

# The Submarine Chaser Training Center Downtown Miami's International Graduate School Of Anti-Submarine Warfare During World War II

Charles W. Rice

Our purpose is like the Concord light,  
A continuous vigil at sea,  
Protecting ships from submarines,  
To keep our country free.<sup>1</sup>

The British freighter *Umtata* slowly lumbered north, hugging the Dade County coast during the humid South Florida night of July 7, 1942. Backlit by the loom of Miami's lights, she made an irresistible target for German *Kapitanleutnant* Helmut Mohlmann as he squinted through the lens of *Unterseeboot-571*'s periscope. When the doomed freighter was fixed in its crosshairs, Mohlmann shouted, "Fire!" The sudden vibration of his stealthy death ship was followed by an immediate hissing sound as the E-7 electric eel escaped its firing tube through a swirl of compressed air bubbles. The U-boat skipper and his hydrophone operator carefully timed the torpedo's run, while the men hopefully waited for the blast signaling the demise of yet another victim of Admiral Karl Donitz's "Operation Drumbeat." Within seconds, a tremendous explosion rewarded their hopes as the star-crossed merchant vessel erupted into a huge billowing fireball.<sup>2</sup>

Millions of gallons of crude oil, gasoline and other petroleum products desperately needed in the Allied war effort were being shipped up the Florida coast in tankers from Texas, Venezuela, Aruba and Curacao to New Jersey and New York ports. From those staging areas, tankers and freighters carrying oil and munitions combined in convoys traveling east across the North Atlantic to the British Isles. The Third Reich launched an expedition from its submarine fleet, the *Ubootwaffe*, intended by Donitz to destroy the vessels transporting the life-saving fuel and other

war materiel to Great Britain. Lacking those critical supplies, the island nation would be unable to withstand the German assaults on its freedom. Donitz's strategy was to eliminate the Allied merchant fleet, put a stranglehold on that flow of supplies to Britain, and inflict a major propaganda victory by forcing U.S. citizens to watch the burning ships from nearby American beaches.<sup>3</sup> The German admiral's campaign achieved astonishing success. During the first six months of 1942, U-boats sent three hundred ninety-seven Allied ships to their watery graves and killed approximately five thousand hapless souls. In accomplishing his remarkable feat, Donitz took advantage of the opportunity for his voracious U-boats to feast on the vulnerable merchantmen sailing in the narrow, crowded and minimally-defended shipping lanes between Florida's reefs and the Gulf Stream. Maritime traffic along Florida's coast in 1942 ranked second in the U.S. and sixth in the world. Indeed, one out of every twelve ships stricken by Nazi attacks worldwide that year sank in Florida waters, and people on the state's beaches were frequent witnesses to the shocking violence. As the fire-blackened corpses of unlucky merchant sailors washed ashore in the surf and Miami's beautiful beaches became saturated with oily tar from the ocean disasters, sixteen additional ships were rapidly sunk and another four seriously damaged inside Florida territorial waters between February 19 and May 14, 1942.<sup>4</sup>

The offshore terror unleashed by the Nazis alarmed Florida's U.S. Senator Charles O. Andrews, who wrote to the Secretary of the Navy calling for greater protective action. The Navy's Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Russell Willson, explained the serious situation facing the Navy to Andrews:

The torpedoing of vessels, along the coast of Florida, is a matter of great concern to us—so much so in fact that I have just returned from a three-day trip to Key West, Miami and other points, for the express purpose of examining the situation on the spot.

Reduced to its simplest terms the problem is basically that we have not enough anti-submarine vessels and planes to cover the extensive areas at any one point in which the enemy may concentrate his submarine effort. However, our anti-submarine vessel-building program is just beginning to produce and ships will soon be delivered in increasing numbers. You can rest assured that these vessels will be put into service as soon as possible.

Instructions have just been issued placing on an urgent basis the strengthening of the forces, facilities and personnel of the Gulf Sea Frontier, which includes both coasts of Florida.<sup>5</sup>

In essence, the U.S. Navy had a shortage of destroyers at the outbreak of the war and was spread far too thinly to adequately defend East Coast shipping. Transatlantic convoy duty was the Navy's first priority, and it did not have a sufficient number of anti-submarine vessels to curb Donitz's coastal U-boat campaign. Under those circumstances, radical action was required to stem the copious bleeding inflicted on the Allied merchant fleet by the National Socialist regime. Naval leaders like Willson recognized the urgent need for a substantial fleet of small anti-submarine craft that could be built and manned quickly to counter the German U-boat onslaught. They were vexed, however, by a training problem that taxed the Navy's creativity and resourcefulness. Part of its answer to the U-boat dilemma was the establishment of the Submarine Chaser Training Center (SCTC) at the Port of Miami along downtown Biscayne Boulevard. Its purpose was to instruct subchaser officers and men in the maritime combat skills necessary to operate the anti-submarine fleet then under construction and effectively search out and sink the



Damage done by a torpedo hit in the hull of the *William Cullen Bryant*. She was attacked on July 21, 1942, a little more than 40 miles from Key West. Miami News Collection, History Miami, 1989-011-18401.

offending enemy marauders. Between 1942 and 1945, the SCTC became Miami's largest industry as it washed across Biscayne Boulevard to absorb the ritzy hotels; extended its dominion over the city's piers; and served as the nation's primary training site for subchasers to kill Axis submarines, escort ships carrying men and equipment to the theaters of war, fearlessly lead amphibious invasions against fortified enemy beaches, and perform a variety of ancillary tasks in the face of enemy bombs and bullets.<sup>6</sup>

As the gathering war clouds progressively spread their darkness over Europe and the Imperial Japanese Army ran amok in East Asia, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ordered the Bureau of Ships to develop submarine chasers. There were two classes. The Luders Marine Construction Corporation and the Elco Company jointly designed 110-foot wood-hulled vessels powered by General Motors "pancake" diesel engines. Those ships, known as the "Splinter Fleet," bore the letters "SC" for sub-chaser and, in most cases, each was initially armed with one three-inch gun, twin machine guns, fourteen depth charges and two sets of MK 20 "mousetraps." The last were devices that fired patterns of small rocket bombs at submerged U-boats. The Bureau of Ships designed the second class, which was identified by the letters "PC" for patrol craft. They were made of steel and were 173 feet long. Patrol craft were generally armed with the same basic weapons as the SCs. Depth charges were the most important weapons both types used to attack enemy submarines. Each depth charge contained from 230 to 500 pounds of TNT or Torpex.<sup>7</sup> When Hitler's U-boats first began sinking ships on the East Coast, the United States only had three SCs and two PCs. Orders for sixty more boats were already placed, but they were not yet filled. The Navy desperately searched for shipyards that had been constructing any type of wooden hulls to supplement the boats on order. Captain A. Loring Swasey, USNR, tirelessly traveled around the country to find yacht builders who could convert their yards to subchaser production. The Navy's mass production slogan became "sixty vessels in sixty days" and by May 1942, thirty-three PCs and thirty-four SCs were built and ready for action. By war's end, the Navy had commissioned 438 of the wood-hulled subchasers and 219 patrol craft.<sup>8</sup> The heroic crews on those small warships were nearly all trained at the SCTC in Miami.

The international crisis of World War II caused the reoccupation of Key West by the Navy. When military planners were taking initial steps to create the Submarine Chaser Training Center in Miami, they first



SC class submarine chaser in Government Cut.

Mary McIssac Collection, HistoryMiami, 2001-450-7.

established the headquarters of the Seventh Naval District in Key West on February 1, 1942, and organized the Gulf Sea Frontier (GSF) on February 6, 1942. Rear Admiral James L. Kauffman was appointed commandant of the district and, as such, also became the commander of the GSF. The GSF ran from North Florida's Duval-Saint Johns county line south around the Keys, past the Gulf States, and down the Mexican coast as far as British Honduras (present-day Belize). The GSF's jurisdiction for protection of shipping, therefore, included most of Florida, the Florida Straits, most of the Bahamas, the western half of Cuba and the entire Gulf of Mexico. The Seventh Naval District also established advance bases in Cayo Frances, La Fe, and Santa Fe, Cuba; as well as in Grand Cayman, British West Indies; and Walker's Cay, Bahamas. While both organizations fell under Kauffman's leadership, the GSF was conceived as operational, while the Seventh Naval District was an administrative command. Accordingly, a training facility like the SCTC in Miami was subject to direct supervision and orders from the Seventh Naval District. Kauffman quickly recognized that Key West was unsuitable for his headquarters. While Key West was a strategic location for a naval outpost to defend the surrounding waters from Donitz's sub-

marines, its isolation rendered the Seventh Naval District vulnerable to severance of its line of communications with the mainland. The Overseas Highway was subject to potential breaches by German guns around the clock, but the undimmed headlights of motorists made it a highly visible and inviting nighttime target. If a submarine's deck guns destroyed any of the Keys bridges, motor transportation and commercial telephone service would be cut. That possibility worried the State Road Department to the degree that it asked the Seventh Naval District whether it would be harmful to the national defense to include a map of its most recent construction improvements to the Overseas Highway in *Florida Highways* magazine. Additionally, Key West's geographical location and geological structure limited the city's supply of potable water. The resumption of intense naval activity caused a sudden influx of Navy and federal civilian workers. That population surge led to an acute water shortage, and a hasty joint venture between the Navy and the newly created Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission to construct a freshwater pipeline along the highway. Naturally, if the Overseas Highway sustained a breach, the critical water supply would also be ruptured. Moreover, the threat of U-boat attacks was so acute that a field of 3,460 mines was laid around Key West for its protection.<sup>9</sup> That precaution was not unwarranted. All around Key West the Germans were turning Allied freighters and tankers into fiery furnaces. For example, at 3:15 a.m. on April 3, 1942, the tanker *Gulf State*, riding low in the water with a full cargo of Texas crude, sank in five minutes off Key West after being hit by two torpedoes. On May 4, 1942, the tanker *Mungar T. Ball* and its cargo of gasoline from Port Arthur, Texas, was sunk near Dry Tortugas at 6:40 p.m. Within hours, Nazi torpedoes also laid waste to the nearby tanker *Joseph M. Cudahy*. That same day, *U-507*, commanded by *Korvettenkapitan* Harro Schacht, sank the freighter *Norlindo* in the Gulf of Mexico northwest of the island city. The Coast Guard cutter *Thetis* sank *U-157* with depth charges south of Key West on June 13, 1942, and on July 15, 1942, the *Pennsylvania Sun* was torpedoed and burned to the city's west.<sup>10</sup>

On June 17, 1942, Kauffman moved the headquarters of the Seventh Naval District to a safer venue in downtown Miami. After federal court condemnation litigation to wrest the Alfred I. Dupont Building at 169 East Flagler Street from its owner, he established a command post there and worked closely with the SCTC a few blocks away as it continued its takeover of the twenty-six acre Port of Miami for sub-

chaser training. Democratic U. S. Senator Claude Pepper attempted to obstruct the building's turnover to the Navy on behalf of a number of its politically powerful and self-interested tenants, who were more concerned with doing business as usual than with sacrificing to assist the war effort. In a telegram to the admiral, Pepper complained that certain occupants in the building had strongly protested to him and he wrote, "I am informed that (immediate occupancy of the Dupont Building at the behest of the Navy) will cause very serious financial loss and disruption of business to a number of persons concerned, among them doctors and other professional men." Nevertheless, the Navy's needs prevailed over politics, and the Seventh Naval District took control of the Dupont Building. The structure contained a towering ceiling that permitted Kauffman to install a command chart that was two stories high. His chart displayed the positions of all merchant ships and American naval vessels within the GSF. Even though Operation Drumbeat's U-boats were authorized by Donitz to hunt Allied ships along the coast at will without assigned areas, the chart also showed their suspected positions. It was placed directly across from a deep balcony outfitted like a ship's bridge and containing communications equipment that allowed Kauffman to instantly contact all of his forces.<sup>11</sup>



The "bridge." Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, 1989-011-18447.





