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## Vet, 92, Navy demolition team member at D-Day, gets last wish in return to UDT/SEAL Museum

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FORT PIERCE — A 92-year-old graduate of the Underwater Demolition Team School at the U.S. Naval Amphibious Training Station at Fort Pierce and five-time wounded veteran of the D-Day landings on Omaha Beach will get his last wish Tuesday — a visit to the National Navy UDT/SEAL Museum.

Norval Nelson and a friend, former World War II mariner Michael Natale, 82, both of Chicago, are being flown to Fort Pierce thanks to the basketball players of Westminster Christian School in Elgin, Ill.

Nelson completed his training on the beaches of Fort Pierce in 1943, and was assigned to a team that prepared the way for the invasion fleet on D-Day.

Members of the combat demolition team cleared mines, destroyed beach and underwater obstacles and cleared six lanes for Allied landing craft that fateful day. Nelson was wounded five times during the work.

"Tuesday, April 5, will be a special day for Mr. Nelson and the museum," said Ruth McSween, museum curator. "He is still very spry and engaging and has some incredible stories of those horrific times on the beach. We are planing a 'Heroes Welcome' that week for him with a main reception here at the museum at 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, April 5. The public is invited."

Admission to the museum will be free Tuesday for Nelson's visit.

Nelson will spend four or five days in Fort Pierce.

His trip was made possible by the basketball players who made free throws to raise funds under the auspices of The Charity Stripe Inc., which is similar to the more widely known Make-A-Wish Foundation.

The veteran is looking forward to his visit, which he has wanted to do make but could

not afford because of finances and his health condition.

He told McSween: "I just can't find the appropriate words to express my appreciation for what ... these young players have done for me. I am probably 75 years older than these players, and to know they care enough about me to do what they have done, making this dream come true for me. I don't know what I can do the thank them. I am so blessed."

From 1943 to 1945, the U.S. Navy Amphibious Training Station at Fort Pierce produced UDT teams, scouts and raiders, attack boat crews and those with other military skills.

The demolition teams eventually became today's elite Navy SEALs. The acronym stands for Sea, Air, Land, where the SEALs fight.

The National U.S. Navy UDT/SEAL Museum is the only museum of its kind in the world and is the location of the official SEAL Memorial to the men who have died in SEAL activities.



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