

We would be remiss if we did not include the vital information about the World War Two(WW II) "Frogmen" annals of one **RCNVR LCdr(ret) Bruce Stanley Wright C.D., O.C.** as detailed in his book **"THE FROGMEN OF BURMA"**.

In January 1941 RCNVR Sub Lt. Wright had command of the boom Patrol Vessel, a decked-over Motor Launch which patrolled the St. John's, NFDL harbour entrance. During the long dreary night, he speculated as to how one might evade all the security at the entrance, then proceed to an attack on shipping and docks of the inner harbour. He surmised that the enemy attackers would have to pass over the sensitive Asdic loops on the sea bottom, get through the torpedo nets, pass by the Coastal Defence guns and finally the patrolling Motor Launch if they were to be successful. Being a swimming champion while attending the University of New Brunswick, I had been fascinated by reading articles in the newspapers of abalone skin divers in California USA, who used paddleboards, dive masks and swim fins in their activities. As the coming dawn was just breaking, a solution meshed in my mind. A team of skin divers could leave a submarine lying just outside the Asdic loops on the bottom of the harbour entrance, towing a cigar shaped plastic mine that would not register on these loops, they would swim to the net, dive down to cut a hole in it and pass through. After stealthily passing by the patrolling Motor Launch and Coastal Defence guns, they would proceed to their intended targets, plant the mines, then return via the same route to their submarine, waiting off-shore. Shortly thereafter, I was posted to the Corvette, HMCS LETHBRIDGE for patrol duties to protect our ocean-going Convoys, where I mulled over and perfected my scheme. I then talked it over with the ship's Captain, who informed me that it should be put on paper as an official submission and he would forward it to higher authority. This I did, entitling it "The Use of Natatorial Assault and Reconnaissance Units in Combined Operations". To make a long story short, the report went to the Royal Navy Admiralty in Whitehall, England. They informed the RCN Headquarters that I was to "Proceed by air to the United Kingdom for six months duty to develop and demonstrate my proposals. I was to bring with me surfboards complete with built in waterglasses, single-windows-type underwater masks, 'kicky fins' for hands and feet, and spring guns complete with arrows". The experts wanted to be shown. The fat was in the fire! I was sent off to the USA with a sum of \$5,000.00 to purchase the necessary equipment, and also to get some first-hand practice in its use. It all arrived in Ottawa ON to a hush-hush site, as by now it was all classified as TOP SECRET. Shortly it was dispatched to a ship sailing in convoy to the U.K., while I travelled by an RCAF Bomber to finally end up in the RN Admiralty Whitehall, Combined Operations Headquarters. Unfortunately, all the diving equipment was lost at sea when the ship was torpedoed and sunk in the convoy! All of it was eventually replaced through "resources at hand", an euphemism that really meant "scrounge whatever you can". Meanwhile, I had officially met with Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma, who informed me that he wanted me to train his Royal Marines in this new technique, and that I was to go to the Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment in Portsmouth, where I would find everything I would need. After some time had elapsed, I was eventually provided with 40 men(I had requested 60!) to train as swimmers for a Commando Swim Team. Since all Commando Units were commanded by an Officer of the rank of Army Major, or the equivalent, Lord Louis promoted me to the rank of LCdr, and asked me where I wanted to train my team. Knowing that it would be almost impossible to train them in England, as the water is too cold and the visibility underwater is not great enough, I proposed to him we should train in California, USA where the water is warm and clear, while there is a lot of heavy surf required for adequate training. The Admiral concurred, stating he would ensure all the necessary arrangements will be made. He also stated that everything must still remain TOP SECRET.

And so the SRU(Sea Reconnaissance Unit)was born! My staff consisted of two American expert skin divers from California, who travelled up to Esquimalt BC to sign up with the RCN, Lt. RCNVR Hal Messenger and SLt. RCNVR Frank Rodecker, and Canadian Lt. Bruton Strange, who was posted in to the

US Marine Base, CAMP PENDLETON in Southern California from where he had been serving aboard a Corvette on a mid- Atlantic convoy. I appointed Captain E.H. "Mick" Muldoon, M.C., General List, British Army as my XO(Executive Officer, or Second in Command). Our Doctor, RNVR Surgeon Lt. Robinson joined us later. In due course, we received 55 volunteer from England, and we then developed a series of tests to weed out those who were unable to pass. After heavy training, we had our target force of 40 men, while those 15 men who were unable to complete the training, were R.T.U.'ed(Returned To Unit). We then began our first operational training, with the Unit organized into four Sections of two Officers and eight men each, as follows:-

Number One Section Commander, Capt. Jock Elder M.C., the Black Watch, with RNVR Midshipman Barry Kimmins our Senior "Snotty".