Port of Miami piers 1, 2 and 3 (from right) on Biscayne Boulevard. circa. 1940. Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, 1989-011-13753.

Lieutenant Commander Eugene Field McDaniel was the tough, no-nonsense captain of the destroyer U.S.S. *Livermore* in the North Atlantic. During the *Livermore's* duty, McDaniel saw the horrifying results of unrestricted Nazi U-boat warfare and developed a fanatical hatred of the Axis Powers. When he put into port in early 1942, he received orders to run the new subchaser school in Miami. The Navy commissioned the SCTC on March 16, 1942, one day after the City of Miami leased Pier 2 and all of its buildings, offices, and warehouses to the Bureau of Yards and Docks for the express use of the Submarine Chaser Training Center, and issued a permit for the storage of ammunition on the pier. McDaniel was formally installed as its commandant on April 8, 1942.<sup>12</sup> Pier 2 of the Port of Miami was commonly known as the old Clyde Mallory pier. The port was originally constructed by the Peninsular and Occidental (P&O) Steamship Company in which Henry Flagler was a principal owner. It was built in 1912 on Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway company site on Biscayne Boulevard between N.E. Sixth and N.E. Ninth Streets. By the 1930s its channel was dredged to a sufficient depth for large seagoing vessels. When McDaniel first arrived, he found Pier 2 cluttered with a private cargo of sugar that its factor stubbornly refused to move. He immediately telegraphed the businessman in New York, threatening, "At 8 tomorrow





SCTC Headquarters—Pier 2.  
Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, 1989-011-18307.

my men move your sugar into the street. I hope it rains.” The intimidated New Yorker promptly removed his sugar early the next morning.<sup>13</sup>

Since Admiral Kauffman was the Navy’s leading anti-submarine warfare expert, he was highly supportive of the mission to which McDaniel was assigned. Consequently, McDaniel’s decisions were routinely rubber-stamped. The Bureau of Naval Personnel wanted to send McDaniel 150 officers to help get the school organized, but he would have none of it and flatly replied that he would hand pick his own men. With the initial help of only four trusted officers, he began the complicated task of finding space for the arriving sailors to eat, bunk and study. The first arrivals at SCTC had to sleep in crowded warehouses around Pier 2, but before long the fancy, sixteen-story Everglades Hotel on the corner of Biscayne Boulevard and N.E. Third Street was appropriated by the Seventh Naval District to house the center’s enlisted students. Some of the hotel’s rooms were converted into classrooms, and only standby crews, guards, and those on watch duty continued sleeping in the Spartan squad bays remaining on the pier. The manager of the Everglades was Walter Chandler, who was retained by the Navy to operate the hotel. Since there were no eating facilities on Pier 2, the Navy also took over the nearby Ungar Buick dealership and transformed its garage into a huge

mess hall with America's largest steam table.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the men were allowed to eat during their off-duty hours at nearby civilian establishments. Manning's Seafood Grill was an SCTC favorite, and there was a Howard Johnson's located directly across Biscayne Boulevard from the main gate.<sup>15</sup>

McDaniel called upon several professors from the University of Chicago to formulate the training center's courses and curriculum. He opened the subchaser school with only fifty students, and was initially told by personnel officers, who vastly underestimated the Navy's needs, that the maximum number of trainees would rise to 150 officers and 650 enlisted men. Eventually, however, the school would substantially pass those conservative projections and had a consistent enrollment of thousands. Its curriculum offered difficult, condensed courses in a variety of disciplines requiring class and laboratory work. Those courses were practical and not theoretical. For instance, when the students were taught celestial navigation, they were provided no explanation why such procedures were used. Classes typically lasted ten hours a day, and instruction took place six and a half days a week in hastily partitioned classrooms in Pier 2's loud and poorly ventilated warehouses. Officer trainees only had Sunday afternoons off. The training took from one to three months depending on the subjects each trainee needed to learn. Officers were expected to gain a full understanding of all functions of subchaser operations. They were trained in Morse code, signaling with flags, communications, navigation, administration, piloting, seamanship, logistics, military justice, gunnery, protocol, naval customs and engineering. Enlisted sailors studied engine mechanics, electricity, radio operation, ship handling, signaling, gunnery and seamanship. To help the men acquire their skills in such short periods of time, the Navy utilized all of its available indoctrination and instructional films as educational aids. The school also had a mock-up subchaser deck, illustrated lectures, darkened lookout rooms and huge laboratories for mechanical work on guns, radar and subchaser engines. There was even a motor-powered rotating cabin manufactured from scrap metal in which potential helmsmen learned how to steer subchasers under adverse circumstances.

Instruction in the use and handling of small arms took place in groups of up to sixty men at the Miami Police Department's pistol range at N.W. 22 Avenue and 106 Street.



Officer trainees in a Pier 2 classroom.  
Mary McLissac Collection, HistoryMiami, 2001-451-10.



Enlisted men during a gun drill.  
Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, 1989-011-18294.

All instruction at the SCTC was aimed toward a single goal—find and sink enemy submarines.<sup>16</sup> In doing so, it was McDaniel's intention to train the men to think for themselves and to foster their use of independent judgment when attacking difficult problems and to avoid being slavishly bound to the conventional or orthodox. His forward to the SCTC's *Aviation Rescue Vessel Manual* is a prime example of his view:

Aviation Rescue Boats have been in use for sometime but no definite program has been developed for the training of personnel. The Submarine Chaser Training Center at Miami, Florida has now incorporated in its curriculum a specialist course for such Training.

In matters of organization, equipment and tactics the atmosphere of *open minded experimentation* is being intentionally maintained in the text. The principles and practices set forth in this manual are not therefore to be considered the last word on this subject.

The actual problems of the activity to which the boats are attached will continually present *new situations*, which can be met only with *ingenuity and ability to adapt* familiar practices to unfamiliar circumstances by the officer and men concerned.

The officer reading this manual is therefore, advised that he is simply to accept them for what they are, a distillate of experience over a short period of time with training and operation of Aviation Rescue Boats. Then too, the officers (*sic*) should remember that *his ultimate success will depend on his own aggressiveness, tenacity, ingenuity and intelligence, rather than on any parrot like memorizing of the contents of any treatises.*<sup>17</sup>

Subchaser officers were all reservists. The Navy foresaw that it would need to develop a quick supply of men to serve as leaders aboard its small anti-submarine fleet, so it offered reserve commissions to thousands of students in their last year of college or graduate school and deferred their active duty until June 1942. Accordingly, Biscayne Bay's SCTC was a "Ninety-Day Wonder" school with new classes of young reservists arriving weekly to learn how to operate the subchasers. At the center's beginning, the most experienced reserve officers were graduates of ROTC programs at Harvard and Yale, and they became the first instructors. Their tenure as instructors was short-lived, however, because

McDaniel had an inviolate rule that none of them remained on the staff more than six months before they were ordered to sea duty. Soon, most of his instructors were experienced Navy chiefs and officers, who were frequently referred to as “walking textbooks,” since they had already been through battle like McDaniel had been in the North Atlantic. Because the anti-submarine ships were tiny compared to the rest of the Navy’s fleet, the Miami men and their SCs and PCs were soon dubbed the “Donald Duck Navy.” That designation was proudly accepted, and the SCTC began using memo pads sporting a letterhead with a fearsome looking duck carrying depth charges on its back. McDaniel strove to assure that the Donald Duck Navy’s crews were fully qualified to operate their vessels in view of the difficult service they were to encounter. Therefore, he constantly revised the courses and added new ones reflecting the latest U-boat tactics and methods to counter them. He flatly stated, “Whenever I find the men have fifteen minutes to spare, I add another course. I’m looking for quitters. I don’t want any quitters—any “dregs”—to get out there on those little ships, where every man, from lookout to skipper, has such a big job to do.”<sup>18</sup>



The Donald Duck Navy insignia.  
 Mary McIssac Collection, HistoryMiami, 2001-421-335.

The SCTC rapidly expanded, and every Monday morning newly arrived men began their training. Each class received an orientation lecture from McDaniel himself, which reporter Sidney Shalett of *The New York Times* called a “blistering masterpiece of hatred.” McDaniel told the incoming trainees, “When you’ve seen men killed in a ruthless, indecent, inhumane, useless way, you’ve got to hate.”<sup>19</sup> He expounded on his philosophy of hatred to *Miami Herald* reporter Jack Bell:

I make no secret of the fact that we teach our men to hate those subs, and its results are evident. We have put fear into their hearts because they know we will show them no mercy. When those chasers turn up in any waters the subs get out of there—quickly. And our mode of warfare has had an effect. The Germans and Japs know American nature. They expected us to be humane, a bit soft in our conduct of warfare—as we have been. They took advantage of that, but that is no good. The way to win a war is to get the other fellow before he gets you; and the humane thing is to get him as quickly as possible, destroy his war power, and thus relieve the whole world of suffering that much sooner.<sup>20</sup>

To graphically illustrate his point, McDaniel used a gruesome, bullet-riddled lifeboat, said to have been picked up at sea, as a training aid to remind the men of the enemy’s ruthlessness toward the escaping crews of torpedoed ships and to inspire them to work as hard as possible during his rigorous training program. Hank Strauss, who was both a student and later an instructor at SCTC, recalled McDaniel’s presentation to the new enrollees. He said that McDaniel used the shot up lifeboat to motivate the men and show what they should expect from a Nazi submarine if a ship they were aboard was torpedoed and the survivors came under the U-boat’s machine guns.<sup>21</sup> David Hibbs, who arrived as a twenty-one year-old apprentice seaman at the SCTC in September 1942, remembered being told, “Shoot the enemy in their life rafts, shoot them in the water, and kill them.”<sup>22</sup>

As an ever-increasing number of students poured into the SCTC, McDaniel told the local press that its rapid expansion necessitated the procurement of more housing and additional space for the training center’s operations. The City of Miami permitted the Navy to build temporary dressing rooms and shower facilities for its personnel in Bayfront





From left: McAllister and Columbus hotels.

Mary McIssac Collection, HistoryMiami, 2001-451-6.

Park at N.E. First Street directly across Biscayne Boulevard from the swanky Columbus Hotel, which was a trendy playground for affluent international tourists. In authorizing that construction, the city required landscaping by its Parks Division to screen any objectionable appearance from the hotel's guests. The 250-room Alcazar Hotel at Biscayne Boulevard and N.E. Fifth Street was the second hotel leased for enlisted barracks, and the Columbus was soon converted into bachelor officers' quarters.<sup>23</sup> The fashionable Venetian Hotel at 1451 North Bayshore Drive followed.

