

**PADDLE BOARD DIVERS – Part 2    By Chuck Rolfe    30 October 2014**

**Rod Petty and Bill Lawrence**, those two intrepid Bermudian Divers, wrote in their story/saga(see DIPPERS DIGEST #8, 15 December 1991), that they were drafted to Diving Tender #3(DT #3), and after that to Lawlor's Island with many other DV's. It was there that they underwent extensive physical training, with much new gear arriving. They also had a visitor, Mr. Emile Gagnan(he had moved to Montreal from France after the War), the French Engineer who technically developed the SCUBA Regulator – he was a great boost and morale builder to all the Divers at the Unit. That summer, Rod and Bill, together with LCdr's Tommy Thompson and Bill McAlpine then travelled to the Ammunition Depot in Renous, New Brunswick to deactivate 3 R.I.A.(Russian mines of the Korean War era), after which they returned to Lawlor's Island. With the Korean War Armistice bringing the fighting to a close in Korea in 1953(they had originally joined the RCN to go fight in that war), and they did not see any action in it, they decided to purchase the remainder of the term they had signed up for, which gave them an Honourable Discharge, and returned to that sunny Isle down south. Bill Lawrence became the prime contractor for underwater and land construction in Bermuda, and Rod Petty ended up with both hip joints replaced, and in a recovery home.

**Chuck Rolfe** informs us that the photographs given to him by Dave Pilot, showing the guys at Lawlor's Island going through the Assault Course and Paddle Board training in the early 1950's, can be viewed on our website navydiver.ca in the DIVERS SCRAPBOOK site. One photo can be seen by going to CNDA ALBUM 1, and it is photo 19 of 27(5<sup>th</sup> row down & first on the left – called Lawlor Island aquaplaning on Paddle Board). The main group of photos can be seen by going to VINTAGE PHOTO ALBUM from Chuck Rolfe, and they are photos # 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 71 and 72 of 72. Also photo 26 of 72 is another one. As the word gets around to all our retired members concerning the use of Paddle Boards in the RCN, it will be expected to get some responses about what they may now recall of the Boards – just what we are looking for!

**Mark Simonsen** said it is good to have Haydn iuchi-suton's official history facts, but that doesn't always cover the unofficial and real stories the guys back then can tell. As Haydn points out, officially we didn't have this capability, but we all know that these little experiments never get the glory/recognitions they deserve sometimes, and it is always nice to get the real stories from the guys that were there. As for stories from DIPPERS DIGEST's, I will take all those worth printing and framing, and will mount them around the PADDLE BOARD exhibit here in FDU(A), together with any of the good/interesting photos that have been identified as being located in our websites DIVERS SCRAPBOOK. Any stories the guys can recount will be good, and then we can vet all the information into something worth adding to the display. I think it is good to get the members juices flowing again, as one old story can usually trigger memories other guys have that may otherwise have been forgotten. The trigger is usually followed by the words "Oh yaaa – I remember that now!", or "Yes, now that you mention, I remember .....". So I think it's all good to get. Much the same as when Gary Reddy mentioned KP McNamara and my little SABEX with the Kayak....I hadn't thought of that for years, but it quickly came back. Who knows, years from now, no one officially may know of the Clearance Divers role in the Maritime Amphibious Unit(MAU) that was set up in October 2005. It was also experimental, and we did a proof of concept Exercise in November 2006 down in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. I went with LCdr Darrin Hopkie in October 2005 to Coronado, California and did an Amphibious Exercise with their Special Beach Clearance Team One, followed by going down to Perth, Australia with AUSDET 4, and observed how they did Beach Operations, etc. General Rick Hillier wanted a "Big Honkin Ship" to carry around his Tanks & Trucks, etc, and land them on the beach. Since the Army didn't want to commit troops for a security section to be attached to us, the OIC, Commodore Paul Maddison said "Fine, I'll make my own SEAL

