Foreword

When I enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1970 after drawing draft #006, the Navy decided that they needed Minemen and routed me through that training. I knew nothing about the proud tradition of Minemen, who were then, and remain so today, collectively only a small component of the Mine Warfare Community. Mine Warfare is itself, a very modestly sized and funded warfare area, far smaller than the Aviation, Surface Ship, and Submarine Warfare communities with which it interfaces, but a little more expansive than those of Special Operations and Special Warfare.

In 1940, well before the entry of the United States into World War II, the Naval Ordnance Laboratory, White Oak, Maryland, decided to copy the mechanism of a German magnetic mine received from the British. Since the mechanism required a nonmagnetic case, U.S. replicas of the mine were housed in aluminum mine cases, and designated Mk 12 mines. Other types of mines, among them the venerable WWI mine Mk 6, and the new Mk 25 and Mk 36 series, were subsequently developed and employed.

U.S. mines were used both offensively and defensively in World War II. In the Pacific, mines were laid in the approaches to, and within enemy harbors to "bottle up" shipping and deny use of the facilities. Mines were also employed defensively to protect Allied shipping and facilities from attack, primarily by Japanese submarines. The assembly, care, maintenance, loading, and in many cases deployment of these new types of undersea ordnance, required specialized naval personnel.

The Mineman rating was first established on 12 October 1943 and disestablished 1 January 1948. The rating was then re-established 9 June 1948. Initially, Gunner's Mates who were assigned duties to work on mines wore a GM rating badge with the silhouette of a Mk 6 mine around the crossed guns (nicknamed "Keyhole" Gunner's Mates). These gunner's mates were commonly referred to as "mining men." The actual MN rating badge (shown on the following page) was created when the rate was established in 1943.

From the beginning, Minemen played an important role in U.S. mining efforts during WWII and served as an important source rating for the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community, who benefited from their training in the assembly and function of undersea mines. As discussed in *Kissing Cousins*, then lieutenants Odale Dabney

Waters Jr. and Stephen Morris Archer were among the fathers of the Mineman community, and Lt. Draper L. Kauffman of the Navy EOD community. The former individuals were tasked with establishing a Mine Disposal School, and the latter with "standing up" a bomb disposal school.

USN Enlisted Rating Insignia of World War II

Mineman 3rd Class (MN3c)	Mineman 2nd Class (MN2c)	Mineman 1st Class (MN1c)	Chief Mineman (CMN)

DUTIES OF MINEMEN DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

My own experiences as a Mineman came well after both World War II and the Korean War but are illustrative of the Mineman community in that era. During the Vietnam War, I was among the many Minemen who were sent to augment Naval Magazine, Subic Bay, Philippines, to assist with the building and movement of mines in support of carrier operations, including the mining of Haiphong Harbor.

Later in my career, after achieving the rank of Mineman Chief Petty Officer, I deployed in USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) as the sole MN within the first three carrier battle groups responding to the taking of U.S. hostages by the Iranian Ayatollah. After commissioning to Ensign (LDO Surface Ordnance) in 1980, my responsibilities greatly broadened to encompass tours on the staff of the Mine Warfare Command, then three tours as a Mobile Mine Assembly Unit commanding officer.

Photo Foreword-6

Naval Magazine, Subic Bay (on Camayan Point), September 1965.
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 74182

Subsequently, while assigned to commander, Mine Warfare Command as the Mine Readiness, Planning and Requirements Officer (N5), I was exposed to the full spectrum of activities within the mine warfare community. This included, in addition to my involvement in offensive mining capabilities, greater interaction with all components of mine clearance operations. These included surface ship minesweepers, minesweeping helicopters, EOD detachments, and marine mammals.

I concluded my career as commander, Mobile Mine Assembly Group. Today, the Mineman rate continues its Jack-of-all-Trades reputation by subsuming jobs in Mine Countermeasures previously held by other ratings. Minemen now serve aboard *Avenger*-class mine countermeasures ships, *Freedom*- and *Independence*-class littoral combat ships, Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadrons, and EOD Units and Detachments. Their skills include expertise in the operation of sophisticated unmanned underwater systems. When not on sea duty, they continue to serve ashore as experts in the maintenance and assembly of sea mines.

Photo Foreword-7

Littoral combat ship USS *Independence* (LCS-2) pierside during her commissioning ceremony, 16 January 2010.
U.S. Navy photograph #100116-N-8273J-025

Following my retirement, I continued to support the Association of Minemen, serving as the editor of *The DASHPOT*, the newsletter of the association. In this venue, I was privileged to continue my acquaintance with many noteworthy Minemen, EOD officers and technicians, including CWO4 John 'Bart' Bartleson, USN, whose unpublished work, "History of U.S. Navy Mine Disposal, 1996," lent material to this book. Though not mentioned in *Kissing Cousins*, Paul William Culotta who recently passed, was among the many Minemen who served in the Pacific Theater, including Australia. Following Culotta's naval service, he became a noted aerospace engineer and an avid watchmaker from Hampton, Virginia. Believed to be the last WWII-era USN Mineman, he "crossed the bar" on 31 October 2021.

Commander Ron Swart, LDO, USN (Retired)