Despite the international emergency, there were indignant, selfish protests from the Miami Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Miami Hotel Association over the SCTC's takeover of many of the surrounding hotels.<sup>24</sup> When the center insisted on leasing the McAllister Hotel at 10 Biscayne Boulevard, its owner staunchly refused and coldly turned deaf ears to McDaniel's procurement officers' repeated requests. At the SCTC's direction, the Lands Division of the Bureau of Yards and Docks was forced to bring a condemnation lawsuit through the Department of Justice. Federal Judge John W. Holland granted possession to the sub-chaser center over the howls of the McAllister's owner. There was also

loud, resentful baying directed at the school for its takeover of the Leamington, 307 N.E. First Street; the Plaza, 316 Biscayne Boulevard; the Miramar, 1744 North Bayshore Drive; the Villa d'Este, 249 N.E. Eighth Street; and the Bellevue at 407 N.E. Seventeenth Terrace.<sup>25</sup> Once the SCTC took over the hotels, however, decorum was maintained and signs were posted in their lobbies that commanded the sailors, "No one allowed in lobby in undershirt." Additionally, the hotels were also used for training. Student signalmen on top of the Everglades practiced sending semaphore and blinker messages to their counterparts on the roof of the Alcazar two blocks away.<sup>26</sup>

Besides the male sailors, WAVES became a familiar part of the SCTC scene. During the summer of 1943, they began arriving at the school to take over jobs previously performed by men, so that the men would be freed for sea duty. There were about 200 women assigned to the school, and they were quartered in a barracks near the main Merrill-Stevens shipyard on the Miami River at 1207 N.W. Eleventh Street. Unlike the men, the female sailors were required to log in and out over their objections to that procedure. The WAVES added a splash of color to the SCTC's social landscape as they mingled with military officers at parties and dances. They held a gala affair at the downtown Robert Clay Hotel with dancers, singers and the Seventh Naval District band. Precedent was shattered when a group of WAVES was invited to a dinner party at the all-male Rod and Reel Club on Hibiscus Island, where they socialized with Army and Navy officers and dined on a succulent spread of duck and drinks. They complained, however, that their uniforms were unsuitable for Miami's hot and sticky summers in offices lacking air-conditioning. Yeoman Second Class Becky Sharpe commented:

Well, the best news ever to hit the barracks is the new uniform for next year. We won't have to be bothered with wilting collars and wrinkled skirts because the new uniform for next summer will be harmonizing with the slate gray for men, and they will be gray and white striped seersucker dresses with separate jackets! Boy, that's good news!

There's a rumor that hats are to be purchased with detachable crowns. That would be a money saver too because some of the "down at the brim" jobs that the girls have been wearing lately are a result of the hard labor of washing them by hand ... to save half a buck!<sup>27</sup>

The subchaser center continued its expansion in the port as well. There had been damage to the engines of subchasers attributed to adulterated fuel and lubricants, so the Bureau of Ships required the SCTC to construct a fireproof laboratory on its pier with the appropriate testing and treatment apparatuses and personnel experienced in petroleum chemistry to analyze fuel and oil. That complex building had to be specially equipped with exhaust blowers to eliminate toxic fumes. Contracts for the construction of the petroleum laboratory and for major alterations to other facilities on the piers and at the nearby Alcazar Hotel were awarded to the Miami construction firms of Fred Howland, Inc., and Jack Quinn, Inc.<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of 1943, the SCTC's executive officer, Lieutenant Commander F. J. Condon, incorrectly predicted that the school would eventually attain a maximum enrollment of 4,500 trainees.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Pier 3 at the foot of N.E. Ninth Street and Biscayne Boulevard was taken over piecemeal for more classrooms and dockage. The City of Miami operated a cold storage plant there and first leased 4,835 square feet in warehouse 11-A along with dockage. Then it quickly leased its remaining warehouse space and dockage through several transactions, and the Navy used the plant to store and distribute fresh meat, fruit and vegetables to its mess facilities. As soon as the SCTC had complete control of Piers 2 and 3, the Seventh Naval District also vigorously sought a lease of Pier 1 from Miami City Manager A. B. Curry and City Clerk Frank J. Kelly. On May 19, 1943, McDaniel advised the Chief of Naval Personnel that crews for destroyer escorts would soon begin reporting for training at the center in numbers that would provide enough men for forty ships per month. Accordingly, he calculated that ongoing enrollment of enlisted trainees would immediately rise to 6,000 men, but the existing classroom facilities could only accommodate 4,000. Hence, more classroom space was needed. Furthermore, congested berthing conditions on Piers 2 and 3 were quickly worsening, and it became nearly impossible to operate safely without collisions damaging the vessels. The number of ships docked at the SCTC on June 10, 1943, indicated the dangerous overcrowding at Piers 2 and 3. McDaniel's command had thirteen permanently attached training vessels and thirty-three subchasers undergoing shakedown. To make matters worse, fifty-five additional subchasers were scheduled to arrive within a month and four much larger destroyer escorts were due within three weeks. Adding to the congestion, ocean-

going supply barges from the Naval Operating Base at Key West had to carefully squeeze their way through the clusters of tethered vessels as they continuously came and went to pick up food from Pier 3's cold storage plant and other supplies needed by that installation. The Chief of Naval Operations appreciated the increasingly hazardous port conditions and proclaimed, "The acquisition of Pier No. 1 Miami, Florida for use by the U.S. Navy is *urgent*." Significantly, the SCTC's lease of Pier 1 from the City of Miami on August 6, 1943, obviated the necessity of the Navy's previously considered stopgap takeovers of the Sears, Roebuck & Company store at N.E. Thirteenth Street and Biscayne Boulevard, the Biscayne Roller Skating Palace at 1220 Biscayne Boulevard, the Metzger Motor Company at 230 N.E. Fourteenth Street, and the Oldsmobile garage building at 1125 N.E. Second Avenue. None of those would have been fully satisfactory solutions to the problems of classroom overcrowding and insufficient ship operating space. Additionally, a Navy takeover of the Sears store would have hurt a large group of that company's Miami employees, since Sears had a large export business there engaging in substantial trade with Cuba. Once the SCTC acquired all three of the Port of Miami's big piers, McDaniel plastered signs all over them exclaiming, "Sink that Sub!"<sup>30</sup>

The downtown Biscayne Boulevard area became a full-fledged military installation. The speed limit for motorists using Biscayne Boulevard between S.E. First Street and N.E. Twelfth Street was reduced to twenty miles per hour with SCTC personnel directing traffic during the busiest hours of the day. Sailors marched to and from their hotels and the piers protected from traffic by wooden barricades running along both sides of the Boulevard's center median for the entire zone's length. The barriers remained in place until October 1945. Even with those safeguards, that stretch of the Boulevard was dangerous for pedestrians. L. F. Barnes, a bluejacket stationed at Pier 2, was seriously injured when a Miami Transit Company bus struck him in front of the Alcazar Hotel.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the piers themselves were hazardous places to work, and industrial accidents sometimes occurred. The dockage around subchasers was typically crowded with materiel waiting to be loaded aboard the vessels. That included items like dangerous machinery, stores of ammunition, spare parts, crates of rations and other haphazardly stacked gear. Second Class Electrician's Mate Claude Josiah Kitts of Dallas, Texas, was accidentally hit in the head and killed. His body was found floating in the bay near



Barricades along Biscayne Boulevard.  
Miami News Collection, HistoryMiami, 1989-011-18471.

Pier 3 and was turned over to the Philbrick Colonial Funeral Home for disposition.<sup>32</sup>

Medical care was provided to SCTC personnel at the Everglades Hotel. Its top three floors were converted into a 225 bed naval hospital run by Commander Thomas W. Hutson, USNR. A member of the family of Dr. James Jackson, a noted early-Miami physician, Dr. Hutson possessed many years of experience in the medical field before receiving his commission. His staff at the Everglades included eight other medical doctors and sixty assistants. Pharmacist Mate H. O. Diamond maintained the complete medical charts of every individual assigned to the subchaser center. X-ray equipment was installed and a prosthetic dental laboratory was established. The Navy also built the U.S. Naval Dispensary and Family Clinic at 800 N.E. Second Avenue to serve the health needs of the dependents of the people stationed at the SCTC. That construction was partially prompted by advice to the Navy from Dade County Health Department director Thomas H. D. Griffiths, M.D., and Dade County Research Bureau head Professor O. P. Hart, that the number of civilian hospital beds for isolation of communicable diseases in Dade County had fallen below the margin of safety. Those officials noted that dependents

of SCTC personnel and those of other military services were using many of the beds to the exclusion of indigent civilians.<sup>33</sup>

The extensive use of public hospital beds by subchaser school dependents was not the only stress placed on Dade County by the influx of Navy trainees into Miami during the war. Dependent children of subchaser trainees and other members of the Navy created a financial strain on the public school system. A. P. Walter, who was the business manager of the Dade County Board of Public Instruction, contacted Admiral Kauffman seeking detailed information about war activities and facilities under his command in order to complete an application for federal aid for the operation of the county's public schools. In reply to Walter's letter, Kauffman acknowledged that the Submarine Chaser Training Center and other naval facilities created an additional burden on Dade County classrooms, and that there would be further expansion in the near future. He responded, however, that the Navy could not reveal additional details of its plans and operations due to the classified nature of much of the information sought.<sup>34</sup>

SCTC personnel and their families became prominent downtown shoppers. Wives joining their subchaser trainee spouses in Miami necessitated the opening by the Navy of a commissary store. It was located at 105 West Flagler Street and carried a complete stock of groceries, meats, vegetables, and sundries. The Submarine Chaser Training Center required its officers and men to apply to the supply officer at Pier 2 for a permit before they or their dependents could shop at the commissary. In addition to the grocery shoppers, naval officers choosing not to purchase government-issue uniforms were offered the opportunity to buy better quality uniforms with gold braid from Burdine's Department Store at Flagler Street and South Miami Avenue at prices established by the Department of the Navy.<sup>35</sup>

Admiral Kauffman's wife organized the Miami chapter of the Navy Wives of America. It was named the Betty Lou Kauffman Chapter for their daughter, who was active in its establishment and activities. Among its numerous purposes were to foster a spirit of fellowship and friendship among the wives of Navy men stationed in Miami, to extend relief to its needy members and to organize various social activities for the women and their spouses. In 1943, the chapter's president was Mrs. A. F. Last, whose husband was a Yeoman First Class in the SCTC's personnel office in the Everglades Hotel. Its vice-presidents were Mrs. N. Bronstein and



Mrs. C. D. Bailey, whose enlisted husbands respectively worked on Pier 2 in the electric shop and the radio school. The Betty Lou Kauffman Chapter held its weekly meetings every Tuesday afternoon at 4:00 p.m., alternating between the YWCA and the downtown Seybold Building's arcade at 33 East Flagler Street. During their meetings, the women made surgical dressings for the Red Cross, donated blood, arranged social events, and held drives to obtain items needed by sailors sent overseas. They also operated the Navy Thrift Shop at 811 N.E. Second Avenue, where Navy families could purchase used items from clothing to baby furniture. One of the Miami chapter's most active members was Mrs. Roy Adair, whose husband was killed in action. She explained how the group helped its members cope with the war, "Navy wives are always traveling around, and it makes them feel pretty good in a strange place if they know somebody else in the Navy. It makes a bond between them."<sup>36</sup>

Although many of McDaniel's students were married with children and most of the students were serious about their training, a few sailors were disciplinary problems. Military discipline was strictly enforced at the SCTC. McDaniel did not tolerate troublemakers. He announced that some of the trainees were misfits, who should never have been sent to the center. He promptly expelled those people from the program and transferred them to other duty stations. He also ordered the hard cases jailed in a brig constructed in the Alcazar Hotel.<sup>37</sup>

While the course work and sea duty were strenuous, two-thirds of the enlisted men were given liberty each evening, and many had girlfriends in Miami. Most officers, on the other hand, generally spent their evenings studying.<sup>38</sup> Many of the men felt like tourists. Northern trainees particularly enjoyed the tropical weather that was so different from that in their hometowns. Motor Machinist G. C. Skalman of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, exclaimed, "Miami is the prettiest town I ever saw, and the hottest!" The beauty of South Florida's sea and sky awed New Englander Hank Strauss, who was accustomed to the North Atlantic's slate gray waters. He especially admired the colorful combination of the indigo Gulf Stream, the brilliant sunshine, and the billowing white cumulus clouds, which reminded him of a bright Mediterranean painting. The limit of shore liberty for both officers and enlisted men attached to the SCTC was within a twenty-five mile radius of Miami. The enlisted liberty sections were initially required to report back by 7:00 a.m., but that liberal policy was severely curtailed due to abuses, and the

hours were cut back to mandate expiration of liberty for sailors at 12:30 a.m., except for Saturday nights when it ended at 1:30 a.m. There was an exception for chief petty officers, whose liberty expired at 2:00 a.m. every night.<sup>39</sup> There were warnings that overnight liberty would be ended if the privilege were abused. The center's weekly news magazine *The Chaser* cautioned:

A few weeks ago we here at SCTC were given the privilege of over-night liberty with the understanding that when we started to abuse that privilege, the administration might have to withdraw the order. Most of us, conscious of that fact, have made an effort to get in at a reasonable hour so our studies the next day would not suffer.

