

Feature OBIT

Side-by-Side in the Shadows of the Sea

Hank Weldon , Last of the original World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS)Maritime Unit Operative-Swimmers – whom were the First Americans to Use and Pass SCUBA and Skin-diving Skills via Navy UDT to all American Frogmen; passes away at 95

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Henry Thomas 'Hank' Weldon, formerly a World War II era Specialist (X) First-Class petty officer U. S. Navy & Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Maritime Unit (MU) Special Maritime Group-A (SMG-A) Operative-Swimmers (OS). Has passed away earlier this month at 95 years old. Weldon served his wartime duty in a very unique capacity like all Navy "Specialists" would do. It was a rating created for wartime (job description i.e. Boatswain, torpedo man etc.) allowing for jobs that were needed in wartime that did not fall within the established U.S. Navy Structure. The Specialist X rating covered a dozen or more qualifications two of them were "Intelligence" and "Strategic Services". Weldon would uniquely and strategically serve out his duty using both, in a way that would change the course of modern warfare forever:

Weldon was "the last of the first" of the World War II wartime agency Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Maritime Unit (MU) Special Maritime Group-A (SMG-A) Operative-Swimmers (OS). The OSS was the United States' first national clandestine espionage and intelligence service during World War II. This was the first ever foray sending secret agents into harm's way using skin-diving, masks and swim fins, self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA) and limpet mines as secret Operative swimmers (OSS title for frogmen) whose skills and techniques were brought from civilian disciplines into the OSS, pooled and refined into a fighting concept then deployed in warfare behind the lines, the first organized SECRET joint maritime special operations in U.S. History forged primarily in the surf and sands on Southern California beaches of Santa Monica Bay, Catalina Island, Orange and North San Diego County.

Later after the war OSS ways and practices would be largely the influence would be reorganized as today's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

In the Post war Weldon was a noted Police officer with LAPD and family man with many successes for all

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his very special 95 years. But he is best remembered how he was the last survivor of his OSS Maritime fellows whose contribution was to help develop and pass on a training toughness and tradecraft of watermanship into of combat swimming which all American frogmen of today us that he is best remembered . For the OSS Maritime was the first of that style of fighting man we today know as (Navy SEALs) that began with Weldon’s fellows in the wartime OSS Maritime.

The OSS operated behind-the-lines in every wartime theater, in a variety of valiant, valorous and glorious if not "weird and wonderful, while mostly unconventional" ahead of their time precepts during the war. One of them was to utilize the world’s maritime environments - ocean, river, sea gulf littoral tributary, lagoon, river estuary, tidal basin, flood channel, stream brook and sewer pipe to insure the OSS’s “Operative,” as it referred to its secret-agents, would be able to navigate, transit in, on or under to either observe or attack targets.

The in water and underwater aspects of these unique elite trained men is the where Hank Weldon comes in. As they were called “Operative-Swimmers” or just “swimmers,” the OSS Operative Swimmer like Hank Weldon was a one of a kind American original take on an ancient tradition of waterborne agents to prevent war or if necessary prosecute it. OSS Operative Swimmers were developed to operate behind the lines using a special ocean waterman’s tradecraft via a variety small craft and SCUBA to carry out their tasks.

Frogmen is the classic term that one thinks of when reading of a operative swimmer whether out of a James Bond like novel or film or the exploits of the Italian or British frogmen of the Second World War. Such legend and facts led to the post war era popularizing exploits of mythical American Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) frogmen in World War II and the Korean war in several well known book, cinema and TV dramatizations as the cultural phenomenon of SCUBA diving that would be marketed to the public on these foggy myths and concepts in part by 1950’s TV Series like the “Sea Hunt,” (a show conceived by a fellow OSS Operative Swimmer to Weldon but that’s another story,...) where Navy UDT frogmen were spotlighted and spring boarded into the American historical and cultural psyche

