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## America's First Frogman: The Draper Kauffman Story

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had spent as much time dissecting the Chavez regime as those that preceded it. One of the few drawbacks is that there is little attention to an examination of Hugo Chavez and his inner circle of advisors.

This book is a must-read for anyone who wishes to get beyond Chavez's rhetoric and red beret. It would enrich any South American regional studies course and has applicability for other disciplines as well. Readers who take the time to consider *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela* will emerge richer for the effort. Among those who should read it are businessmen interested in Venezuelan markets and any military officer assigned to the U.S. Southern Command.

Given the success McCoy and Myers have had in creating this book, it is only to be hoped that a companion is in the works.

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War brings out the best as well as the worst in human nature. Freedom for Americans has always depended on the bravery and innovation of servicemen willing to endure danger and privation. Elizabeth Kauffman Bush has written a marvelous account of one such hero, her brother, Draper Kauffman—the nation's first frogman and the founder of the Navy SEALs.

Determined to follow in the footsteps of his father (Vice Admiral James

Laurence), Kauffman persevered at the Naval Academy despite his poor eyesight, which nearly prevented him from attending and initially denied him a commission in the Navy when he graduated in 1933.

Disappointed but undaunted, he accepted a position at a shipping company, U.S. Lines, in New York, where he became assistant operations manager. His two-month tenure at the company's German office in 1939 convinced him that the United States had to join with France and Great Britain to stop Hitler. When he returned home, Kauffman joined the free-lecture circuit urging early American intervention in the war, in defiance of the prevailing isolationist sentiment in the United States.

Eager to do more to defend the cause of freedom, Kauffman joined the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps, which placed itself under the direct command of the French army. He served with valor as an ambulance driver during the Battle of France in May–June 1940 before the Germans captured him. He languished several weeks in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp, dropping forty pounds before the American embassy secured his release.

After a six-week voyage from Portugal, Kauffman arrived in Great Britain at the peak of Hitler's bombing campaign. He joined the Royal Navy and became expert at the harrowing task of diffusing delayed-action German bombs and mines during the Blitz. He narrowly escaped with his own life when a mine he was working on blew up.

Kauffman returned home to recover from his wounds, and in November 1941 he finally received his commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve. His experience in

Great Britain won him the job of launching the Navy's Bomb Disposal School, receiving his first Navy Cross for dismantling a five-hundred-pound bomb dropped in Hawaii by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Chosen in 1943 to establish an underwater demolition school in Fort Pierce, Florida, Kauffman rigorously trained teams later known as frogmen (later to be known as the Navy SEALs) to defuse bombs and destroy submerged obstacles deployed by the Nazis to impede the invasion of France. Kauffman received his second Navy Cross for valor in leading underwater demolition teams at Tinian in the Pacific, as well as advance demolition teams at the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

When the war ended, Draper Kauffman continued his distinguished naval career, commanding the destroyer USS

*Gearing* and the heavy cruiser *Helena*. Promoted early to rear admiral, Kauffman eventually became superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. His naval career concluded with two postings: as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Philippines, and then as commandant of the Ninth Naval District and the Great Lakes Training Center, north of Chicago. Kauffman retired from the Navy in 1973, revered by those with whom he had served. The author of this work is Kauffman's sister, Elizabeth Kauffman Bush. Her historical analysis is precise, concise, and judicious. She has not only mastered such technically intricate topics as bomb demolition but conveys them in a way that keeps the reader riveted.

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