Surveys reveal that quite a few of the men have been abusing the privilege by staying out until the wee hours of the morning, night after night.

We must remember, mates, that even though we have the privilege, we are still students with our duty as our main obligation!<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, it was mandatory for the SCTC's enlisted men to show their identification cards, liberty cards, leave papers, and travel orders or other special papers upon demand by the Shore Patrol, which was headquartered in room 1023 of the Alfred I. Dupont Building. Those restrictions were equally applicable to the numerous enlisted personnel of Allied navies stationed at the SCTC.<sup>41</sup> Irresponsible drinking had become a major problem, and the trainees were ordered not to consume alcoholic beverages after midnight on weeknights and after 1:00 a.m. on Saturday nights.<sup>42</sup>

Most of the subchaser crewmen were young. Many had just begun to shave, while others were still in high school when they joined the reserves. The SCTC, like many military bases, was surrounded with temptations for the young sailors, most of whom were away from home for the first time. Miami had plenty to offer. The most obvious was prostitution, which the Navy believed was closely related to the excessive use of alcohol by the men. The owner of the Circus Bar at 401 Ocean Drive on South Beach, just across County Causeway from the center, was fined and seven female "entertainers" in their twenties were arrested for prostitution and given thirty day jail sentences. The *Miami Daily News* report-

ed that misguided teenage girls, who slept with the Navy boys and called themselves "Victory Girls," were an increasing source of venereal disease in Miami.<sup>43</sup> Other women migrated to Miami to work as prostitutes for the thousands of bluejackets who passed through adjacent Bayfront Park during the war. The U.S. Public Health Service's Venereal Disease Control Division cited Miami for its alarming rate of infection among naval personnel. Consequently, the military closed all of the bordellos around the school, including Gertie Walsh's infamous house on the Miami River, which always had a staff of fifty to one hundred girls available. City of Miami officials cooperated with embarrassed Navy brass but, during the wartime crush of humanity transiting through downtown Miami, prostitution was exceedingly difficult to control. In conjunction with the efforts of the city and the Navy, Dade County Sheriff D. C. Coleman announced that an unparalleled drive would be made against prostitution, because venereal disease drained manpower and menaced the progress and security of the war effort. Accordingly, Admiral Kauffman directed the Shore Patrol to cooperate with local authorities and in his order he quoted a section from a letter he recently sent to the City of Miami's mayor, stating, "The policies of both the Army and the Navy Departments direct that suppression of prostitution shall be the primary step in venereal disease programs. In this connection, the armed forces rely on the efficient and wholehearted cooperation of the civilian authorities." He followed his order with a memorandum advising:

The War and Navy Departments have stated that prostitution must be eliminated from the areas in which personnel of the Armed Forces are stationed or operating. This policy also states that houses of prostitution must be eliminated or closed to the personnel of the Armed Forces.

Even extra police patrols and the early closing of Bayfront Park to the public failed to stop the practice until all the shrubbery was so severely cut back that there was no privacy for the sailors and women to engage in sexual activity.<sup>44</sup>

Along with alcohol consumption and prostitution, gambling was also a readily available vice, and the subchaser center's young trainees were easy marks for swindlers. For instance, the Miami City Commission revoked the operating license of the Miami Bar & Grill at 208 N.E.

Second Avenue after liquor inspector H. G. Howard found that bar owner Sol J. Levy was using crooked dice to cheat the sailors.<sup>45</sup> The SCTC looked unfavorably on gambling, and it was prohibited on the station, with personnel guilty of violations subject to disciplinary action.<sup>46</sup>

To counter those temptations, the SCTC, city government, religious groups and civic organizations worked to provide wholesome recreation, activities and entertainment for the subchaser trainees. On their Sunday afternoons off, the single, young reserve officers wore their dress whites and attended buffet suppers with singing and dancing given by Miami's Spinsters' Club. Other dances were held for them on the top floor of the bachelor officers' quarters at the Columbus Hotel.<sup>47</sup> The exclusive Bath Club on Miami Beach offered memberships to subchaser officers, and the expensive Tatem Surf Club on the beach permitted SCTC officers and their families to use its facilities for an admission fee without requiring them to purchase the usual membership.<sup>48</sup>

Along with its obstacle courses, the Navy constructed a sports area in Bayfront Park with a field for touch football, a basketball court and volleyball courts. The United War Mothers and Fathers opened reading and writing rooms for sailors on the fifth floor of the Seybold Building. The City of Miami constructed and leased a recreation building across from the Alcazar Hotel at N.E. Fifth Street and Biscayne Boulevard to the Dade County Defense Council for the entertainment of the subchaser center's trainees for \$1.00 per year for the duration of the war. Known as the Service Men's Club, it offered free admission to the enlisted sailors and often provided amenities like buffets, dancing and live orchestra music. Radio station WQAM frequently broadcast live from those events. Free boxing matches for the men were held on the roof of the C-A-Y Club at N.E. Second Street and First Avenue.<sup>49</sup> Other dances and social events were offered by nearby Gesu Catholic Church, Riverside Methodist Church, and the Young Men's Hebrew Association at 1567 S.W. Fifth Street.<sup>50</sup> Religious services were available in the SCTC's hotels, on its piers, and at various area houses of worship. The center's chaplain, Father James J. Carberry, USNR, whose office was in the McAllister Hotel, made sure that all the students were aware of the times and locations of Sunday services, including "colored" services.<sup>51</sup> The Navy also urged the enlisted trainees to attend war bond shows and rallies on weekend evenings, such as the one held in Bayfront Park on Saturday night, September 26, 1942, featuring an appearance by

Hollywood starlet Veronica Lake. The SCTC constructed a movie hall on Pier 2, which showed a different film each evening. Those included celluloid fare like George Sanders in *The Falcon's Brother*, Abbott and Costello's *Who Done It*, and *Gentleman Jim*, starring Errol Flynn. Sometimes the sailors simply wanted to hang out on their ships and relax. For instance, communications personnel aboard *SC-761* bought a record player in Miami and had it installed in the vessel's radio shack. The sound system carried music from Miami's AM radio stations and the record player to speakers in the crew quarters and the ship's fantail. A canvas awning was rigged over the fantail to shade the crew from the hot Miami sun as they lounged during their off-duty hours. A favorite tune was *Tangerine* recorded by Helen O'Connell and Bob Eberly.<sup>52</sup>

Miami was certainly a safer location for the land-locked Flagler Street headquarters of the Seventh Naval District than Key West had been. As Miamians switched their clocks over to Eastern War Time (EWT), important security measures were put in place all along the Gold Coast. Steely-eyed naval sentries carrying rifles with fixed bayonets alertly paced back and forth along Miami's waterfront. Guards were placed around the city's water plant.<sup>53</sup> Border Patrol officers from the U.S. Immigration Service stopped traffic and closely interrogated drivers and passengers in motor vehicles traveling on the causeways connecting Miami to Miami Beach and on the U.S. 1 span between the mainland and Key Largo to prevent travel by enemy aliens. The Dade County Courthouse was closed to night meetings, and armed guards were posted in its lobby.<sup>54</sup> The Coast Guard built watchtowers staffed in shifts by civilian volunteers every three miles along South Florida beaches; celebrated Florida author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings took her place among the coast watchers in the towers.<sup>55</sup> Air raid warning procedures were established for the Dupont Building and the Submarine Chaser Training Center.<sup>56</sup> The Light Control Committee of the Dade County Defense Council, chaired by Ellis C. Knox, banned all outdoor electric signs and non-essential lighting in Miami, ordered street lights along the bay to be dimmed, and mandated that the sodium vapor lights on the Venetian Causeway be extinguished. Five teams of lighting engineers made nightly rounds to ensure that store windows were in compliance with the Committee's lighting standards, and Florida Power & Light Company painted the tops of Miami's streetlights to reduce illumination under orders from the War Department. Civilian Air Patrol pilots surveyed the

coastline from Riviera Beach in Palm Beach County down to Molasses Reef in the Florida Keys.<sup>57</sup>

At the Submarine Chaser Training Center, its industrial manager, Lieutenant Commander F. A. LaRoche, entrusted his bluejacket guards on Pier 3 with the responsibility for the facility's security, which was clamped so tight that no relatives or friends were allowed on the premises or the piers. Those sailors were called the Seaman Guard, and they also watched over the hotels leased by the Navy on the opposite side of Biscayne Boulevard. David Hibbs recalled that his duties included making armed floor-by-floor checks in the hotels. Hibbs carried a loaded rifle and was also responsible for ensuring that the hotel rooms were secured each evening. His guard unit was under the direct command of the SCTC's Security Officer, U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant J. Wadsworth, who constantly drilled the guards. Moreover, the center's gates were manned by crisply dressed and armed Marines to prevent the entry of unauthorized persons. According to E. J. Comeau, who was a nineteen year-old apprentice seaman when he arrived at the center in 1942, students were even forbidden to possess cameras. In fact, he said that it was a court martial offense to take a camera aboard a subchaser, and the students were threatened with twenty years imprisonment at hard labor for violations of that rule. On January 13, 1943, the Seventh Naval District's Chief of Staff H. H. Benson issued an official written order expressly stating, "The taking of pictures by unauthorized persons, naval and civilian, in or near Naval establishments ... is prohibited." That order required that in the event of violations officers were to "secure the camera and all exposed film, and turn it over to the Commandant, together with a complete report, so that the appropriate disciplinary action may be taken."<sup>58</sup> Parenthetically, the Seaman Guard from the piers participated in the half-time festivities at the Orange Bowl football game on January 1, 1943, before 30,000 screaming sports fans. A combination of Army Air Force and Navy marching bands formed a huge bomber that slowly moved the length of the field. Lieutenant Wadsworth's incessant drilling paid off when his accomplished drill team of SCTC Seaman Guards flawlessly performed the manual of arms with their rifles and gave a demonstration of bayonet fighting moves to the excited crowd. In that game, the University of Alabama Crimson Tide rallied from a 14-0 first quarter deficit to roll over the Boston College Eagles 37-21.<sup>59</sup>



Notwithstanding the numerous security measures taken ashore, Florida's East Coast waters were no safer for commercial shipping than those around Key West. Even as the Submarine Chaser Training Center was hard at work to counter the Nazi U-boat scourge, Donitz's underwater fleet was taking a horrendous toll on the merchant vessels plying the state's nearby shipping lanes. The attacks off South Florida beaches became so frequent that the Miami City Commission urged federal authorities to deepen the Intracoastal Waterway from eight to twelve feet between Jacksonville and Miami to avoid the submarine hazard and enable the water transportation of vital war materiel.<sup>60</sup>