Hank Weldon and the OSS Operative Swimmers he was part of gave birth to and were in fact America’s first Frogmen and gave the skills to the Navy UDT men to start the myth, while insuring OSS would remain a hushed-hush if ever quietly mentioned and unknown to American history and society. Contrary to the frogman myth, the OSS Maritime Operative Swimmers were actually a very home grown and original group unknown to many separate and simultaneous US and British/Canadian concepts relying on a pre war pursuit unique to Southern California that paralleled the Italian, German and Japanese frogman efforts in the war. Though the Italians were the first to use combat swimmers and swimmer delivery vehicles (SDV’s) known as *Maiale* or “Pigs” in the war; and the Japanese and Germans made valiant strides; it was the American

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OSS Maritime Unit working alongside the British and Canadians in joint efforts as operative swimmers who fully perfected, modernized and executed the combat swimmer/ “frogman” skills, which is thus a very misunderstood historical milestone. These skills were perfected on the beaches and coastal areas of Santa Monica Bay, in the waters of Santa Catalina Island (Catalina) and the other channel islands off Southern California.

In today’s fast wars and small conflicts, leaders may call upon the “Frogman” or Navy SEAL to superhumanly do the impossible. But in 1941, only the leadership of the OSS, then the COI, not the other services, knew of these potential capabilities and was thinking of combat swimmers as more than science fiction and how they might create the what would become the frogman of the future. Where did they get that concept and abilities to do so? In World War 2, it all came through OSS Maritime.

Hank Weldon was “Maritime’s” last of these first trained U.S. combat swimmers. Calling on “Frogmen” or Navy SEALs may sound like a familiar no brainer option for today’s fast paced special operations, but during World War 2, the OSS like science fiction seemed farfetched if not foolhardy to many American combat leaders of the era’s conventional military forces.

America’s first frogman was in fact a Navy Petty Officer Gunners mate and Hard Hat Diver who recruited under OSS was the first trained on rebreather-SCUBA and while wearing a green colored British Dunlop Dry suit given as the first OSS Operative Swimmer become Hank rebreather-SCUBA instructors and a fellow Operative -Swimmer. It was not the father of Navy UDT, Admiral Draper Kaufman who commented while observing OSS underwater swimming gear, “swimming is not one of my favorite things.”

However it was then Col. William Joseph 'Wild-Bill' Donovan, the man who conceived and was Director of OSS from start to finish had the " Maritime” aspects of his espionage outfit squarely in his forward thinking eyes, as a key to help ease the pain for winning the war. From day one of Donovan’s involvement, the OSS at large recruited from all branches and back grounds to whatever the particular mission might be. From , Army, Army Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy and civilian to make those selected a uncommon tool for wining at war. When it came to the answers to the Maritime problem Hank Weldon and his fellows were a product of this concept, selected for there personal experience and capabilities. By Presidential decree and Commandants of the Coast Guard and Marine Corps assistance OSS maritime became key toward Maritme gaining personnel to billet the unit and be trained for special perations under combat arms. The OSS Maritimes leader was a decorated British Naval commander in small boat tactics and was part of the era lend-lease quid-pro-quo, whereby of Espionage and clandestine commando training the Brits provided as collateral as allies for all the gear the USA was leasing them for battle .

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Having the key element of two national services to assist them in sailing and small unit combat tactics Thus the OSS "Maritime Section" later 'Maritime Unit' were a form of combat, which the OSS quietly conceived, designed and trained for in the U.S. and forward areas secretly . .

They would clandestinely conduct behind-the-lines espionage and intelligence gathering and sabotage operations, amidst the largesse of the leaders and battles immortalized in its histories while they did their jobs with in most cases only the OSS or theater commander knowing they were there.

Today the Army Special Forces, Marine Corps Raiders, Coastguard Special Operations, Naval Special Warfare branches and all clandestine intelligence organizations who carry forth maritime and underwater oriented combat swimming commando "frogman" missions, do so as if they have always done so. When there was that time when these units were becoming who they are today and for reasons of myth and mystery but more importantly secrecy, as to how and why they could be operating from the water; all these groups can trace their heritage right back to OSS and its Maritime Section and Maritime Units .

Weldon and the OSS Maritime structure went from zero-to warp speed in a very short period, creating a modern recognizable style of warfare as well as adapting and employing such skills on the battle front and behind the lines. Remember US and OSS involvement was only 3 years and 8 months from Pearl Harbor to the Japanese Surrender on VJ day 1945 . This makes it difficult for the modern Special Operations branches to effectively pinpoint " how when and where the American " frogman" as they are all classically referred to and honored as, came to be.

