, the pieces were big enough to be scooped out so the games could continue.

Remember Njenga and Kabui from Kenya, Africa? They were from a tropical climate and the wet and cold was absolutely pure hell for them. Over and over they just kept saying in their broken English, "It doesn't *%&%ing matter anymore!" Before, during and after each evolution they would say it.



There is nothing intrinsically funny about their statement. It was just normal. But to hear them say it in their own way was absolutely hysterical and could always bring a smile to my face.

Our class almost adopted that expression as its class motto. I wish we would have because I'll never forget them saying it covered in mud, neck deep in water, bare assed naked standing under a cold shower, or in any of the other wonderful situations we managed to endure. "It just doesn't *&%*ing matter anymore!"

Some other items about Hell week need to be mentioned, so I'll address them here.

One winter class has the nickname "The Class That Never Was" because they graduated only six (6) guys. Their plaque can be seen along with all the others hanging on the quarterdeck at the BUD/S compound. A lot of class pictures from the fifties and sixties which hang there also show classes that small.

There used to be, until the late 60s or early 70s, a West Coast and an East Coast BUD/S. The West coast BUD/S was in Coronado and the East coast BUD/S was in

Norfolk, Virginia. Naturally, Norfolk is much colder than Coronado. Try to imagine being cold and wet there!

I'll relate one story I was told about a winter class in Norfolk. The class was taken to a golf course, to one of the water hazard ponds. It was covered with ice. They had to break holes in the ice and swim down and pick up golf balls from the bottom. Although I cannot verify the story, I can believe it.

One might get the idea from reading this that student safety is not taken into account. I want to assure you that, as a general rule, it is. Almost every evening at BUD/S each student is checked by a full fledged, bonified, medical doctor. He determines whether a student continues Hell Week or not. The doctor decides, not the student!

Also, as I mentioned earlier about guys falling asleep while paddling the IBS, one might suspect that drowning was a probable, or at least possible event. During those evolutions, each student is required to wear a KA-POC life jacket. I do not believe that it would be possible to drown while wearing one of those jackets even if one made a deliberate effort to do so.

Eventually, Friday afternoon rolled around. We were a pretty ragged group by that time. Naturally the instructors were not through with their psychological warfare. They told us that they were disgusted with our attitudes and that they were going to take advantage of their right to make us continue our Hell Week training until Saturday afternoon for sure and possibly until Sunday evening if our attitudes didn't improve! In the background I could hear, "It just doesn't *&\$\$ing matter anymore!"

Our scalps hurt like hell to touch from carrying our IBS on our heads all week long. For a week after Hell Week, every time we combed our hair or touched our scalp, dead skin would fall off, sometimes in very large patches and the scalp remained painful to the touch. The thoughts of having to place the IBS on it again, to move it another foot, was horrible. But everyone was prepared to do it



if we had to. Perhaps that's the one overriding lesson in Hell Week, that you can always do a lot more than you ever thought possible.

Then, with everyone preparing himself mentally for another day or two of this misery, the instructors announced, "Class 123, you are secured from Hell Week!"

We didn't have to carry the boat any farther than the BUD/S compound to put it away. Everyone was all smiles, patting each other on the back, knowing that it was all over now. And it had stopped raining too.

Class 123 started Hell Week with seventy guys. Thirty-three would continue SEALs Training. Total sleep for my boat crew was five hours, and that's because Mr. S, the commie, and we won a lot of races which allowed us a little time to sleep before the other crews arrived.

After stowing our IBS and picking up our sea-bags we were allowed to get cleaned up, and get one more medical check-up, and receive instructions for the weekend, (medical instructions), and then go home for the weekend. Home sweet home until Monday morning. It was really over!

PHASE I, WEEKS 5 THROUGH 8

As I mentioned earlier, the weeks leading up to and including Hell Week were designed to tear the students down physically. The weeks following Hell Week, through graduation, were designed to build the students up. The worst was over but we were all aware that any one of us could be taken out of training for failing to perform during the remainder of Phase I.

For the next four weeks we continued to have regular four mile time runs, two mile timed swims, timed obstacle course runs and daily 'conditioning hikes'. Cold and wet remained a daily constant. We spent more time in pool training evolutions during this period which included life saving and drown proofing. In these we received both instruction and practical exercise.