Number Two Section Commander, RCNVR Lt. Bruton "Brute" Strange, with RNVR Midshipman J.R.S. "Sandy" Docherty as Second in Command.

Number Three Section Commander, RNVR Lt. John Junor, with RNVR Midshipman "Bonzo" Booth as Second in Command.

Number Four Section Commander, RCAF Flt. Lt. G. Harry "Canuck" Avery, with Lt. J.E.M. "Dick" Turpin, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment as Second in Command.

The teams became so proficient that, near the end of November 1943, the US Marine General commanding CAMP PENDLETON visited us to see everything we did, and asked us some very penetrating questions, such as:

Q. Could my men reconnoitre an enemy held beach undetected?

A. *That is what we are training for.*

Q. How many miles offshore could they start from?

A. *That depended on the method of getting there. Five or ten miles at least with the paddleboard.*

Q. What did we know about coral?

A. *Nothing yet, but that has still to come.*

Q. What about sharks?

A. *No one knew, but I intend to find out soonest. Although it was known that sharks were near us during our swimmer training exercises, there have been no attacks by sharks to date".*

The General listened intently to all I had to say and, as he was about to depart, stated "*Wright, I think you have the answer. You will be hearing from me soon*". The very next day 21 November 1943, the electrifying news broke. The Battle for the island of Tarawa commenced in the long fight for the central Pacific. After a sojourn in the Bahama's, to become better acquainted with sharks and other dangerous sea life, we all returned to the U.K. fully expecting to be in on the D-Day attacks, which was not to be. After some length of time, we all moved to Ceylon in late 1944, and then went into action against the Japanese in February 1945 in Burma, for the crossings of the Irrawady River near Manadaly.

At the end of WW II, having shown the exploits of what so-called "Frogmen" could do for the Allied cause, the SRU was disbanded, with personnel returned to their various units. Forty men had gone into Burma, taken fire from the enemy, and forty men came out! The back of the Japanese Army had been broken by the multiple crossings of the Irrawady by the British Army. As my aircraft circled to land at the Torbay airport in St. John's, I looked out to the harbour entrance, and considered my "Great Idea" had come full circle – an episode of my life was finished.

NOTE; RCNVR LCDr Bruce Stanley Wright died in Fredericton NB on 19 April 1975 at age 63.

Our correspondent in Switzerland, Haydn iuchi-sutton sent us an article about the American OSS(Office of Strategic Services) Combat Swimmers marking the 70th Anniversary in 2012 of the founding in 1942 of the USA's first covert espionage organization for secret, unorthodox overseas wartime operations. This 70th Anniversary being held at the Adventurer's Club in Los Angeles, includes the Amphibious classified OSS MU(Maritime Unit) – Special Operations Diving Unit and its OSG(Operational Swimmers Group),

who were the forerunners of the Navy SEAL's. Most people have no idea that it was in Southern California where all this took place! This event recognizes, celebrates and honours how the OSS "Swimmando's" (Swimmer/Commando, Combat/Frogman) came into being, via a very storied legend and lore that is steeped in Southern California's geographical, societal, Hollywood and watermanship history. This event brought together the still living OSS MU, and MU Operational Swimmer veterans, to honour them at the place where they developed their diving and watermanship techniques, to make this type of special maritime warfare possible:- the Santa Monica and Los Angeles coastline, CAMP PENDLETON, Catalina Island, Newport Beach and, for some, in the Bahama's. These intrepid swimmers knew of the "British" SRU(Swimmer Reconnaissance Unit), under the command of RCNVR LCdr Bruce Wright, which were then training in CAMP PENDLETON in Southern California. Some of the American Swimmers eventually went into action against the Japanese, with the British later in 1945