With the war ending and the overall OSS mission (and its "how, where did they come and how did they do that ?") rarely if at all understood by its conventional civilian and military leaders, the OSS, its concepts, its equipment , its skills , its methods and its men were disbanded and remained classified for nearly 50 years ! Capabilities and willing men, like Hank Weldon, who continued to volunteer their service for the country, submerged themselves into a labyrinth of sacred tradecraft, honor and elite capability, allowing future generations to navigate the unpredictably of uncharted seas of modern small unit warfare from all bodies of water. How they did so and who those who first were can be traced back to OSS Maritime and its Operative Swimmers like Hank Weldon. He was one of their first, and the one who became the last living Operative-Swimmer to Navy Frogman link to these most daring and harrowing , adventurous forms of warfare mankind would devise and implement.

However during World War II when the OSS Maritime Unit commenced operations and was searching for a Hank Weldon from across America, the other services had not yet conceived of the type abilities and adaptations for the style of warfare the OSS Maritime "Operative -Swimmer", as they

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were called and developed into. Many of the volunteers for this program had no idea what they were about to get into including Hank Weldon.

Henry Thomas “Hank” Weldon was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma to parents, Henry Cole and Alice Weldon, on May 29 1923. Weldon was a swim team member and pool lifeguard in high school. Graduating in June of 1942, he became an offensive lineman for Villanova University's varsity for two semesters and then as an acting Chief Petty Officer for his Naval Cadet unit at Bainbridge Maryland as part of the US Navy wartime V-12 program, designed to fast track candidates for junior officer training. During training, Weldon answered a call for volunteer swimmers. Military uniformed men and civilians in suits took him to a pool, where he was told to dive underwater and lift a manhole cover to the surface and pool deck. Weldon completed the exercise and was then accepted into a new world that was the beginning of what would be his journey into OSS Maritime Section and later Maritime Unit (MU), Operative-Swimmer training.

Weldon’s fellow MU Operative-Swimmers (who were also Weldon's instructors), were the only pre-war Americans who regularly used and perfected experimental and commercial skin-diving and surfing equipment and technique as tools and skills for recreational and professional use. Most of these watermen were lifeguards in the coastal areas and beaches of Santa Monica Bay, California. They taught Weldon and his fellow SMG-A swimmer trainees how to use these skills and equipment, which had never before been used by any of the US Armed Forces and adapting them for secret warfare primarily behind the lines for espionage missions of intelligence operations, unconventional warfare, reconnaissance, sabotage, direct action, and combat search and rescue. They were further refined and developed by Weldon, his fellow Operative Swimmers and instructors as they trained.

Weldon and the cadre were sent to the Marine base at Camp Pendleton. Issued Marine uniforms and gear, but not knowing what they were into, they were driven to the beach at San Onofre. There they stripped to swim shorts and were told to follow fellow OSS Swimmer Instructor Robert Butt, a legendary prewar waterman, skin-diver, and lifeguard for Santa Monica -- into the surf. As they were going into the heavy surf, another one of his instructors, Robert Scoles, a Lifeguard from LA County, caught the ever so brief flash of pause in his Weldon’s eyes and told him: " Don’t worry, dive under each oncoming wave and plunge off the bottom back up to the surface, taking a breath and repeat the process until you pass the surf line and follow us." Weldon did so, getting out past the breakers for a one mile swim then returned to the beach, where their instructors had a bon fire and brandy for them. The Marines and instructors informed Weldon he and they were now training for something called the O-S-S. That was the first time Weldon ever heard those three letters.

