

Fred "Tiz" Morrison—"King of the Frogmen"

Fred "Tiz" Morrison was given the title "King of the Frogmen" about midway through a long and successful career with UDT. A magazine article described him as such and naturally his teammates wouldn't let the "regal" title die. A battle-tested veteran, Tiz served with the Teams from his WWII training at Maui and through the Korean War until his retirement in 1962. The first black man in UDT, he broke many old traditions and prejudices while setting a new standard for African-American sailors.

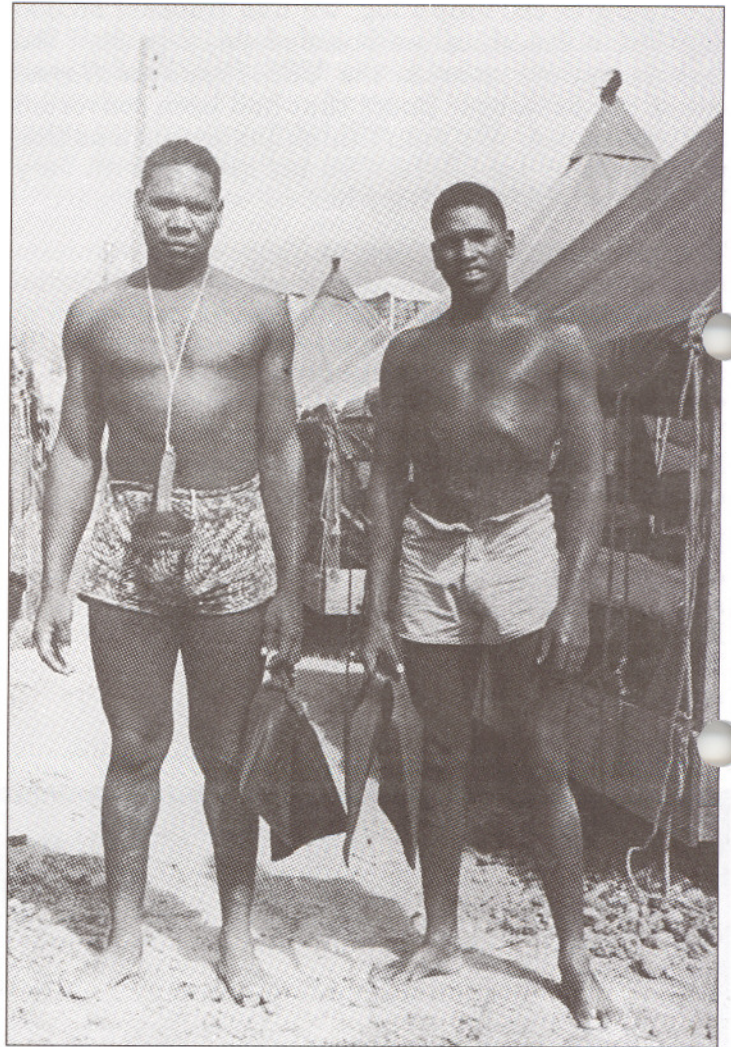
In the 1940s the Navy, reflecting society, limited black sailors to jobs as stewards or cooks. Morrison didn't follow that pattern. Born in Columbia, South Carolina, Tiz moved to Baltimore in 1939. There he worked on car and tractor motors while holding down a part-time job at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

When World War II came along Tiz, like many other Americans, signed up. He chose the Navy for no other reason than that he wanted to be different from his brother who had joined the Army. In July 1944, he shipped off to a "Negro" boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois, which stood across the highway from the camp where white men trained. After basic training, Morrison was ordered to Johnson Island in the Pacific Ocean and was crew to an all-black base company of 200 men. His aptitude for working on tractors and motors landed him a job as an engineman.

As the war continued into 1945, an urgent need for Underwater Demolition Team personnel prompted a call for all sailors to try out for UDT. Tiz accepted the challenge and began training along with 115 other sailors. He was one of only six who completed the course. Although he could be justifiably proud of this accomplishment, Tiz didn't boast but just credited his ability to swim and "being fool enough to want to cut mines and set explosives." He concluded, "Most guys didn't want to do that kind of work and not many black guys could swim."

After training at Maui Tiz was ordered to UDT 1. In the Teams there was a sense of closeness and he became part of the crew. "We were a close-knit group, very protective of each other. I was the only black and there were a few country boys that used the "N" word but mostly we got along well," Morrison said.

The Teams were on a 13-month stateside, 6-month deployment in Japan when the Korean War broke out. Teams deployed from Japan to Korea. During



This undated photograph of Tiz Morrison (right) and an unidentified man was probably taken during training at Maui in 1945.

one operation there Morrison earned the Bronze Star for heroism. Surveying a beach south of Inchon as part of a Special Operations Group (SOG), the UDT men were using Marines as beach security. When the Marines and the survey party came under intense enemy fire, all hands were ordered to withdraw. With bullets from the North Korean guns splashing around them the men made their way to the IBSs and out to the waiting LCPRs.

Upon returning to the *Bass* (APD 124) a head count indicated nine Marines still missing. A volunteer rescue party of Morrison, George Atcheson, E.F. Smith, and one other led by Lt. Ted Fielding went back in to get the Marines.

continued on next page

"King of the Frogmen"

Continued from page 6

They were towed part way by an LCPR and then paddled an IBS toward shore. Under heavy gunfire five Marines were soon found and transferred to the LCPR. A return trip located and rescued the other four. The entire SOG was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for these operations.