The first of many U-boats to infest Admiral Kauffman's GSF waters was U-128 under command of *Korvettenkapitan* Ulrich Heyse. On February 19, 1942, Heyse's submarine made a brazen daylight attack within view of Cape Canaveral and sent its tin fish into the tanker SS *Pan Massachusetts*, laden with four million gallons of Texas oil. In a mere ten days in May 1942, Adolf Hitler's *Ubootwaffe* sent an amazing ten freighters and tankers to the sandy bottom of Florida waters. Their cargoes consisted of such vital war necessities as phosphate ore, crude oil, lead, lumber, aviation fuel, and camouflage paint. When the Dutch freighter *Laertes* was sunk by U-109, commanded by *Kapitanleutnant* Heinrich Bleichrodt, she was loaded with airplanes, tanks and trucks desperately needed in the war effort. Bleichrodt also torpedoed the British tanker *La Paz* just off Miami Beach.<sup>61</sup> Not all the U-boat destruction off South Florida came from German torpedoes, though. Sometimes the Nazis used their guns. On July 18, 1943, U-134 shot down U.S. Navy blimp K-74 flying out of the Richmond Naval Air Station in South Dade. The action occurred right off Islamorada in the Upper Keys, and sharks killed Isadore Stessel, a young sailor from Brooklyn, New York, after the blimp crashed into the Atlantic.<sup>62</sup> The offshore *unterseeboot* devastation was graphically described by Philip Wylie and Lawrence Schwab in their March 11, 1944, *Saturday Evening Post* article "The Battle of Florida" in which they reported:

By night one could see sudden pillars of fire at sea and by day, dense clouds of smoke. In one instance, a torpedo missed its target and plowed toward land. It struck a sandbar a hundred feet off the beach of a resort town. The blast broke the windows in the hotels along the ocean front for a half mile. Scores

of tankers exploded, burned, keeled over, and sank within sight of land.<sup>63</sup>

Miamian H. K. Johnsen of 7100 N.E. Fifth Avenue was the master of a U-boat victim torpedoed in broad daylight only a mile and a half off Lake Worth. Ruby Compte saw the attack on his ship as she was gathering shells on the beach. She immediately ran to the beachfront home of Pat Enright, the wife of the *Miami Herald's* cartoonist, and telephoned the authorities. When the two women returned to the beach the ship was already tilted and going under.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps the most notorious of the South Florida Nazi attacks was the May 14, 1942, assault by *Korvettenkapitan* Reinhard Suhren in U-564 on the Mexican tanker *Potrero del Llano*. Thousands of Miamians were witnesses to Germany's ruthless violation of Mexican neutrality, when the 7,500-ton tanker was viciously torpedoed just a few miles south of Fowey Rocks, not far from Key Biscayne. The ship became a roaring inferno, which lit the sky for miles around with a satanic reddish glow. After its attack, U-564 was seen slowly circling the fatally wounded tanker. Among the witnesses was Peggy Schroeder of 805 S.W. Thirteenth Avenue. She was casually walking along the beach and heard a muffled boom followed by a brilliant flash. She described what she saw as a great fire arising from the sea. Captain Herbert M. Carey, the dockmaster at the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce Marina, saw the flames leap skyward, creating such a brilliant red glow that all of the dark buildings around him became instantly visible. He said that the victimized ship was so close to land that he could easily see the rescue craft in the light of the broiling conflagration. Those rescuers were two Coast Guard patrol boats that picked up the survivors. Thirteen other crewmen died. Thirty-two year old crewman Julio Benavides of Tampico, Mexico, angrily shouted after he was rescued, "It was cold-blooded savagery. I would like just once to shoot that submarine." William E. Larisey of 3951 Palm Avenue in Hialeah was the night watchman at the *Miami News* Tower directly across Biscayne Boulevard from the Submarine Chaser Training Center. As he passed the window of the editorial room during his rounds, he saw a glare so bright that he thought Bayfront Park was on fire. The blaze produced such intense light that Key Biscayne was completely illuminated. When dawn broke, the blackened Mexican hulk, still belching fire and oily smoke, had drifted almost to the mouth of Government Cut at the south end of Miami Beach. The Nazis' stealthy

torpedo attack on the neutral *Potrero del Llano* precipitated Mexico's declaration of war against Germany.<sup>65</sup>

Suhren was certainly not the only U-boat captain to bring his submarine close enough to Miami to risk being seen. Some Nazi skippers were so bold that they routinely surfaced in the daytime near the beaches. Henry Rehse, an engineer on U-511, watched happy vacationers playfully splashing in the surf on Miami Beach as his submarine casually cruised south along the surface from Fort Lauderdale. It even stopped for a little while off Dade County to let the crew swim near an offshore lighthouse. On May 4, 1942, *Kapitanleutnant* Peter Cremer took his U-333 in so close to Miami Beach that he watched cars driving along the street and read the neon signs on the beachfront hotels. It was not unusual for German submariners to recline on the decks of their U-boats getting suntans during balmy weather, and survivors of daylight U-boat attacks reported that sunburned young crewmen aboard the surfaced submarines took snapshots and home movies. Sometimes their commanders even apologized and blamed the victims' circumstances on the war. Occasionally, they passed out cigarettes and water to the survivors. In one striking instance, a U-boat surfaced alongside a Florida sport cruiser and its commander yelled in English to the pleasure boat's startled occupants that there was a war on and admonished them for their carefree attitude, "Get the hell out of here, you guys! Do you want to get hurt? Now scam!" In another, fishing boat skipper Willard Lewis in his thirty-eight foot cabin cruiser *Jay-Tee* was surprised when a U-boat began to surface directly beneath him, damaging the hull's planking.<sup>66</sup> During the summer of 1942, Admiral Donitz gloated over Germany's submarine success off America's beaches and bragged:

Our submarines are operating close inshore along the coast of the United States of America, so that bathers and sometimes entire coastal cities are witnesses to that drama of war, whose visual climaxes are constituted by the red glorioles of blazing tankers.<sup>67</sup>

The Office of Censorship in Washington, D.C. tried to clamp a lid on news media coverage of Donitz's submarine operations in Florida waters. The sinkings, however, were common knowledge. On February 24, 1942, John D. Pennekamp, managing editor of the *Miami Herald*, complained to the government about naval censorship of the newspaper's

articles about Nazi torpedo assaults on merchant ships off the Gold Coast. He telegraphed the federal censorship agency with the names of the most recently sunk ships and correctly identified them as the *Republic*, *Cities Service Empire* and *W. D. Anderson*. He wrote, "Sinkings public knowledge along coast since survivors already landed, explosions heard ashore, one derelict visible. Continued rumors and gossip doing more damage than facts would."<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the submarine attacks occurred so close to South Florida's beaches that war hysteria in Miami gave rise to various rumors and gossip regarding enemy sailors stealthily landing in Dade County and collaborators aiding the U-boats. Some claimed that U-boat crewmen were paddling ashore to purchase fresh groceries, while others asserted that local German sympathizers delivered fuel, milk, and citrus products in their small boats out to the enemy vessels. Nazi submarine crewmembers were reportedly arrested with ticket stubs in their pockets from a movie theater on Flagler Street. Local turncoats allegedly sent messages to the submarines with carrier pigeons. To calm the war jitters, F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover was finally forced to announce that the Bureau had investigated 500 false reports.<sup>69</sup>

The SCTC did not sit idly by on its piers and ignore the Nazi mayhem occurring in the nearby waters. Many of its trainees became active participants in the war. About fifteen subchasers were generally assigned to the SCTC as training ships, and they were frequently used for dangerous on-the-job training. Those were berthed in areas along the piers that were designated by letters of the alphabet. With explosions occurring just a few short miles seaward, students were often called out at all hours in response to the torpedoing of merchant vessels. Their early anti-submarine electronics were not advanced and were generally ineffective for detecting enemy U-boats that were more than 300 yards away. Readouts from those instruments were unsophisticated graphs. Consequently, the student equipment operators were forced by necessity to rapidly learn for themselves the characteristics of the German submarines through mental calculations concerning dive angles and speeds within certain geometrical areas.<sup>70</sup> Those inexperienced young subchaser officers and crews ventured out from the Miami school in their small sub killers to search for the enemy before they were completely trained. The Nazi slaughter was so overwhelming that every available means had to be used to try to stop the destruction. In addition, McDaniel sent crews of students off to bring back new subchasers for shakedown cruises lasting several weeks. Those

cruises were intended to probe for faults and correct them to strengthen each vessel's fighting efficiency. The shakedown cruises often turned into vital working missions in which the reservists escorted merchant ships to screen them from U-boats.<sup>71</sup> For example, E. J. Comeau was being trained as a radar operator at SCTC, but he was sent out to sea daily in a patrol craft. While still a student, he was temporarily assigned to PC-553 for convoy escort duty out of Guantanamo, Cuba, to protect merchant shipping.<sup>72</sup> So many of the trainees began patrolling the waters within the GSF that they started landing in Central and South American ports. In order to give a boost to friendly inter-American relations, the SCTC opened a library at the Plaza Hotel with books on Latin American culture. Some contained facts and figures about the host countries, while others provided useful information about how to make the most of liberty in those countries' ports.<sup>73</sup> The center's subchasers proved to be a useful deterrent, because they kept the German submarines deep underwater and unable to take periscope aim. Furthermore, when U-boats were forced by subchasers to stay down, they were susceptible to depth charges. Subchasers had the additional ability to ram submarines, and that had the psychological effect of keeping them submerged. Attacks by Donitz's U-boats gradually tapered off when subchasers began screening merchant ships, and the Navy instituted other coastal convoy protection. They ceased entirely by 1944.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the danger to subchasers from the lurking enemy, their weapons themselves were inherently ultra hazardous, and any errors in their use had serious and potentially fatal consequences for the men and their small ships. Bob Goll was a crewmember trainee aboard SC-1492 on a shakedown cruise out of the SCTC in 1944. He remembered an incident on that cruise when the vessel launched a depth charge, while moving at about five knots. The charge exploded after sinking only twenty-five feet, which was too shallow for safety. The concussion opened up the seams of the subchaser's fantail and everything in the galley was thrown to the deck.<sup>75</sup>

Even after a rough day at sea protecting merchant vessels from U-boats, there was often little rest for the weary trainees serving in duty sections. During the night, SCTC shakedown officers bawling, "battle stations, battle stations," suddenly appeared out of nowhere to roust the men out of their sleep and run surprise drills to evaluate the SCs and PCs for seaworthiness. McDaniel announced adamantly, "The purpose of this

center is training. To do everything we can—*everything*—to prepare your ship to go out and kill the enemy—accurately and permanently.”<sup>76</sup>

To maintain the combat readiness of the subchasers in the face of the Nazis’ bold predations, McDaniel’s personnel worked closely with local shipyards, with the Merrill-Stevens Dry Dock Company performing most of the work. In fact, Merrill-Stevens and its affiliated companies expanded right along with the subchaser center. Most of the engine repair work for the subchasers was done at the company’s facility next to the Twelfth Avenue Bridge on the north bank of the Miami River. Poorly installed equipment on subchasers was also fixed there and new components were frequently added. That work required the little ships to be pulled up the river, around its bends and curves, and through its raised drawbridges by towboats. One of Hank Strauss’s vivid memories of his time at the SCTC was taking his SC-668 up the Miami River to Merrill-Stevens to have mousetraps installed and the subchaser readied for combat before sailing to the Panama Canal on its way to the Solomon Islands. Strauss also remembered that even in 1942 the Miami River water was exceptionally dark and dirty.<sup>77</sup> The facility also refit the ships for overseas combat duty in other ways. Alterations typically involved removing the guns and the ammunition storage boxes that were installed when the vessels were constructed and replacing them with bigger ones. More powerful 40-mm Bofors guns replaced the three-inch guns. Radar was installed and subchasers headed for the South Pacific theater had extensive blower systems built in to reduce the extreme heat that accumulated inside the vessels. Meanwhile, Merrill-Stevens appointed Captain L. G. Reynolds as executive supervisor over defense precautions for its facility at the Navy’s request.<sup>78</sup>