A grand immersion into the beach craft of ocean watermanship was passed down to Weldon and

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company . from Surfing to and paddle boarding Long swims how to used fins swim fins and face masks hunt underwater and breath hold swim underwater; survive and rescue at sea and forage Neptune's bounty, camouflages within the hinter coastal sands ..to the low watermark . They did so mastering skills that at that time were handed down very selectively out side of the Armed forces and these were the first Americans to received such skills who wer being craftred to go into harms way.. They also were introduced to of those several fellow instructors who were pre war waterman legends,

They had also come to Camp Pendleton to complete the Marine Raider training course, an intense combat conditioning course like no other. They and the other two OSS Martime Groups and one British Group (the Sea Reconnaissance Unit(SRU) who preceded OSS to camp Pendleton) were the only non Raiders during World War II to receive that storied training. They became experts in weapons and small unit tactics land nav and amphibious operated and other cutthroat sills set that honed Weldon and his Swimming fellows that raiders were had received . At the long demolished Doheny Beach Club Pool In san clement, they were assessed for further swimming capabilities by fellow maser watermen (Fred wadley, Art Garrett , Jim Eubank, Frank Donahue, Gene ward and Bud Miillen who were prewar waterman lifeguard associates to Butts and Scales

They were the first to use the Lambertsen Amphibious Respiratory Unit (LARU) or "Lambertsen-Lung" a SCUBA re-breathing apparatus anywhere the world. Weldon would become the one of the first 50 Americans to received and employ LARU re-breather SCUBA diving training for secret operations. This device was a key component to how daring Americans like Weldon's group were being groomed to fight a war. Invented by medical student Christian Lambertsen, the LARU was the first system to operate as well as it was designed in America , and considered to be one of the best SCUBAs ever designed for clandestine swimming operations, light-years ahead of its time.

Weldon and SMG-A received further clandestine OSS training on Catalina Island (where Weldon participated in the first modern mock combat swimmer attack against shipping in America), That attack on Catalina Island would lead Navy brass to start considering the threat of the determined swimmer with SCUBA wanting to attack shipping , There Weldon by his own admission and the retelling of the tale by many other of his long long deceased OSS operative-Swimmers fellows who would recount the story is considered by the OSS operative Swimmers frogman legend to be the first true "naked warrior,"(something that has to do with a photo and paddle boards on the Toyon Cove Shoreline which requires a longer forum that this article to tell properly. From Catalina he and his group then went to the Bahamas Islands before attending and at other secret OSS camps on the East Coast . With limpet mines, re-breather SCUBA and other specialized equipment and weaponry, Weldon was being readied to be deployed into the Eastern Mediterranean, Aegean and Adriatic Seas, when the winds of war changed Weldon's and the SMG-A 's current changed course.

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Because of the harrowing amphibious landings in the Pacific theater, the Navy needed its Demolition Teams to become swimmer capable with the equipment and skill that the OSS MU had trained its swimmers to conduct. But a bitter disdain by General MacArthur for anything OSS in his area of operations was the order of the time. However, Admiral Chester Nimitz overrode the General's decision and had SMG-A become the only OSS unit to operate in force in the Pacific by having them become the back-bone of the first newly formed Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT), UDT-10, to be associated with the skills of a " frogman".

Weldon and SMG- A traveled to one of the first Navy UDT training bases established in the Pacific on Maui in the Hawaii where they became the back bone and instructor core for the first use in the US Navy of swimming fins and face masks. SMG-A would bring to UDT the skills-set and tools they are often most identified with -- the ocean waterman's capability using the then rare rubber swimming fins and face plates, paddle boards and re-breather SCUBA for underwater swimming and skin-diving that OSS MU had developed. They were in turn were put on loan for the duration of the war to a 'joint' USN & OSS) Navy UDT 10. They are considered the first trained group of Americans to use the classic frogman "naked warrior " capability-image and skills associated with today's Navy SEALs.

During the OSS maritime training and skills adapted A on the beaches of San Clemente San Onofre , Catalina and Salt Cay which they passed on the Navy UDT personnel. Due to its "Top Secret" classification, OSS MU training, techniques, and accomplishments remained classified for over 40 years, and the Swimmer Operatives kept their oaths often to their graves.

Weldon and his Operative Swimmer comrades saw action in the South Pacific, clearing the beach heads as frogman in advance of General MacArthur's return to the Philippine Islands. Humorously, Weldon was on the beach watching as the storied General returned by strolling through the surf onto the sands of Leyte that Weldon and elements of UDT 10 had just cleared. Before the end of the war, Weldon received the Bronze Star for combat gallantry clearing beaches under fire against Imperial Japanese Forces.

