

# Mineman's heroic service honored

New mine warfare training center in San Diego named for Cecil Martin

MN1 Cecil Martin (left) and his crew in January 1969, participating in Operation Barrier Reef West. Left to right: MN1 Cecil Martin, GMG3 Vernon Lucas, SN William O'Donnell and EN3 David Anderson.



MN3 Cecil Martin in 1960

Mineman Cecil Martin's heroic service coupled with extraordinary technical and managerial excellence epitomize the skills required of the modern Mineman. The new Mine Warfare Training Center in San Diego will be named in his honor.

During his 21-year Navy career, Cecil Harvey Martin conducted mine warfare in nearly every corner of the globe. From South Carolina to Japan to Scotland and Sicily, with medals, honors and commendations, Martin's enduring service will be memorialized when the soon-to-relocate Mine Warfare Training Center in San Diego takes his name. The training center is closing its doors in Ingleside, Texas, making the move west in an effort to consolidate undersea warfare activities into

a central location at Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command (NMAWC).

The naming of this new facility came by way of a class assignment, but the current Mine Warfare Training Center Commanding Officer, Commander Brian Falke said it's an honor that has been a longtime coming. Falke tasked his students to find a fitting name for the new building. The intent was to get the students to look into the history of their mineman rating.





Left: The Martin family stand with Rear Adm. Plate. From left, to right: Regina, Cecil, Rear Adm. Plate, Toby and Kazuko.

He received a nomination from a Sailor who obtained his information from the Navy Cross citation and photo hanging on the quarterdeck walls of the training center. The photo showed Lt. Cecil Martin, formerly Mineman First Class, receiving the Navy Cross. Following further research efforts into Martin and the details of his service, Falke was convinced.

"This building needs to be named after him because this is where we teach Minemen," he said. "Cecil Martin was an honor student when he graduated from Mineman 'A' School. It is fitting that we should honor him with this and instill his story into the Mineman." Any time a Sailor comes to the training center, they will have the opportunity to learn about the man for whom the school is named and understand the caliber and character of those Sailors who came before them.

Martin said the naming of the school after him is a great distinction. "My family and I are pleased with the acknowledgement," he said. "Personally, I hope I can live up to the honor."

If Martin could teach the Sailors

coming through the training center one thing, it would be a lesson he himself learned from fellow River Boat Patrol Captain James Elliot Williams — "There's just no right way to do wrong." Martin said Williams, a Boatswain's Mate First Class, was the recipient of the Medal of Honor as well as the Navy Cross. He was the highest decorated enlisted Sailor in the history of the Navy and he also served in River Division 531 having left the section about six months before Martin joined the division. "I believe that if the graduates of Mine Warfare Training Center would remember that one saying, they would certainly serve the Mine Force and their nation with honor," he said.

Falke said Martin serves as a shining example of what it looks like to successfully and admirably serve outside one's rating, something today's Sailors face in modern battlefronts. "In Vietnam, Martin was asked to do something completely outside his rating. It's indicative of what's going on with the war on terrorism. We are asking our Sailors to go forward and do something completely outside their rating," he said. "Some of my minemen have been on Individual Augmentee duties in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa doing all kinds of things that are outside their rating."

Martin was awarded the Navy Cross for action during the Vietnam War. While serving as the Senior Boat Captain with River Division 531, Martin was transiting from one location to another when his two-boat patrol came under enemy fire from all sides. A citation from the Secretary of the Navy John H.

Chafee describes the events. "During the initial hail of fire, his cover boat received two direct rocket hits, wounding all personnel aboard and causing the craft to veer out of control and run aground directly in front of the enemy firing positions. Petty Officer Martin ordered his coxswain to reverse course and re-enter the ambush area to rescue the cover boat's crew members.

As his unit approached the stricken craft, Petty Officer Martin directed effective counter fire and, placing his boat between the beleaguered craft and the blazing enemy batteries, took command of the precarious rescue effort."

The citation reports that Martin manned and fired a machine gun at crucial intervals while directing fire-suppression efforts and later he administered first aid and coordinated the transfer of wounded personnel to his unit.