Team(Sea, Air & Land)” and that’s how we got our marching orders. Myself and Yves Clement used our experiences and knowledge from our postings(by this time it was no longer drafts!) with JTF2(Joint Task Force 2), and exchanges with SEAL Team 6 in Virginia, and made our own training course for Covert Swimming, Underwater Navigation, OTB(Over The Beach) SOP’s(Standard Operating Procedures). I did the 3 week Lead Diver Course with SEAL Team 6 in Key West, Florida also, which was very helpful with our new role. Our guys did over 100 freefall parachute jumps within 6 weeks, 50+ up in Arnprior, Ontario(near Ottawa), and 50+ in Daytona Beach, Florida, with 1 hour in a wind tunnel complex in Daytona, on top of that. I remember one of the US Army Pathfinders, who was part of the MAU exclaiming...”Holy #####! It took me 12 years to get in over 100 jumps!!!” Due to the pressures of the war in Afghanistan, the cost of the Submarine Program, and the Arctic Ops priority, the MAU was shut down in April 2007, just as we were scheduling Small Arms, Patrol & Field Craft, plus Escape and Evasion Courses. If it had gone through, we were looking at possibly adding up to 30 more billets in the Divers Trade. The Trade now stands at about 150 NCM’s(Non Commissioned Members)and 30 Officers – not counting Purple, or out of Trade billets.

Another story about the MAU, at the “Proof of Concept” Exercise in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina in November 2006, part of the Beach Reconnaissance process, along with beach characteristics, width/length, slope, depths, sand/rock/gravel, obstacles natural/manmade, defenses, etc, involves an environmental assessment, which includes wind conditions, speed, direction and also a wave index. Wave index counts frequency, how many waves come in during a 3 minute period, and you divide by 3. Along with that, you include height of waves, direction, type – rollers or breakers, etc. and other information, which all goes into this formula that indicates whether the beach is “good to go” as a landing place, or look for another place. Part way into the opening days of the Exercise, a big storm front came barreling through, and we had to shut down Diving Operations until it had passed. We still went out on the stormy beach to take the wind & wave readings, etc. because this gave us a little bit to do, besides Classroom Briefs and Lesson Plans. At the same time we were doing the Beach Recce’s, a bunch of Canadian Army troops from CFB VALCARTIER(near Quebec City)had unloaded their APC’s(Armoured Personnel Carriers) onto the LSD(Amphibious Landing Ship)USS GUNSTON HALL at CFB SHEARWAER, Nova Scotia, and were sailing down to Camp Lejeune to land on the beaches. This ship’s Well Deck holds some Landing Craft capable of landing 2 main battle tanks each, along with all the troops, etc. As soon as the Ship left Maugher’s Beach, just outside the mouth of Halifax Harbour, just about all the rough, tough Army troops were soon throwing up everywhere, and into everything, and that was just normal ocean weather conditions! When the Americans in the Operation Room on board read our beach reports, they basically said “We were out to lunch and didn’t know what we were doing. It never gets that rough at Camp Lejeune, and all our readings must have been wrong”. Well, a couple of days later, as the storm had moved up the coast to meet the ship coming down, sure enough, they hadn’t secured for sea properly. The Landing Craft cut loose, and were banging into everything below, causing significant damage along with all the other unsecured equipment in the cargo holds, and such. Some Army troops who had started to get their “sea legs” after a couple of days out of Halifax, all went back to “Barf Mode”, making it a pretty miserable place to be. The Americans, who only a couple of days before were bad-mouthing our rookie Canuck Diver Beach Reports, were then heard to say” I guess those Wave indexes were correct after all!”. It was a good validation process for us, and multiple big learning curves which everyone was doing exceptionally well at. When we met up with our Commodore, Paul Maddison on the beach, he was all smiles, couldn’t stop praising us about how well everything had turned out, and the excellent work we had done. In the end, I think those poor Army troops had more respect for sailors, and were sure glad to get on dry land again!