Weldon's other fellow OSS MU Operative Swimmers conducted a multitude of actions in all part of World War Two including the first US Submarine launched swimmer recon of enemy held territory in the Pacific; Others were lead behind the lines intel gathering operations from swimming in and or small boat infiltrations to conduct raids and intelligence gathering in the China-Burma-India theater lead by a decorated Marine Raider Officers who became OSS operative swimmers as their section commanders. The first US Naval officer credited with conducting SEAL commando and espionage operations would be the second American to be taught rebreather SCUBA and conduct land based raids and to parachute deep behind Nazi lines Was a OSS Maritime swimmer . Finally the first in U.S. combat swimming History

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attacks to successfully using SCUBA re-breather underwater limpet attacks against Japanese shipping targets was courtesy of OSSmaritimeinthe CBI theater during WW2.

The OSS would be dissolved by Presidential Executive Order in 1945, thus all its operations and joint interactions with other US and foreign armed forces remained classified SECRET by the US Government for over 40 years. While many OSS men and a few Operative -Swimmers joined the new CIA reorganizing Many of the OSS personnel including the Operative Swimmers kept their oaths often to their graves, never breathing a word even to their families.

After the war ended, Weldon Joined the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) as a police officer in 1948. There he worked the Metro Division and jail and was involved in it during the Watts Riots, the arrest of Charles Manson. And part of the initial electronic transfer of fingerprints before He retired as an LAPD Sergeant in 1974 with 26 years of service.

In the post war era and throughout the remainder of Hank Weldon's life the OSS maritime story he was part of , became declassified, whereby further accolades, accommodations and recognition came to OSS veterans became more p recognized for there war time sacrifices and service . All OSS MU members were awarded a US Army Special Forces Green Beret as OSS MU has a direct lineage to Special Forces underwater operations as well as USMC Raider Special operations lineage, US Coastguard and US Air Force Special operations communities and US Naval Special Warfare in who in 2003 stood up by a modern legacy of SEAL Team Ten as a modern ode to the heritage of Weldon and his OSS Navy UDT 10 enterprise of World War II and made him a life time member of UDT/SEAL Association.

Many followers of the way of the World war II OSS often read how Donovan often sought out "PHDs , who could win in a Bar fight. " While that is true it is also a fact , Donovan and his sub-lieutenants also knew the value of a bar-fighter who when given a certain course of knowledge could easily become a PhD expert in its strategic and tactical applications. Hank Weldon was onof the pioneering OSS Maritime Operative-Swimmers sought out for born with qualities , just those Qualities that would serve him in the waters of the pacific as a frogman and later on the turbulent streets of LosAngeles as a Cop

Weldon was the last the original first OSS tough-as iron never to be screwed with, immensely hard-chargers , hailing from good American families, yet who prepped at the school of kick-ass, shoot –straight - take names- ask questions later, which Donovan's OSS Sub-lieutenants not only sought out and brought these American's on board OSS, but it was the reason to this day OSS gets both a hot or cold reception from Military historians in it s contribution to the American World War 2 effort.

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Without operatives like Hank whose audacious natural way that could both win in any bar or gun fight , and ly learn and apply the natural art form and use of the sacred gear of watermanship, that when combined with field-craft , they had invented and made for a new type of Tradecraft - PhD expert , secret ocean warrior, like the world had never seen. One with a truly American bent to it. Think back to Frontiersman and Mountain men and Injun; fighters whose application in the Americas fledging young military led to a tactical advantage, engaging our foes with a ferocity and surprise, that standing armies of the day and the Native Americans whom we learned it from, never expected to have it used back at them. with the guile and will we did.