The company’s first expansion took place in December 1941 in anticipation of the SCTC’s establishment on Pier 2. The City of Miami granted a zoning variance to a Merrill-Stevens affiliate, Miami Yacht Storage, Inc., to construct facilities on the south side of the Miami River across from Merrill-Stevens’s existing business. The purpose of the expansion was to build wood-hulled vessels for the Navy. The ordinance granting the variance only passed after a contentious city commission hearing at which residents of the area, including Sybil Jenkins of 737 N.W. Twelfth Court and Edna H. Smith of 1218 N.W. South River Drive, voiced their opposition. The women argued that their homes would be devalued if the area changed from residential to industrial. Miami Yacht’s



vice-president, Alex Balfé, told the commissioners that the Navy wanted the boat-building plant constructed and would simply condemn the site if the application was denied. G. Hyde Hopkins, president of Hopkins-Carter Hardware Company, implored the city to grant the variance to save his marine supply company and its twenty employees' jobs. Noting that the federal government forbade further sales of marine hardware for use on private yachts after December 31, 1941, Hopkins pointed out that his company would supply its products for the construction of the Navy's wooden vessels. The ordinance passed with the following provision:

That this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure on the ground of public need for the preservation of peace, health, safety or property of the City of Miami, and upon the further ground that the ships to be erected under the authority of this permit are required for national defense.<sup>79</sup>

The next Merrill-Stevens expansion occurred on April 8, 1942, the same day McDaniel was installed as the SCTC's commandant. Paul Prigg, who built pleasure boats before the war, organized the Miami Shipbuilding Corporation. It was another Merrill-Stevens company. The Miami Shipbuilding Corporation, obtained a permit from the City Planning Board to build a plant to construct additional boats for the Navy on Florida East Coast Railway Company land along Biscayne Boulevard between N.E. Seventh and N.E. Ninth Streets. That was filled property just south of the SCTC's piers, which had recently been leased by the railroad to the Bureau of Ships.<sup>80</sup> Toward the end of the summer, Miami Shipbuilding Corporation leased additional land about three blocks from the Dade County Courthouse on the Miami River's north bank next to the S.W. Second Avenue Bridge and immediately south of Florida Power & Light Company's downtown electrical yard. The Submarine Chaser Training Center requested the expansion for the servicing of its vessels.<sup>81</sup> On November 10, 1942, the city allowed a third Merrill-Stevens company, Dade Dry Dock Company, to build an office and workshops by a floating dry dock at SCTC opposite N.E. Eighth Street, which was to be used for the repair of the Splinter Fleet. The SCTC's industrial manager, Commander F. A. LaRoche, certified the need for the structures to the city as being essential to the war effort. The Dade Dry Dock Company operated the floating dry dock under a con-

tract with the Bureau of Ships. All of the Merrill-Stevens companies were intertwined. Alex Balfe, the president of Dade Dry Dock Company, was not only Miami Yacht Storage, Inc.'s vice-president, but was also vice-president of Merrill-Stevens. Paul Buhler, Dade Dry Dock's vice-president, was treasurer of Miami Shipbuilding Corporation.<sup>82</sup> When the Submarine Chaser Training Center regularly began transferring large numbers of its small ships and their crews to war zones, Merrill-Stevens became swamped with defense work. It had to turn away business when its yards on the Miami River and around the SCTC got so congested with subchasers that no more could be accommodated. Some subchasers had to go to bases as far away as Panama for refitting. Others went to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard at Portsmouth, Virginia.<sup>83</sup>

Segregation persisted in Miami during World War II, and Merrill-Stevens was no exception to that era's culture of racial discrimination when it came to the SCTC's African-American trainees. Jarvis Guice of Birmingham, Alabama, and Willie L. Gray of Baltimore, Maryland, the first black sub-chaser students, reported to Miami on December 23, 1943, and were quartered at the Everglades Hotel. Sixty other black sailors joined them within a week. Some of them were assigned as crewmembers of a subchaser being serviced at Merrill-Stevens's main yard, which had a snack bar with three sections. Those were labeled "white," "colored," and "enlisted." When the black sailors sat in the enlisted section, the white waitresses refused to serve them and ordered them to move to the one reserved for their race. The company also hired pot-bellied gate guards armed with .38 revolvers to keep the yard secure and to check liberty passes. They called the SCTC's black sailors "uppity niggers" and, on at least one occasion, threatened to lynch them if they argued with the white waitresses.<sup>84</sup>

The Jim Crow treatment of the SCTC's black sailors was not unique to Merrill-Stevens. The climate of racism was pervasive in Florida during the war years, and politicians stirred its embers. Senator Claude Pepper thundered, "The South will allow nothing to impair white supremacy." Florida attorney general J. Tom Watson similarly railed, "There is no such thing as racial equality and there never will be." Even Miami's local establishment held strong racist views. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's stop at the Negro USO Center at 535 N.W. Third Avenue was highly criticized by the *Miami Herald's* editors. The City of Miami

had a midnight curfew for blacks and a Miami Beach municipal ordinance criminalized “coloreds” being on its streets after sunset.<sup>85</sup>

Those laws and attitudes naturally had a negative effect on the training and morale of the subchaser center’s African-American sailors. The Navy realized early in the war that the fatality rate among the crews of torpedoed vessels would be reduced if the men were taught how to correctly abandon their ships and escape the burning oil slicks on the surrounding waters. Therefore, McDaniel instituted a training program that was held on a municipal fishing pier on Miami Beach. The SCTC constructed a high tower at the end of the pier, simulating a ship’s deck, and the trainees were shown how to properly jump into the water and rescue their drowning shipmates. Additional training was provided on the beach in first-aid and artificial respiration. The Miami Beach government, however, prohibited the Navy from using its public pier and beach to train black sailors, and McDaniel could do nothing about the city’s discriminatory policy.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, since greater Miami was a racially divided community with its restrictive policies, there was very little for the SCTC’s black sailors to do on liberty in Dade County. Their recreational outlets were largely confined to the areas known as “Colored Town,” “Liberty City,” and parts of Coconut Grove. Denial of their use of the beach left them few options for places to swim. In fact, when the Dade County Commission issued bonds in 1941 to build new beaches and improve those already existing, its commissioners did not appropriate any money for beaches to serve the county’s 45,000 black residents. Similarly, the Miami City Commission only budgeted \$529.07 to be spent during the 1942 fiscal year to develop Coconut Grove Colored Park, which was the only black park developed within the city limits that year.<sup>87</sup> Generally, the black SCTC students were left to swim in the filthy Miami River. They did not know the health hazards to which they were being exposed. Up until the late 1940s, raw sewage was discharged directly into the river, and the levels of contamination were so high that health officials recommended against contact with the water.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Lew Hewes, owner of Hewes Outboard Service at 841½ Biscayne Boulevard, complained in a letter to the city manager about the overpowering stench at riverfront property he owned at N.W. Sixth Avenue and N.W. North River Drive. In it he said, “Solids of all kinds come from the sewer and the gas odor

at low tide is unbearable.”<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, other swimming facilities for the black SCTC trainees were virtually nonexistent in Dade County.

Discrimination against the SCTC’s black personnel, of course, was not limited to swimming or to enlisted men. Even black naval officers were subjected to indignities. A case in point involved Ensign Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., who was the first black man to be commissioned from a college Naval Reserve Officers Training course. Up until 1944, there were no black naval officers at all. As the war continued, the Navy began to show more interest in racial integration, and it commissioned thirteen black officers. Gravely became an officer on November 14, 1944, and in February 1945 he was ordered to the Submarine Chaser Training Center for three months of training. One evening he was having supper in a black restaurant in the “colored” section of Miami and was roughed up and arrested by a white MP, who simply refused to believe that a black person could achieve officer status. The MP charged Gravely with impersonating an officer and had him rudely hauled away to the city police station, where he was kept in custody until a white officer signed for his release. While Ensign Gravely never commanded a subchaser during the war, his training at the Submarine Chaser Training Center qualified him for assignment as ensign in charge of communications aboard the little PC-1264. He remained in the Navy and became the first black officer to rise to command of a U.S. Navy warship. In 1962, Lieutenant Commander Gravely became the captain of a destroyer escort. Despite his racially charged encounter with the abusive MP in Miami in 1945, Gravely had two stars pinned on his collars when he was promoted to rear admiral in 1971 and placed in command of the entire United States Navy’s communications.<sup>90</sup>

Samuel L. Gravely, Jr., was not the only member of the SCTC to achieve prominence. Future president John F. Kennedy was assigned as an instructor on March 8, 1944, following the sinking of PT-109, which was rammed by the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri* in the Solomon Islands. Another was Pierre Salinger, a subchaser commander who became Kennedy’s White House press secretary. Science fiction writer and Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard reported to Miami for duty as a trainee on November 2, 1942, and received assignment afterward as commander of PC-815.<sup>91</sup>

The SCTC became an extremely cosmopolitan military installation. Not only did it pioneer a degree of racial integration and incorporate

women into its staff, but also in 1942 and 1943, 360 Allied officers and 1,374 enlisted men from fourteen different foreign navies were trained there through interpreters. The center trained officers from the Soviet Union, Cuba, Brazil and France. Sailors from the Dominican Republic, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela were among those receiving lessons in the operation of subchasers.<sup>92</sup> In 1944, Hank Strauss taught navigation and piloting to Nationalist Chinese officers, who provided their own interpreters. He also instructed Soviet sailors, who sharply marched to class in formation along Biscayne Boulevard every morning while they sang in Russian. The men from that Communist dictatorship were required by their leaders to stay together and were prohibited from fraternizing with the other nationalities' sailors.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, it was federal government policy that the presence of Soviet military forces in Miami was not to be publicized. Hoke Welch, managing editor of the *Miami Daily News*, caused a controversy for publishing an article on September 24, 1944, about their training at the SCTC and apologized to the commandant of the Seventh Naval District for doing so. He said that one of his staff "must have misunderstood the Office of Censorship ruling" and promised that a similar violation would not reoccur. In a response to an inquiry by the commandant, the Navy Department's Office of Public Relations advised that government policy was unchanged and no publicity about the Soviet sailors' subchaser training in Miami was desired.<sup>94</sup>

The United States started delivering subchasers under lend-lease to many of its allies. In March 1943, officers and men of the Cuban navy completed training at the SCTC that taught them how to operate ten vessels turned over to their government by the U. S. Navy. Cuban Lieutenant Commander Marcos Perez Medina presented McDaniel with a Cuban flag at a graduation ceremony in front of the SCTC administration building on Pier 2. In his graduation address, Medina told his trainees and McDaniel:

This morning we leave in this center something that we love the most—our flag. A flag that in our history always has flown ready to defend all just and noble causes ... We know that here she will wave, next to the flag of this great country, when the sun of justice will shine upon a world for men of goodwill.

McDaniel replied that he accepted the flag on behalf of the Submarine Chaser Training Center and the United States as a symbol of the unity of



Presentation of Cuban flag.

