



# PROJECT LIFESAVER

NEWSLETTER | JULY 2020



20/20

# Vision

*Our Vision for the Future*



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# CHIEF AND ME

## The Ambassador's Column

Ron Yeaw

Chief Gene Saunders' association with me actually began several years prior to our first meeting. Gene became a police officer with the Chesapeake, Virginia Police Department in 1968. In 1974, through his own Army training and initiative, Gene requested, and was given permission by the Police Chief, to form the Chesapeake Police Department Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT). Because of his Army experience as a Ranger that closely resembled the efforts being exerted by the Navy's Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) and SEALs, and Chesapeake's proximity to the Naval Special Warfare base in Little Creek, he was able to participate in some training with Underwater Demolition Team 21 in 1975 and with SEAL Team TWO from 1982 to 1987. One training experience with SEAL Team TWO in 1985 involved fast roping from a helicopter. Because of the pilot's inexperience at conducting such training, and his subsequent inability to adjust the helicopter's altitude downward to compensate for the loss of the helicopter's weight, after the first four SEALs exited the helicopter and landed and it came his time to fast rope, the helicopter was 60 feet above the ground. When Gene got to the end of the 30 foot long fast rope, there was nothing but 30 feet of air between him and the ground. As a result of his fall he suffered a broken back. (The first SEAL to get to him was the SEAL Team TWO Command Master Chief Rudy Boesch who, in 2019, retired as the US Special Operations Command Master Chief after 45 years of service.) The experience reinforced in Gene's mind that, like Ranger training, SEAL training can be adventurous and fun but also inherently dangerous.

In 1990, as a source of personnel to train his volunteer SWAT team, Gene sought to renew his association with the Naval Special Warfare forces by requesting a meeting with me who, at the time, was a Captain and the Commanding Officer of SEAL Team SIX, the world's most elite maritime counter-terrorist force. In the meeting, I offered the assistance of several of my team members to conduct the training. As a result of their efforts, Gene's SWAT Team was able to conduct over 800 successful operations prior to his departure in 2001 from the Police Department after 33 years of service to form Project Lifesaver International.

Following my change of command in 1992, I lost contact with Gene until 2016 when Gene, as a member of the UDT/SEAL Association, was reading an Association magazine roster of fellow members, and saw that I was now living less than a mile from his home in Port St. Lucie. He called me, we had dinner together, and our relationship was renewed. Gene invited me to the 2017 PLI Conference in Orlando where, on the first day, I hosted a visit to the UDT/SEAL museum in Fort Pierce by about 40 of the conference attendees. The following day, Gene designated me as a Project Lifesaver Ambassador. The following year, I served as a conference Guest Speaker and now serve as the director of the Ambassador program.



I spent 30 years in the Navy as an Underwater Demolition frogman and SEAL. All of the time operating at night with the SEALs during my three tours in South Vietnam was in the Mekong River Delta.

Me with my Colt Automatic Rifle (CAR-15) Commando Assault Rifle in the Rung Sat Special Zone 20 miles SE of Saigon - August 1969



I'm leading my platoon across a canal in the Rung Sat Special Zone 20 miles SE of Saigon - August 1969

I serve as a guide for family and friends to the UDT/SEAL museum. The following photograph is me standing in front of one of SEAL Team SIX's high speed assault boats.



If you are ever in southeast Florida near the Fort Pierce area and want to visit the UDT/SEAL museum, you can contact me through the Project Lifesaver International headquarters office in Port St. Lucie and I will be more than glad to give you a guided tour!

# ***Make a change?***

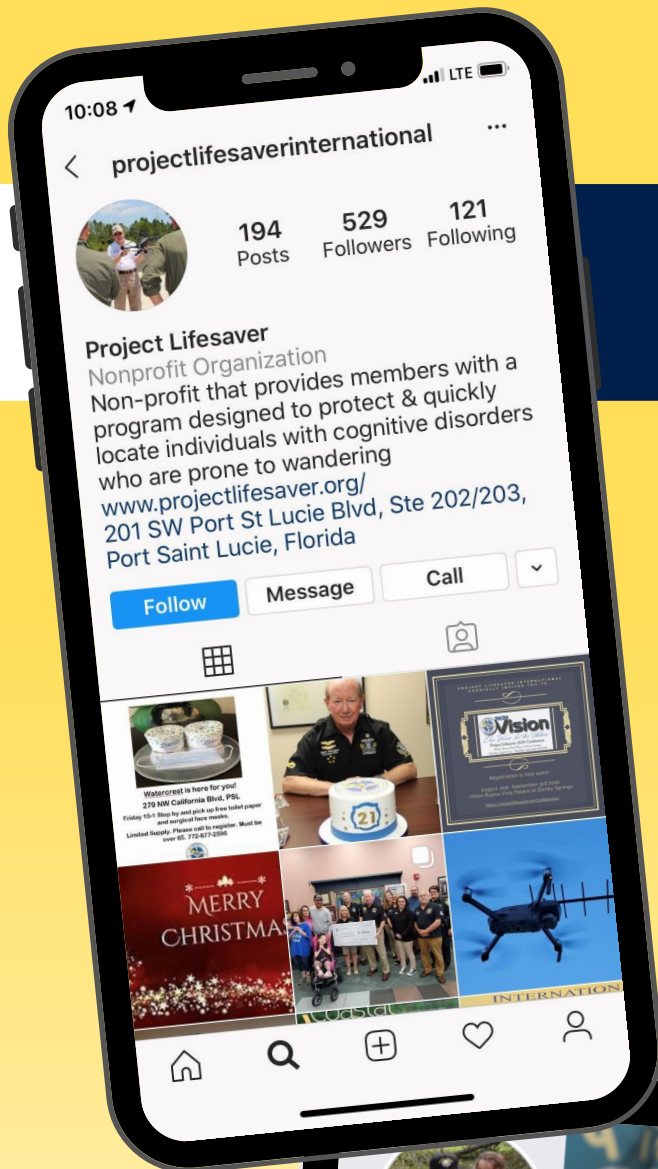
**We totally get it!**

Changes are necessary to learn and grow as agencies and individuals. However, these changes need to be reported to us so that we can keep our records up to date. If you make any changes to your Project Lifesaver Program (such as a new coordinator, new emails, or a change in personnel), please submit these changes to our Director of Member Relations, Jeanne Saunders. Thank you for being a member with Project Lifesaver!

***Director of Member Relations***

Jeanne Saunders

[jsaunders@projectlifesaver.org](mailto:jsaunders@projectlifesaver.org)



# CHECK US OUT!

We enjoy interacting with you on social media!  
We also post articles, events, and updates so it's a great way to stay informed!

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