The USA was still a young nation in World War II and this new tradecraft turned the tables back on our enemies, who had been in the ocean for centuries longer than we were a country, by the time we entered the war . But those nations now in the war as enemies, never had the combined will, resources might and freedom to have their industry to take ideas like the watermanship and its gear and trade craft Weldon learned and put it into a truly perfected capability

Those enemies swimmers- frogmen were mostly successful with a true measure of God's showing loves for man, extend s even to bad guy socialists occasionally giving them a break. Not out of any divine empathy nor from a place of good will, mind you. The OSS despite it having and being forged by using more fire to fight fire , had in its Maritime Unit deployed swimmers like Hank Weldon, whose grounded Oklahoma tough demeanor , had God's good grace and measure watching over him from the moment he lifted that manhhole cover in a Maryland pool, until the day he mustered out of the Navy in December, 1945. A divine over watch of grace that stayed behind he and his fellows before they went into battle because they were doing so for a noble cause of defense, using offensive-down and dirty -go for broke all -or- nothing, get the job done , save the nation and the world tactics as a service to the strategy of coming back home alive, all in one piece. It mostly worked. For during the war all but three OSS Operative-Swimmers returned home alive and mostly ok with the job they had done.

Their method was based on the sacred barely known at the time equipment. Gear conceived, designed , engineered and used by men not for purpose of imperial conquering , but as a supplement to bring a ease to those who perfected there uncommon if simple daily lives: feed a man fish , he eats for a day - teach a man to fish, he eats for a life time. The men who taught hank watermanship guys went into a war liking to eat a lot of fish !

Weldon 's instructors and the gear they and he were one with, became the two ingredients for a expert mix taught and learned nearly three -quarters of a century ago now and was all stemmed from having better tools to fish more effectively under the sea: Bare handed, up close and personal, making it a ease to see and catch their fish. On the way it opened a whole new world and perspective to those living and playing next to the ocean or a lake. They could easily see underwater and as they plunged the deep for recreation. As Americans, they now had gear morphed in become rescue tools to help save lives in the water, long before they were ever thought of be used for taking them. Their using this gear gave a new glimpse on

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Hank Weldon , Last of the original World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS)Maritime Unit Operative-Swimmers – whom were the First Americans to Use and Pass SCUBA and Skin-diving Skills via Navy UDT to all American Frogmen; passes away at 95

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the environment they lived next to as a way of pausing whatever troubles 1930's depression era America had bestowed upon their lives . Yet , when war came , this gear became of a new weapon of war which others in the world liberated and tried to replicate, but never quite matched the capabilities of Hank and his colleagues as they applied their tradecraft and the world war went on.

Daring early strikes are one thing, but having them reapplied with tools was another. Thus was the difference from the word go between the OSS Operative -Swimmer Knight errant with his out of the box method and tactics, and the arrogant WW 2 enemy Axis swimmer history presented as being whom the allies mimicked and learned all such skills from—a pack of crap , mostly due to historians never having access let alone a technical understanding to the real story. Add the fact that the real story was so classified for so long, and the men who lived it all , but gone why look deeper into a already nice romantic mythology based on a theory that everything we do comes from Europe or the Orient is somehow done better than us Yanks...let alone an “Okie’ “or two like Hank, thrown in for good measure ? (Okie = cne from Oklahoma).

Just like Hank Weldon's waterman-Tradecraft applied tools for fishing into a hard, fast yet measured with a grace and natural class and understanding of when to go hard, and when to change course and fade into the shadows of the sea as if they were never - ever there; And when they were asked and then tasked -- which Hank Weldon and his cadre were -- to pass that tradecraft on as force multipliers to others which they, and they alone at that time could only have done, with a smile and sincere concern to forge their new teammates with skills intensely but fondly -- not regretfully , strategically letting go whatever egos they had, to take a back seat, to merge with those they would teach and fight with them with a esprit- de-corps that lasting the rest of their lives .

Hank and SMG -A OSS Maritime Swimmers were new fangled -hybrid sons of Neptune, Aqua men crossed with a cutthroats charm and grace, who simultaneously gave to UDT their new no-where else to be found, Tradecraft they passed this method gear and technology to, swimming with them side-by side into combat with the capabilities , they alone and the Other OSS operative Swimmers in other OSS units had become our the nation's only expert PhD s in the subject as force multipliers . No one at the time could have ever had the foresight to how much this new type of SECRET warfare, forever changed how the USA and our allies goes to war, not even Donovan who knew it was only a concept something that just must be tried to win ...until recent times.