"Through his courageous and determined fighting spirit, he succeeded in safely extracting his men, undoubtedly saving numerous lives. His great personal valor in the face of heavy and sustained enemy fire was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service," the citation concluded.

Martin describes his service in Vietnam as a Mineman First Class with the River Patrol Force and captain of a River Patrol Boat as the high point of his career. "Few enlisted men have been given such responsibility," he said. In addition to the Navy Cross, Martin was also awarded



Martin captains a river patrol boat in late 1968.



the Bronze Star Medal for his service in Vietnam.

Martin began his naval career at the age of 17. Out of boot camp he was given orders to the Naval Weapons Station, Yorktown, Va., where he was to await assignment to the Mine Warfare School which, at the time, was making a move to Charleston, S.C. When he returned from service in Vietnam, Martin attended B School, once again achieving honor student of the class, and was retained onboard as a lab assistant. When he was promoted to Mineman Chief (MNC), he taught Advanced Electronics and Test Set Maintenance and Repair. He was later promoted to Warrant Officer and was transferred to Commander Mobile



PBR 110 on patrol around Christmas 1968.

Mine Assembly Group (COMOMAG) as a deploying Officer in Charge of overseas mine sites. He served as the Officer in Charge of Mobile Mine Assembly Group (MOMAG) Detachments 2 and 4 in Glen Douglas and Machrihanish, Scotland, MOMAG Detachment 6 in Souda Bay, Crete and twice at MOMAG Detachment 5 in Sigonella, Sicily.

Martin served in the mine force as both an enlisted Mineman and as a Warrant Officer, Chief Warrant Officer and Lieutenant Junior Grade. He retired as a Lieutenant on the first of May, 1979, after serving three years as the Assistant Readiness Officer at Commander Mine Warfare Command

in Charleston. While there, he was responsible for the readiness of all in-service mines.

Martin has been around the mine warfare world, but there are some significant changes he has witnessed since he joined the community. "One of the biggest changes I have seen is the role that women play in the Mine Force," he said. "Since my time in the Navy, women have achieved remarkable progress in responsibility and advancements in rate and grade." Another change Martin marked is the deployment of minemen in their own ships. "During my time, we were primarily a shore duty rating with few of us serving aboard ships. To be sure, a few minemen did serve on

tenders, carriers and ammunition ships, but not nearly so many as serve on the mine ships today." Minemen deploying with their mission modules onboard the Littoral Combat Ship will be an even bigger change for

the future, he said.

Martin married his wife, Kazuko, at the American Consulate in Yokohama, Japan, on March 9, 1962. A daughter, Regina, was born in 1965 and son, Toby, followed in 1967. Martin and Kazuko have five grandchildren.

After he retired from the Navy, Martin designed and built his home and attended college, earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree and a Master of Arts Degree in Studio Art. His awards and accolades reach into the art world as well. He has received many honors for his wildfowl wood carving skills and has sold many commissions over the years. Martin is a multiple cancer survivor. Because of the dust woodcarving creates, Martin has



Martin served in the mine force as both an enlisted Mineman and as Warrant Officer, Chief Warrant Officer and Lt. Junior Grade (pictured left.) He retired as a Lieutenant in 1979.

been forced to give up this passion, but he now occupies himself with making musical instruments and doing an occasional painting.

Upon his retirement, Martin was presented with the Navy Commendation Medal. The citation noted Martin for his "extraordinary technical and managerial skills (that) were instrumental in establishing mine warfare policy and doctrine which influenced worldwide mine system readiness and training and contributed directly to the high state of Navy mine material readiness." Martin is cited for his "resolute determination to carry out his demanding duties with steadfast good judgment, personal initiative, total effectiveness and selfless devotion to duty (which) reflect credit upon himself and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

"It seems like I'm always moving with the Mine Warfare School," he said. "In 1959, I went to Charleston, S.C., and was one of the members of the first Mineman A Class held in the new school. In 1969, I was in Charleston and again we moved into a new building over the Christmas break. And now it looks like I'll be part of another move for the Mine Warfare School."

A ceremony opening the new school house in San Diego is tentatively scheduled for early 2010. ❖

— written by Ashley Lovejoy