Jay Spencer Collection, HistoryMiami, 1985-136-123.

the two countries in the war effort.<sup>95</sup> On June 11, 1943, the SCTC transferred PC-405 and PC-406 to the Brazilian navy after both ships had shakedown cruises from New York to Miami the month before. A ceremony arranged by Lieutenant A. E. Ritchie, the head of the center's Foreign Instruction Department, was broadcast locally over radio stations WFTL and WKAT and in Portuguese to South America by an NBC short wave transmission.<sup>96</sup> Lieutenant T. P. Ulmer turned a sub-chaser over to Soviet Lieutenant N. N. Chriskyakov at the center in July 1943 in the first transfer of an SC to an actual fighting ally. McDaniel personally read the transfer orders at a ceremony in which the Hammer and Sickle was raised on the subchaser. The SC-1076 was transferred to the Soviet Union on September 24, 1943, after it was brought down to Miami from Camden, New Jersey. During the voyage, the navigation chart blew off the bridge and SCTC student Bob Goll had to jump into the ocean to retrieve it. The SC-1492 commanded by Lieutenant J. G. Ludwig was turned over to the Soviets in Miami on June 7, 1944, and crews trained by Hank Strauss sailed their subchasers out of Government

Cut as they departed the SCTC for Murmansk, Russia, to fight the Nazis.<sup>97</sup> Over 25,000 officers and 57,000 enlisted men were trained in Miami. Five hundred ninety-eight U.S. Navy ships and seventy-nine foreign vessels were shaken down at the center. So many nationalities were ultimately represented at the Submarine Chaser Training Center that the *Miami Herald* described it as “an international postgraduate school in submarine warfare.”<sup>98</sup>

Despite being a demanding taskmaster, McDaniel was held in extremely high esteem by his officers and men alike. When he was promoted to full commander, they threw him a surprise party. McDaniel gave a brief speech in which he cemented his bond with them and said, “Don’t let these stripes stand between us, men. Don’t let them break down the close relations we’ve established here. My office door is always open; you are welcome any time.” A thunderous outburst of applause greeted their skipper’s warm words. He craved to get back on the line, however, and within a year was transferred to the Pacific. McDaniel’s replacement was another outstanding officer, Captain Beverly R. Harrison, who was honored for gallantry during the Sicilian campaign. Likewise, the center’s executive officer, Lieutenant Commander F. J. Condon, was also transferred. Commander C. B. Beasley succeeded him.<sup>99</sup>

As the brave sea warriors in their small subchasers left the security of the Submarine Chaser Training Center behind on the way to uncertain fates on both sides of a bellicose globe, their last glimpse of Miami was the palm-lined MacArthur Causeway on the left with its island mansions and streaming automobile traffic. Miami Beach’s sandy expanse swept north as far as they could see. When they passed through Government Cut toward the large sea buoy and into the inky blue water of the Gulf Stream, they were casually watched by curious fishermen casting baits on the breakwater and a sprinkling of oiled, indolent, sun-bronzed vacationers shielding their eyes with copies of the *Miami Herald*. Its headline screamed, “BATAAN DEATH MARCH.”<sup>100</sup>

Those young reservists were to play a major role in the war overseas. The initial purpose of the SCs and PCs was to obstruct Donitz’s coastal submarine campaign and buy time to allow the United States to manufacture enough destroyers and warplanes to stamp out the U-boat initiative. They performed that duty well. As the war progressed and Hitler’s submarine threat on the East Coast subsided, they started providing anti-submarine screening for Allied convoys worldwide. The formidable little





Seaman Nathan Moseley puts the finishing touches to the insignia of one of the sub chasers.

Jay Spencer Collection, HistoryMiami, 1985-136-129.

vessels crossed the oceans during enormously violent and dangerous storms that caused them to endlessly thrash, wallow, roll, pitch, and corkscrew amidst clouds of black, oily, noxious diesel exhaust and crushing waves. The SCTC men endured constant seasickness, physical torture from the endless pounding, soaked bedding, lack of hot food and fresh-water and torrents of frigid saltwater that poured through their congested quarters and made life miserable. In the tropics they suffered from hurricane-driven rain and perilous gale force winds, burning heat and humidity, rotting food and hordes of invading cockroaches and exotic insects. They fought Japanese suicide aircraft and torpedo bombers. They fought German fighters, Stuka bombers, and other enemy warplanes. Mines threatened to disintegrate them. They were frequently bombed and often under heavy fire from enemy shore batteries. Nature and the enemy sank subchasers. Nevertheless, true to their original purpose, they endlessly searched the hostile seas for German, Japanese, and Italian submarines. The SCTC's Donald Duck Navy coped with icing that threat-



Seaman J. B. Johnson takes over at the wheel of a sub chaser and gets his instructions from Ensign T. W. Gray.

Jay Spencer Collection, HistoryMiami, 1985-136-124.

ened to capsize its subchasers and groundings that wrecked their hulls. Subchasers participated in Operation Torch when the Allies landed at Casablanca. They fought at Sicily, Anzio and Palermo. They served as landing control and communications vessels guiding the troops to the right beaches in the landings on D-Day at Normandy and in southern France. In the Pacific campaign, the gritty SCs and PCs from Miami fought with American forces as they jumped from island to island. From the Solomons and New Guinea through Saipan and Guam they recovered the dead and wounded, rescued downed fliers, cleared dreaded mines and laid down smoke screens to conceal amphibious assaults. Subchaser crews also risked their lives during the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.<sup>101</sup> E. J. Comeau's PC-1228 saw service at Guadalcanal, Tulagi and at Tarawa, where his ship had to navigate through water so filled with mutilated human remains that its hull was stained red by the blood.<sup>102</sup> Through all the danger and privation, the Miami men performed their duties with the skill and dedication McDaniel and the Navy

expected. Their resolve and valor were exemplary as American naval forces braved the myriad enemy weapons and drove to unconditional victory over this Nation's fascist tormentors.

The motivation and fearlessness of the Submarine Chaser Training Center's youthful citizen-sailors were largely attributable to the efforts and spirit of their legendary Miami leader Eugene Field McDaniel, who returned to the war. In 1945, McDaniel was the executive officer of the cruiser U.S.S. *Biloxi*, which was blasting Okinawa with its big guns in preparation for the American amphibious landing. The vessel had been previously hit, but survived the attack. Suddenly, a kamikaze pilot bent on blowing the ship to pieces and killing its crew slammed into the port side of the vessel, creating huge smoking holes near its waterline. The suicide attacker's 1,100-pound bomb failed to detonate, and the ship survived the assault. As usual, McDaniel continued to inspire the men under his command as he did at the SCTC. He firmly calmed the shaken sailors and refocused them on their duties by declaring, "The good Lord must ride with this ship."<sup>103</sup>

The United States was not ready for war in 1942 and lacked the vessels and personnel to protect merchant shipping along her coasts. The warships in the American fleet that were capable of countering the Nazi U-boat campaign on the Atlantic Coast, around Florida, and in the Gulf of Mexico were required for the protection of convoys delivering crucial war supplies to Great Britain. That transoceanic service carried such a high priority that those ships were unavailable for detachment to U. S. coastal waters. Consequently, Admiral Karl Donitz was essentially granted free rein by default early in the conflict to engage in unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allied tankers and freighters plying the seas washing American shores. The United States needed time to convert its enormous manufacturing capacity from the production of civilian goods to the massive tools of total war. Interim action was necessary to mitigate the German *unterseeboot* killing, and American ingenuity responded. The president and his naval leaders devised a plan to harness the country's smaller-scale civilian resources for immediate military use in the fight against the enemy submarine expedition. Thus, yacht builders nationwide were recruited to quickly construct the fleet of small subchasers that would challenge the Nazi sea beast devouring Allied merchantmen in view of American beachgoers. Their yards promptly churned out the

Splinter Fleet to frustrate the German objective. SCs and PCs were mass-produced and commissioned in short order to fight back. The Navy then tapped reservists from its manpower pool to command and crew the anti-submarine vessels of the Donald Duck Navy. Boys in high school, on farms, and from cities enlisted in the naval reserve, and college students were immediately commissioned as ensigns upon graduation. Reservists served as the backbone of the Navy's subchaser arm to counter the U-boat terror campaign.

Those human resources first required training to operate their combat vessels. Utilizing the brilliant organizational and leadership skills of Rear Admiral James L. Kauffman and Lieutenant Commander Eugene Field McDaniel, the Navy basically commandeered downtown Miami's business district and port facilities for the Seventh Naval District and its subordinate command, the Submarine Chaser Training Center. An expanse of office buildings, piers, hotels, warehouses, and businesses was transformed into a restricted military training complex almost overnight. Owners of facilities who refused to voluntarily relinquish their property to the Navy had it involuntarily seized through the government's power of eminent domain, despite their entreaties to Washington. Office buildings became command centers; municipal piers provided dockage for ships of war; hotels were converted into barracks; warehouses were transformed into classrooms; businesses became mess halls. Flagler Street tied downtown's Seventh Naval District to the SCTC and Biscayne Boulevard became the school's main artery. The Shore Patrol policed the area and maintained order as waves of transient bluejackets and their officers arrived, received training, and went to war. Naval personnel and their dependents changed the look of Flagler Street as uniforms dominated its sidewalks from the West Flagler commissary to the McAllister Hotel at East Flagler and the Boulevard. Despite the efforts of civilian and military authorities to stifle prostitution, gambling and excessive drinking, the young subchaser trainees entered into an uneasy symbiosis with the city's wartime vice in which each was temporarily dependent upon and reinforced by the other. An informal coalition of religious, Navy and civilian leaders provided alternative outlets for the students during their off-duty hours, which seriously weakened that unhealthy relationship. Sports, movies, patriotic events and social entertainment were organized to steer the young sailors in a more productive direction. Regardless of their choic-

es when not in classrooms or on sea duty, the men were steadily molded into combat seamen and learned to hunt the Nazi U-boats in their little vessels under McDaniel's open-minded guidance and strict discipline.