Morrison said of this event, "I wasn't any badder than the other guys, but I never wanted the mission to fail because the black guy was scared. So I'd slap them on the back and say let's get it over with."

After the Korean War Morrison served with UDT 1 and UDT 12. He also became the first black UDT instructor. Well liked and respected it was during this time that he became known as "Fearless Fred, King of the Frogmen."

As an instructor Tiz often heard this song sung by the trainees as they jogged along. It's based on the harmony of "Jesus loves me, yes I know."

Morrison loves us, yes we know,
Morrison loves us, yes we know,
Morrison loves us, yes we know,
For Chief Walker tells us so.
Little ones to him belong,
We are weak and he is strong.

Tiz was often the pick-up man when trainees were first introduced to "drop and pick-up" ("cast and recovery" on the East Coast). A pick-up by Tiz was smooth. He'd snap a trainee out of the water and into the IBS seemingly without effort. That, along with the last night of "Hell Week" for Class 17, are vivid reminders of training.

That night Tiz caught several trainees trying to sneak across the Amphib Base rather than paddle around the base. After their capture the trainees were marched down to the beach in front of the Del Coronado. They spent the rest of the night paddling to the North Island fence, reporting in, running back to the Del, reporting in again, then repeating the evolution. The instructors meanwhile were having a beach party at the rocks.



Pictured are Korean War medal recipients. Front row: Al Bass, Frazier, Tiz Morrison, Mack Boynton, and QM3 Boswell. Back row: Lcdr. Kelly Welch, CO UDT 1, K.J. Christoph, Capt. Selden Small, CO PhibGruOne, Phil Wilson, and Lt. Ted Fielding, XO UDT 1.

Tiz had some tough times too, but he said he had a relatively good life with UDT. He credits this "goodness" to having a sense of humor and the guys in the Teams having fought for each other. He remembers the liberty calls and having to make sure that he chose a hang-out place where they would all be accepted because the guys on his Team wouldn't tolerate discrimination against him.

Tiz spent 19 years in the Navy. He deployed to Japan, China, Korea, Greece, Cuba, Italy, and Pakistan as well as serving in Alaska, Virginia, and California. Honorably discharged in 1962, he now makes his home in San Diego with his wife Mary Louise. They have five children. One son, Ronald, who works for the San Diego District Attorney's Office, speaking proudly of his father says, "He takes no trash and will straighten you out if he thinks you need it." He recalls running on the beach with his father's UDT and jumping out of airplanes with them. "All of the UDT guys were my play uncles. They were all different people but had comradeship like no other."

continued on page 8

"King of the Frogmen"

continued from page 7

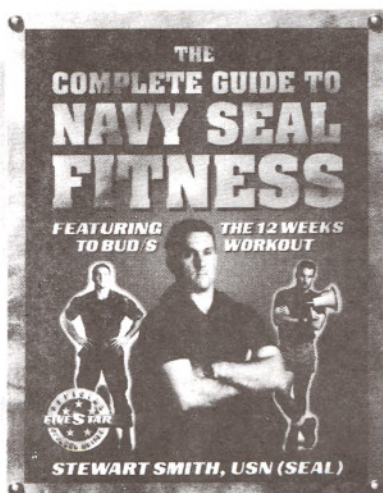
Tiz said that his most lasting reflection about life with UDT was to have survived without a scratch. He considers everlasting friendships as what he gained most from his UDT experience.

Tiz attended the Muster XII reunion in Fort Pierce last year. A photo of him and several members of class 17 appeared in the Winter issue of *FITH*.

Editor's note: Some of the material for this story was taken from an article written by AE2 Dee Sidney, a staff writer for the Navy Compass, San Diego. Lee Stephens, who served with UDT 12, provided considerable information. Another source was SEALs in Action by Kevin Dockery.



Morrison reminisces about qualifying for UDT training in 1945, "Most guys didn't want to do that kind of work and not many black guys could swim."



Written by Stewart Smith, BUD/S Class 182, this book features his 12 Weeks to BUD/S Workout, a carefully developed fitness program designed to prepare men physically for Navy SEAL BUD/S training. Many Photos. 160 pages. \$14.95

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of Stew's book will be donated to the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
FIVE STAR
PUBLISHING
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

S A L U T E S

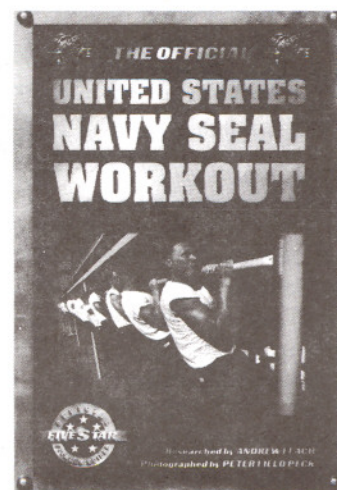
The UDT-SEAL Museum Association

Available at bookstores
everywhere or direct from
the publisher at

1-800-906-1234

Five Star Publishing is a division of
The Hatherleigh Company, Ltd.
New York, NY

visit us at www.getfitnow.com



An exciting fitness-in-action book of Navy SEAL BUD/S physical training. Includes Grinder PT, a detailed walk-through of the infamous Navy SEAL O'Course, and more. Plenty of photos, many in full color! 160 pages. \$14.95.

A portion of the proceeds from this book will be donated to the UDT-SEAL Museum Association.