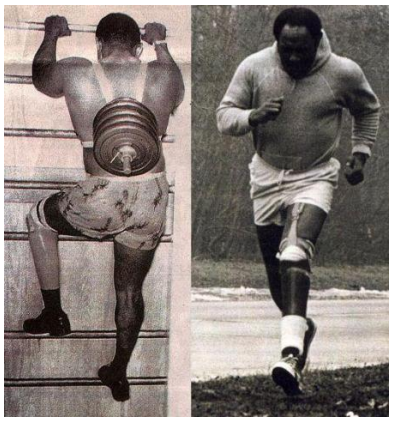
AWESOME stories

AMPUTEE DIVER



0. AMPUTEE DIVER - Story Preface

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13. REMINISCENCES OF CARL BRASHEAR

Giving himself very little rest, Carl Brashear wanted to document—with as many pictures as possible—that he was capable of becoming a U.S. Navy Master Diver, even though he had an amputated leg. These are some of the images which reflect his enormous efforts. One picture shows Carl climbing with weights on his back.

Convincing doctors he was capable of diving, Carl was “officially” called-up to the Deep-Sea Diving School. For one week, under the watchful, doubting eyes of his superiors, Carl did the impossible: diving, running and doing calisthenics.

Passing that hurdle, Carl had to prove himself for one full year. Chief Warrant Officer Raymond K. Duell (not the fictional character “Billy Sunday” in the movie *Men of Honor*) evaluated Carl (who is played by Cuba Gooding, Jr., in the film) to make sure he was up to the challenging grind of a Navy Diver.

Carl demanded of himself what most people could never demand.

Wearing a Mark V, which weighed about 200 pounds, he climbed ladders and did dives in the tank. Wearing the full Mark V helium/oxygen suit, which weighed nearly 300 pounds, Brashear had to take at least twelve steps on the surface. To prepare for that, Carl made sure his legs were strong enough.

> *Sometimes I would come back from a run, and my artificial leg would have a puddle of blood from my stump. I wouldn’t go to sick bay. In that year, if I had gone to sick bay, they would have written me up. I didn’t go to sick bay. I’d go somewhere and hide and soak my leg in a bucket of hot water with salt in it - an old remedy. Then I’d get up in the morning and run.*

Not only did he do the exercises himself, he would frequently lead the sailors in their workouts. They had no idea Carl was an amputee until they saw him swimming in the pool, weeks later.

Duell continued his relentless expectations of Brashear’s performance.

> *You know, that man drove me every day, every cotton-picking day. I did it every day - weekends and all. At the end of that year he wrote the most beautiful letter. Boy, that was something. I was returned to full duty and full diving - the first time in naval history for an amputee.*

While it was a great achievement for Carl to become the Navy’s first amputee diver, he still had not achieved his goal. He wanted to be the first black master diver.

He didn’t have much longer to wait.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AMPUTEE-DIVER-Men-of-Honor-Story-of-Carl-Brashear

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AMPUTEE-DIVER-Men-of-Honor-Story-of-Carl-Brashear

Questions 2 Ponder

When Is Overcoming One Obstacle Just a Prelude to Overcoming Even More?

Giving himself very little rest, Carl Brashear wanted to document—with as many pictures as possible—that he was capable of becoming a U.S. Navy Master Diver, even though he had an amputated leg.

To make that happen, he needed to document his capabilities. Talking about himself was not sufficient. Carl needed pictures proving he was up to the challenge. Photos, taken during his training sessions, speak volumes. Among other things, Carl was able to climb with weights on his back.

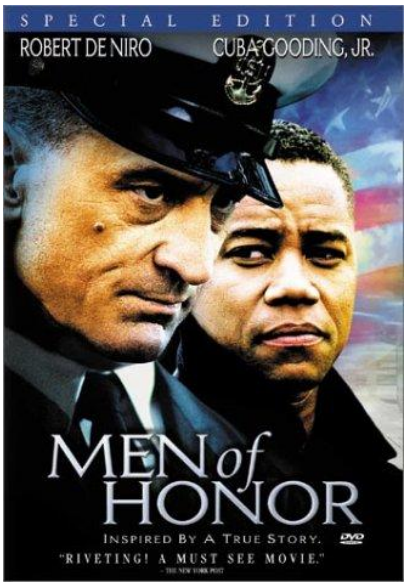
What do the pictures, documenting Carl's efforts, tell you about his determination?

Have you ever demanded more of yourself than you thought you were capable of giving? What happened, as a result of your efforts?

What kind of impact would Carl have had, on the people he was training, when they realized that the man who worked harder than they was missing a leg?

What do Carl's actions, in training others, tell us about how he viewed his disability?

Media Stream



Men of Honor - Movie Poster
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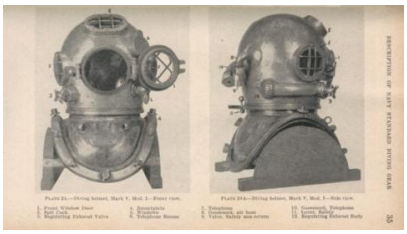

Mark V - Diving Helmet
Image online, courtesy the uss-sarsi.org website.
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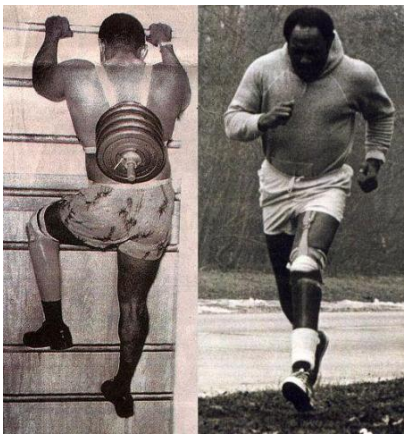

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