



0. AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM - Story Preface

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This image depicts a tinned Schrader MARK V which Navy divers used during the World War II era. Tin helped to avoid dive-suit damage from sea-water corrosion. Image online via Diving Heritage and courtesy West Sea Company.

After leaving Key West, Carl was assigned to an escort carrier, the USS Palau, where he requested training as a diver. The request was denied.

His request was granted, however, when he was transferred to the USS Tripoli. Carl saw a diver, dressed in a deep-sea suit and wearing weighted shoes go over the side of the Tripoli to recover an airplane that had rolled off the carrier's jettison ramp. (The links take you to photos from the Navy's 1943 Diving Manual.) Carl's reaction was immediate:

This was where I said, "Now, this is the best thing since sliced bread. I've got to be a deep-sea diver." So I started requesting, requesting, requesting to be a deep-sea diver. I finally got into school in 1954.

But getting into diving school was just the start of a long, difficult process. And - blacks were not divers in the Navy. These were not the days when black men read Navy recruiting posters that said:

*You can study black history and
you can go out and make it.*

Instead, Carl found life at the diving school very disturbing. Using explicit words, he explains what happened in his Naval Institute *Reminiscences*:

*They would put notes on my bunk:
"We're going to drown you today, nigger!"
"We don't want any nigger divers."*

Carl decided to quit the program. He didn't see how the threats would ever stop. Someone on staff at the diving school - "a man named Rutherford" - intervened. He told Carl:

Those notes are not hurting you. No one is doing a thing to you. Show them you're a better man than they are.

Heeding Rutherford's words, Carl stayed the course. He graduated from diving school, ready to put on the Navy MkV (Mark V) and plunge into the deep as often as he could.



Before that happened, though, he had to learn a few things about diving hundreds of feet below the surface.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AN-IMPOSSIBLE-DREAM-Men-of-Honor-Story-of-Carl-Brashear>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AN-IMPOSSIBLE-DREAM-Men-of-Honor-Story-of-Carl-Brashear>

Questions 2 Ponder

What to Do When Discrimination Blocks a Career Path?

Before the 21st century, career paths were closed to individuals because of discrimination based on race, gender, social standing, age, sexual orientation and educational background. Even today, when such discrimination is against the law, one could make a case that it still exists.

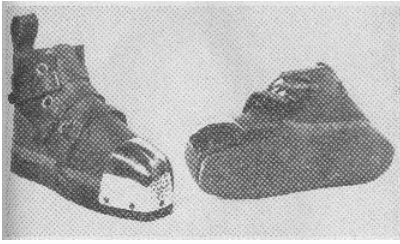
Carl Brashear faced such discrimination on several levels. Beyond the fact that the U.S. military placed African-Americans in labor positions, people believed that black servicemen could not be U.S. Navy divers. When he attended school, to become a diver, Carl received nasty notes from anonymous classmates.

What would make people think that African-Americans could not be divers?

Do you think Rutherford was right when he claimed that hostile actions—like nasty notes—weren't hurting Carl? Why, or why not?

How would you “show them” you're “better than they are” if someone insults you or unfairly treats you because of race, gender, educational background, social standing, age or sexual orientation?

Media Stream



Weighted Shoes

Image online, courtesy the uss.sarsi.org website.

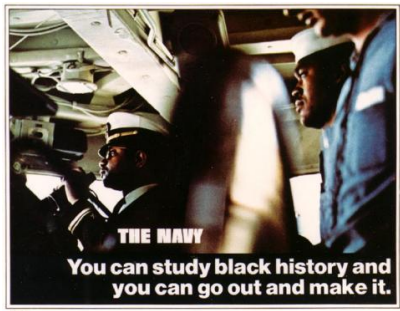
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Weighted-Shoes>



Over the Side

Image online, courtesy the uss.sarsi.org website.

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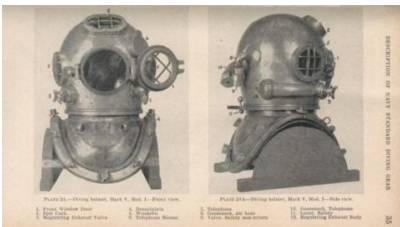


Navy Recruiting Poster

Image online, courtesy the Naval History and Heritage Command. NH 78889-KN.

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Mark V - Diving Helmet

Image online, courtesy the uss.sarsi.org website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mark-V-Diving-Helmet>



Carl Brashear at Salvage School

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AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

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