The SCTC was an emergency experiment that went beyond McDaniel's philosophy of instilling a spirit of inquiry and thoughtful adaptation to unfamiliar exigencies. The center offered opportunities for African Americans and women to achieve levels of responsibility not previously available. Its population and purpose expanded local manufacturing, construction and trade, and caused a corresponding growth in employment. Through its international students, it also brought a mix of cultures, ideas, and a cacophony of languages to a narrow, resort-based city, which forever changed Miami's identity. Most importantly, however, Miami's Submarine Chaser Training Center provided the hitherto missing human element to the Navy's plan to eliminate the dangerous German submarine crisis in American waters and created an intimidating auxiliary fleet that joined U.S. military forces in bringing the Axis Powers to their knees and preserving freedom. The Submarine Chaser Training Center was emblematic of the creative thinking of naval leaders that gave rise to their use of ordinary, existing resources and facilities to win World War II.<sup>104</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 A stanza from the poem *Splinter Fleet*, penned by gunner's mate Oris E. Moore aboard Subchaser-1016 running escort duty out of Colon, Panama, during World War II. Quoted in Theodore Treadwell's *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 8.
- 2 Michael Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), xvii, 197, 345. The general description of the launch of a U-boat's torpedo is found in Wilfred Huettel's *War in the Gulf of Mexico: The German U-boat Invasion* (Santa Rosa Beach, FL: Hogtown Press, 1989), 6-7.
- 3 Joseph and Anne Freitus, *Florida: The War Years* (Niceville, FL: Wind Canyon Publishing, 1998), 69; Eliot Kleinberg, *War in Paradise: Stories of World War II in Florida* (Cocoa, FL: Florida Historical Society Press, 1999), 24; E. Lynne Wright, *It Happened in Florida* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot, 2002), 54; Sally Ling, *Small Town, Big Secrets: Inside the Boca Raton Army Air Field during World War II* (Charleston: History Press, 2005), 39-40.
- 4 Kleinberg, *War in Paradise: Stories of World War II in Florida*, 17, 22; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States*

- Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), 130; Ling, *Small Town, Big Secrets: Inside the Boca Raton Army Air Field during World War II*, 43-44; Elizabeth Bush, *America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 70; Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, 347.
- 5 Willson to Andrews, undated response to May 11, 1942, letter from Andrews, contained in unlabeled file, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, Record Group 181.2.6, Accession Number 00A2001, National Archives and Records Administration—Southeast Region (Morrow, Georgia) (hereafter referenced as NARA with the initials RG for Records Group. All additional NARA references are Accession Number 00A2001).
  - 6 Homer Hickam, Jr., *Torpedo Junction* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 209; Wright, *It Happened in Florida*, 54; J. Henry Doscher, Jr., *Subchaser in the South Pacific* (New York: iBooks, 1994), 2; A. D. Rathbone, *He's in the Sub-Busters Now* (New York: McBride, 1943), 78-79, 200-201; William Veigele, *Sea Bag of Memories* (Santa Barbara, CA: Astral Publishing, 2002), 38, 108; Treadwell, *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II*, x, 2-3, 29.
  - 7 Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 229-230; Veigele, *Sea Bag of Memories*, 231, 235-236; Treadwell, *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II*, 5; Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, 392; and, Huettel, *War in the Gulf of Mexico: The German U-boat Invasion*, 17.
  - 8 Doscher, *Subchaser in the South Pacific*, 2; Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 229-231; Veigele, *Sea Bag of Memories*, 98 and 231.
  - 9 Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 135-136; File L1-2, Funds—Bureau of Yards and Docks and Commandant Seventh Naval District Order Number 1-42, File A1-1, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA; Bush, *America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story*, 70; Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, 347; The Agnew Welch Collection of *Miami Daily News* Articles, Florida Room, Miami-Dade Public Library, Miami, Florida, vol. 3, July 8, 1942, 3 (hereafter cited as AWC *Miami Daily News*); H. H. Baskin, Secretary of the State Road Department, to James L. Kauffman, September 21, 1942, File A7-1, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, Record Group 181.2.6, NARA; and, *State v. Florida Keys Aqueduct Commission*, 148 Fla. 485, 4 So.2d 662 (1941).
  - 10 Kleinberg, *War in Paradise: Stories of World War II in Florida*, 26, 29-30; Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, 348; Huettel, *War in the Gulf of Mexico: The German U-boat Invasion*, 56-57.



- 11 Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 135; Claude Pepper to Commandant of the Seventh Naval District, May 21, 1942, File A1-1, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA; Arthur Chapman, "Watch the Port of Miami," *Tequesta* 53 (1993), 16; AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 6, December 6, 1942, 22A; Peter Kemp, *Decision at Sea: The Convoy Escorts* (New York: Elsevier-Dutton, 1978), 48; Bush, *America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story*, 70.
- 12 Sidney Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 13, 1944, 11; Rathbone, *He's in the Sub-Busters Now*, 200-201; Minutes of the Miami City Commission, October 28, 1942, Resolution 17976 (hereafter cited as MCC); Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 231-232.
- 13 Treadwell, *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II*, 27; Chapman, "Watch the Port of Miami," 10, 12, 15; Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11.
- 14 Bush, *America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story*, 70; Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11; Treadwell, *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II*, 27; AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 3, July 31, 1942, 11-12; Jack Bell (the "Town Crier"), "Miami Sub Buster," *The Miami Herald*, December 6, 1942.
- 15 David Hibbs, interview by author, Miami, Fla., March 11, 2009.
- 16 Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 232; Rathbone, *He's in the Sub-Busters Now*, 78-79, 200-201; Edward Stafford, *Subchaser* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 3; Eric Purdon, *Black Company: The Story of Subchaser 1264* (New York: Robert B. Luce, 1972), 36; Doscher, *Subchaser in the South Pacific*, 6-7; Commandant of the Seventh Naval District Memorandum 43-39, August 5, 1943, and Commandant of the Seventh Naval District Memorandum 43-43, August 11, 1943, File A3-2 (1) ND7 (01), Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA; and, Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11.
- 17 E. F. McDaniel, Introduction, *Aviation Rescue Training Manual* (Miami: Submarine Chaser Training Center, 1943), (emphasis added)
- 18 Treadwell, *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II*, 26, 29; Purdon, *Black Company: The Story of Subchaser 1264*, 35-36, 44; Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11.
- 19 Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11.
- 20 Jack Bell (the "Town Crier"), "Miami Sub Buster," *The Miami Herald*, December 6, 1942.



- 21 Rathbone, *He's in the Sub-Busters Now*, 115-116; Henry Strauss, interview by author, Miami, Fla., August 21, 2008. McDaniel may have been resorting to hyperbole to inspire his men when he claimed that German submariners machine-gunned his lifeboat training aid. Former University of Florida history professor Michael Gannon wrote in his well-researched book, *Operation Drumbeat*, that the only documented incident of that type was on March 13, 1944, when U-852 commanded by *Kapitanleutnant* Hans Eck machine-gunned the swimming survivors of the sunken Greek vessel SS *Peleus* in the Indian Ocean. Gannon noted that wartime propaganda and the imaginations of Hollywood screenwriters often falsely depicted U-boat crews as "evil, cunning, and ruthless outlaws of the ocean." Gannon, *Operation Drumbeat*, xx-xxi.
- 22 David Hibbs, interview by author, Miami, Fla., March 11, 2009.
- 23 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 5, October 4, 1942, 8; vol. 5, October 3, 1942, 4; MCC, August 19, 1942, Resolution 17913; Gary Mormino, "Midas Returns: Miami Goes to War, 1941-1945," *Tequesta* 57 (1997), 12.
- 24 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 6, December 6, 1942, 22A; vol. 8, February 16, 1943, 52; Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, vol. 1 of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 232.
- 25 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 5, October 14, 1942, 21; vol. 8, February 16, 1943, 52; and, vol. 15, February 14, 1943, 24.
- 26 Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11.
- 27 Purdon, *Black Company: The Story of Subchaser 1264*, 93; Submarine Chaser Training Center, "1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary," *The Chaser* 3, no. 19, July 26, 1943, no page number; Submarine Chaser Training Center, "What's Doing with the WAVES," *The Chaser* 4, no. 4, August 30, 1943, 13; Submarine Chaser Training Center, "What's Doing with the WAVES" *The Chaser* 4, no. 14, November 8, 1943, 16, contained in File A10, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
- 28 A. H. Van Keuren, Chief of the Bureau of Ships, to the Vice-Chief of Naval Operations, October 2, 1942, File A1-1; Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks to Fred Howland, Inc. and Jack Quinn, Inc., April 3, 1943, file A1-1; and, Commandant, Seventh Naval District, to Fred Howland, Inc. and Jack Quinn, Inc., May 25, 1943, File A1-1, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
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- teen days. Montgomery later expanded the program to three weeks. His command was situated just south of the SCTC's piers where Miami's Bayside Marketplace is now located. Robert Bulkley, Jr., *At Close Quarters: PT Boats in the United States Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 66.
- 30 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 7, January 19, 1943, 45; MCC, April 8, 1942, Resolution 17775; April 15, 1942, Resolution 17786; May 13, 1942, Resolution 17823; November 4, 1942, Resolution 17982; AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 11, June 20, 1943, 45; vol. 11, July 15, 1943, 85; vol. 12, August 5, 1943, 23; Shalett, "Our School of Death-to-U-boats," 11; W. C. Colbert, Officer-in-Charge of the Navy Supply Pier (Pier 3), to Public Works Officer, Seventh Naval District, March 29, 1943, File L8-3; E. F. McDaniel to the Chief of Naval Personnel, May 19, 1943, File A1-1; W. R. Munroe, Commandant Seventh Naval District to the Chief of Naval Personnel, May 22, 1943, File A1-1; W. R. Munroe to the Chief of Naval Personnel, June 10, 1943, File A1-1; E. F. McDaniel to W. R. Munroe, June 10, 1943, File A1-1; Chief of Naval Operations to the Vice-Chief of Naval Operations, June 19, 1943, File A1-1 (emphasis added), Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
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- 32 Treadwell, *Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers of World War II*, 4 and AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 7, January 2, 1943, 1-1A.
- 33 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 8, January 31, 1943, 10; vol. 3, July 26, 1942, 8; Bureau of Yards and Docks Authority for Expenditure at SCTC, File L1-2/EN5, May 12, 1944 (X-ray) and July 20, 1944 (Dental); and, W. R. Munroe, Commandant Seventh Naval District, to Maury Maverick, War Production Board, May 15, 1943, File A1-1, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
- 34 A. P. Walter to James L. Kauffman, January 15, 1943, and James L. Kauffman to A. P. Walter, February 1, 1943, File A1-1, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
- 35 Commandant Seventh Naval District Memorandum Number 47-43 and Memorandum Number 18-43, File A3-2/ND7 (01), Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
- 36 Submarine Chaser Training Center, "Navy Wives," *The Chaser* 3, no. 18, July 19, 1943, unpaginated, contained in File A10, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA

- 37 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 9, March 19, 1943, 54 and vol. 14, November 22, 1943, 4.
- 38 There is a fictional book about the exploits of Lieutenant Sam Chance, USNR, his PC-1307, its crew, and the Submarine Chaser Training Center. The novel has a chapter about liberty in Miami. It contains an error regarding the direction of Flagler Street, which runs east and west. In the story, Chance and a fellow officer “drove steadily *north* up Flagler,” stopping for drinks at mirrored clubs with “chrome and glass and indirect lighting,” which were filled with servicemen and “tight-hipped girls with the eyes of huntresses.” William Syers, *The Seven: Navy Subchaser* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1960), 125.
- 39 AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 4, September 20, 1942, 25; Henry Strauss, interview by author, August 21, 2008; Submarine Chaser Training Center, “Official Info,” *The Chaser* 4, no. 14, November 8, 1943, 7, contained in File A10, Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA; Doscher, *Subchaser in the South Pacific*, 9-10; and, Commandant Seventh Naval District Order Number 11-44, File A3-2/ND7 (01), Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
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- 42 Commandant Seventh Naval District Order Number 31-42, File A3-2/ND7 (01), Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
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- 48 Commandant Seventh Naval District Memoranda 2-43 and 19-43, File A3-2 (1) ND7 (01), Central Files of the Seventh Naval District, RG 181.2.6, NARA.
- 49 David Hibbs, interview by author, March 11, 2009; AWC *Miami Daily News*, vol. 4, September 20, 1942, 14; vol. 4, September 26, 1942, 30; vol. 5, October 2, 1942, 5; and, MCC, February 11, 1942, Resolution 17684.
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- 104 The author owes a special thanks to Submarine Chaser Training Center veterans David Hibbs, E. J. Comeau, Bob Goll, Henry Strauss and Theodore Treadwell for their reminiscences and assistance in the writing of this article and for their unselfish service and sacrifices during World War II. Thanks are also in order for Theodore Treadwell's son, Dan Treadwell, for his suggestions concerning archival research and his help in procuring SCTC photographs from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.





Vincent Giblin's partner and Miami lawyer J. Fritz Gordon, Chicago mobster Al Capone, and Julio Morales, Mayor of Havana, Cuba, enjoy a beer at the Tropical Garden, Havana, Cuba, 1930.  
Florida Photographic Collection, State Library & Archives of Florida,