His legacy continues through these and all post WW II clandestine military, law enforcement public safety and civilian maritime and diving communities and agencies - including but not limited to, - Los Angeles Police Department and diving operations, Los Angeles County Fire Department diving operations, Lifeguard and Sheriffs Diving operations and the Los Angeles County Underwater Unit of County Parks and Recreation who carry on the traditions first brought for the benefit of our nation and citizenry and world through joyful pursuit of life and survival of it on the beaches and coast line of Los Angeles county in the years between two world wars.

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Weldon a the patriarch of patriotic fellow till last his last days of his 95 years always championed the OSS Maritime Operative Swimmer Story throughout his life and when asked how he thought it was, to be one of the last of the three then living of all OSS Maritime Operative Swimmers in 2016 , Weldon found that a tough thought , for at that timewas also then the last SMG-A OSS swimmer alive for several years as others died off quietly as their OSS was formed . Weldon always focused saying it s a honor and hard for him to imagine especially when so many left before him without their story being fully understood in historical review.

Starting with the Exploits of the time stamp on UDT in the pacific ... when it was all really in large part made possible because of OSS Maritime Operative- Swimmers that merged with them the Hank Weldon s of that breed. He was the last living actuary to convey that time stamp to U.S. Military history which lead to UDT , SEALs EOD Special Forces, Marines Corps Coastguard and AirForce combat swimming and Diver frogmen of today .

By the dawn of 2018 Norman Abbot and Samuel Backus were the first two of the last three to pass on . Hank was the last man of the firsts of American combat -swimming frogmen.

By March U.S. Congress presented a Gold medal to the surviving Veterans of OSS in a ceremony at the capitol In Washington D.C. Where a SEAL Admiral would speak on the exploits of Maritime Unit Wanting to go Weldon was not in attendance but other OSS Operative Swimmer Family members did go . Hank would reflect how it was a great and noble honor for a lot of great men and women of the OSS , just that the national congress honor too long to finally get the recognition, when there was so few of all OSS operatives now alive to be honored as they were. He was proud to be able to know that event took place. Real Proud about it, for the families who would carry the OSS story on in history. Hank reflected how he hoped history would not forget their story. Ever the optimist he knows that the truth would continue.

“Hard is fast and fast is smooth.. and smooth leads to better chances of having a long life, “ goes a wise old SEAL -Samurai adage.

Hank Weldon was all that in his other ways of life as well from secret -swimmer-spy to frogman to to Cop . Father. Optimist. Boy Scout leader , rancher, master wood carver community leader husband. Hank loved to convey such life secrets to all who would care to know.

Weldon’s passing is a milestone to an era gone by. As of the morning of October 6, 2018, there are no other known living survivors of the World War II OSS Maritime Unit Operative-Swimmers. The Operative Swimmers who pioneered and gave frogmen a way to forever get into the fight

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by using gear originally designed to be used for an enjoyable adventure , hunting underwater or taking a visit into King Neptune's vast realm a while spending day at the beach or surfing down his majestic waves.

Survivors include his wife of 12 years, Donna; daughters, Kathy Berg (Larry) of San Jose, Terry (Chester) Andrew of Boise, Idaho; and Susanne (Ken) Olson of Solvang, six grandchildren, and their spouses and children and three great-grandchildren. He had one surviving brother, Rick Weldon of Oklahoma as well as step children, Terri Babcock (Steve), Wally Decker, and Rob Decker.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Marg Weldon.

His passing comes with a heavy heart to his family and friends at large and those who knew him long, along with all present day special operations forces- diving communities, From Army Special forces Coastguard I Special Operations and MSST Teams, Marine Raiders, Navy SEALs, and the few last remaining OSS veterans still with us.

Weldon s funeral services will be with full military honors in a private internment service on 26 October 2019 at the Valley Center Cemetery, Valley Center, California. Later that same afternoon, a proposed Hawaiian style ocean paddle out- swim is scheduled to take place near the sight where Weldon and the OSS Maritimes first operations took place .

Please rsvp by 24 October 2018 to [BMDWF@yahoo .com](mailto:BMDWF@yahoo.com).

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