On the compound we received classroom instruction on such topics as Red Cross first aid, hydrographic surveys and atmosphere (look it up). The term "classroom instruction" conjures up the picture of a nice warm dry classroom environment. Our

classroom instruction could easily have taken place in such an environment if the instructors had so desired. But this was BUD/S training.



Before class we would have to take a bottom sample so that we would be nice and wet in the classroom. All windows and doors were opened to allow the cold ocean breeze to blow in. We would try to take written notes but everything would become a soggy mess very quickly. They managed to make even classroom instruction very miserable. Nobody complained. It was just life at BUD/S.

Occasionally, during class, someone would fall asleep. Each instructor had his own methods of punishment. The most creative, and I believe the most effective, was this: The guy asleep is allowed to sleep undisturbed while the rest of the class takes a bottom sample. In this way the guy responsible for the punishment is the only one not punished by the instructors. Peer pressure usually catches up with the offender and tends to keep others awake.

I have been surprised by all the stories I've heard from people about "drown proofing" at BUD/S training. Usually, I've discovered that the person telling the story has heard it from a friend who heard it from a friend who had a friend who knew someone who went through BUD/S training and didn't quite make it through to graduation. Needless to say the stories were usually blown way out of proportion.

For example, one story went like this: "Yeah, I hear that in SEAL Training they take you fifteen miles out in the ocean, drop off the class, and come back two days later to pick them up. In the mean time they must tread water and fight off sharks." Give me a break!!! This may only be untrue because the instructors can't get permission to do it, but it is nonetheless untrue!

Drown proofing at BUD/S can be very difficult for someone who doesn't have a strong swimming background, but for the average college or high school surfer type individual, the evolution is relatively easy. It all boils down to how much experience one has in the water and how relaxed he is in the water.

Drown proofing at BUD/S consists of swimming three simple laps across the pool and back. During the first lap, your hands are tied behind your back. During the second lap, your feet are tied together and your hands are free. For the third lap, both your hands and feet are bound, but before you are allowed to begin your



lap, you are placed in the deep end of the pool where you are required to “bob” a minimum of fifteen times. Only when the instructor gives the signal can you start your lap.

“Bobbing” is a maneuver where you get a bite of air at the surface and then allow your body to submerge. With a slight kick you surface just long enough to get another quick bite of air and submerge again. A student would fail if he panics at anytime or if he would stay on the surface to breath before resubmerging. A “bite of air” is actually quite a descriptive term in this context.

We were taught techniques of drown-proofing during the prior weeks of pool evolutions. We were also given time to practice and encouraged to practice on our own time during the weekends. We knew that when it came time to be tested the pressure would be on because the tests were graded PASS/FAIL and there were no retests.

Regardless of how well a student had mastered bobbing and drown-proofing prior to the test, only one performance would determine whether he continued in the program. He could not allow himself to mess up. To panic was to be dismissed from training. If an instructor thinks he sees any signs of panic in the student’s movements, he can keep him bobbing for as long as he wants. Fifteen bobs is simply the minimum. If the instructors don’t like a student and he is a little weak in the water, this is one evolution where they can cut him out of the program.

There were a number of other PASS/FAIL tests at the end of Phase I of which I will mention only a few. Each student is required to pass a Red Cross life saving course given by the instructors. This may seem like a relatively simple evolution if one forgets that we are talking about BUD/S training. The joke around BUD/S is that the “life-Saving” refers to saving your own life during the course. This is somewhat exaggerated

of course, but, depending on ones water experience, this could be easy or an exit from the program.

During life saving testing, the pool was divided into four sections to accommodate four different tests being administered at the same time. I remember standing in line waiting for my turn to take one of the tests. At this station, a student was required to tread water while looking straight ahead. No peaking around was allowed. An instructor would swim up behind the student, put a chokehold on him and pull him to the bottom of the pool. The student was supposed to escape using a specific method practiced previously. Usually, however, the biggest and strongest instructors were chosen to apply the chokes.

I was in line waiting my turn with one student ahead of me. All the instructors disliked this particular student because of his “big mouth” and his “attitude”. Instructor Tullas walked up to him just before his turn chewing on a big wad of tobacco. Tullas looked him straight in the eyes and with a big smile said, “Son, how’s it feel to know you’re going to drown in the next couple of minutes?”

After the kid got into the water Tullas stood next to me and said, “Krause, let me tell you the secret of this maneuver. Keep your chin down to your chest. Don’t let that big “&%&!!\$& get a bear paw around your neck. Oh! Look at that! Didn’t keep his chin down! Oh, well. Heh, heh.” Then Tullas walked off.

I watched the instructor bring the kid to the surface and hand him like a limp noodle to the men above. They pumped his stomach on the side of the pool. The kid had sure swallowed a lot of pool water. Now it was my turn. I got into the pool, turned my back to the instructors and started treading water. I remember glancing up at the other guys standing in line waiting their turn. I thought I could almost tell by their expressions what might be going on behind me.

Then, bam! I hadn’t kept my chin down. Worse than that, I was exhaling when he took me under. We were on the bottom. I tried “the move” but he was solid on my neck. I tried instinctively to flip him. No way. Time was running out. I looked in front of me and to both sides and spotted the nearest wall of the pool and swam for it. I reached it and pulled my head out of the water. The instructor was still on my back, still

choking me. I tried for a breath of air but the instructor just choked harder so I was more gagging than breathing.

The class was yelling encouragement. “Take him down to the bottom Krause and put it to him.”, and, “Take him down Krause!”

I was thinking to myself, “If you think I’m going to let go of this wall you’re crazy.” Then the instructor whispered in my ear, “Go ahead, take me back down. I’ll let you work “the move” on me!” There was nothing else to do but trust him, so I did. He let me work it and bring him to the surface. For that, I silently thanked God.

One student from Hawaii was a big surfer and was excellent in the water. He let the instructor take him to the bottom and then he just sat there. He knew he could hold his breath longer than the instructor, so he just waited. Finally he could feel the instructor’s grip loosen around his throat so he worked his move and ever so slowly brought the struggling instructor to the surface. He made sure the instructor would be gagging and choking when he reached the surface. The class loved it!

During one of the other tests, one of the instructors somehow ended up sitting on the shoulders of one of the students. The kid’s head was about two feet underwater and he was struggling for air. But the instructor sitting on his shoulders wasn’t about to get off. He was riding this kid like a bronco with one arm waving in the air and yelling, “Yea ha! Ride ‘em cowboy!”

Inspector Tullas said, “Lookie there! Miller’s got himself a real live one. Ride him, Miller. Don’t let him get away.” “Yee Ha!”

I couldn’t help but feel sorry for the poor kid but I couldn’t help but laugh. The sight of the instructor riding around the pool in circles yelling, “Yee ha!” was quite hilarious at the time. I think they had to pump that kid’s stomach too.

One of the final tests during this time was the underwater breath-hold. You start on one side of the pool. On the instructor’s command, you do a forward flip into the water, swim underwater to touch the far wall and then swim back again without surfacing. This is usually not a problem for anyone.

One kid, upon flipping into the pool, lost his UDT swimming trunks. He swam the evolution and climbed out of the pool, as required, stark naked. The instructors got a big kick out of that. They told him that he had cheated because he was required to do the

swim with trunks on. They made him do it again, with trunks on, which was more of a joke than to see if he could do it. [END of Hell Week Section from “You Want Us to Do WHAT?” by Jeff Kraus. The entire manuscript is definitely worth a read – you can find it at: http://www.navyseals.com/community/store/kraus_book.cfm

US Navy SEAL training is very demanding – but it is only one of the US Military’s elite training schools for Special Operations warriors. The Army Special Forces program is called the “Q” course, and US Army Ranger program is called Ranger School. The Marine Recon group has a program for Recon trainees in Coronado, Ca. just across the street from BUD/s as well. The US Air Force ParaRescue and Combat Controllers also have a very in-depth and rigorous training program. All of these will be the subject of future ebooks by NavySEALs.com. You can learn more about these programs, and other aspects of the Special Operations – in the NavySEALs.com forums: http://www.navyseals.com/community/store/kraus_book.cfm

Thank you for all of your support and interest in the US Navy SEALs and NavySEALs.com. The troops really appreciate support from the public - and they deserve it for serving our great country and risking their lives so that we can go about our business.

Take care and God Bless.

Mark Divine

NavySEALs.com Founder & Editor