

Arthur “Wally” Green, wrote these early memories of the Clearance Diving Branch on the East Coast and, more specifically, the first CD3(Clearance Diver Trade Group 3)Course held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. To ensure his memories agree with this article, he resurrected data from his RCN Service Records(obtained under the Access to Information Act), the course notes and from his old Diving Logbooks.

I enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy(RCN) as an OSS(Ordinary Seaman Standard)in 1954 and was subsequently drafted to HMCS CORNWALLIS, the New Entry Training Base near Digby NS for basic training. While there, we were asked to identify what Branch of the RCN we would like to serve in, and I, along with two others, requested that we be considered for training as a Diver. We were advised that to be considered for Diver training, we would have to receive approval from the CO(Commanding Officer). Therefore we all submitted our request, and when we appeared as Requestmen before the CO, the only questions he asked was “*Have you passed the swim test?*” We answered in the affirmative, and the requests were approved, however on completion of our basic training, I was drafted to HMCS STADACONA in Halifax, for training as an RP(Radar Plotter). Upon completion, and becoming an OSRP(Ordinary Seaman Radar Plotter), I was drafted to the Frigate HMCS PENETANG 316. At that time, she was a training ship for new TAS(Torpedo Anti -Submarine)Ratings, and every two weeks we would embark a new class of them to sail to Bermuda to work out with a USN(United States Navy)Submarine and an RCAF(Royal Canadian Air Force) Argus aircraft. This was fine with me for a while, however I still wanted to be trained as a Diver. So after seeing the clear aquamarine blue waters of Bermuda, I once again requested Diver training. I noted upon reviewing my Service Documents, I found this comment printed upon them “*This man is still recommended for Clearance Diver*”.

In November 1955 I was drafted to the Diving School for training as a CD(Clearance Diver). **The Diving School at that time was part of HMCS STADACONA, and was administered by the TAS Branch.** As it turned out, this was to be the first CD3 Course on the East Coast, which may help to explain my delay, after having twice received approval to be trained as a Diver. The only DV2 who was cross training on our course, was Stan Stephenson, and upon completion of it, he was rated as a CD2. Although we were all billeted aboard HMCS STADACONA, the Diving School was located on the Dartmouth side of the harbour at NAD(Naval Armament Depot), which comprised of two gate vessels/barges. LCdr Ken MacAlpine was the CO, with the Officer in Charge of my course being Lt. Alan Sagar, and P2(Petty Officer Second Class) Patrick O’Neil the Course Instructor. The first day at the Diving Unit, all the candidates were subjected to a pressure tolerance test in the small, single chamber RCC(Recompression Chamber) the Unit was using at that time. This entailed going down to 125 ft, then coming up to 50 ft, where we put on a nose clip and went on only Oxygen(O2). This procedure took two days, because of the large numbers of candidates, some of whom could not meet the requirements to pass. The Course commenced with the following curriculum:

Physics and physiology of Diving	Diving Equipment
Searches	Welding, Cutting and Tools
Demolition	Identification of Underwater Ordnance

Our first dive was in the Sladen suit(ie. Clammy Death) using self-contained mixed gas, with this dive serving as the last weeding out of weak candidates. The class after that consisted of seven AB’s(Able Seaman)candidates as follows; Ike Eisner, Art Beaumont, Bill Stevenson, Bill Allen, Vince Patcheson, Wally Green, and Stan Stephenson completing his conversion from DV2 to CD2. We were issued a CDBA(Clearance Diver Breathing Apparatus), which we used in both swim configuration and in the mixed gas configuration with the Sladen Light Weight Diving Dress. Also issued, was a neck-entry Dunlop dry suit and a pair of the new Angora wool long johns. The Dunlop suit was very rugged and able to take a lot of abuse, however the hood was another matter! It was made of very soft, flexible rubber which,

when you were descending, the pressure would force part of the hood into the ear and, if you were not careful when surfacing, you could experience "reversed ears". Another problem we found with the Dunlop suit was that, with only one size available to all of us, when diving to depths you could end up with "skin pinches" because of folds in the suit, if it didn't fit you. We also were issued with a nose clip, which we proudly wore in our belt loop, thinking to announce to all and sundry that we were Divers, however only other Divers would know what these clips meant, so I doubt that we impressed many people at all! We used the Sladen suit on both day and night dives, carrying out bottom searches of the NAD camber which, I must admit is a very forgettable experience, and a deep dive in Bedford Basin. As a matter of interest, contained in my Service Documents was an accident report as follows: *"Green was diving in Sladen with a 60/40 mixture with a 4 litre flow. He entered the water at 2006 hrs and was attended by Able Seaman Eisner. Eisner checked the Diver periodically and at 2104 the Diver did not respond. The Diver was hauled to the surface unconscious. Lt. Lawther and myself (Pat) treated him for carbon dioxide poisoning and anoxia. He was then sent to STADACONA Hospital"*. The official report by Lt. Lawther goes on to say that the accident was probably caused, in part, by my shallow breathing and the dead air space between the surface of the Soda Lime and the mouthpiece. We then moved on to CDBA in swim configuration, where we carried out hull searches, and the planting of explosive devices on the ship's hull. This was the last time we used CDBA, except for demonstrations on Navy Day holidays, however we did use the Sladen suit in Saint John NB to search for a Pilot boat that had been run down by a freighter entering the harbour. In this instance, we used two boats and a drag line to search for the boat, investigating each time we encountered an obstruction. The equipment used was CABA (Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus) for dives of 150 ft or less, and Sladen for all the others. During one of our dives, when Patrick O'Neil was diving in Sladen and I was his Tender, Pat failed to respond when checked, and he was hauled to the surface unconscious. I do not recall whether the problem was one of mixture, or with the equipment, but Pat was fine and we continued the search. Next was MRS or Mine Recovery Suit, which was heavy and difficult to use. We received instruction on the care, maintenance and use of this equipment, as well as having one dive. This was the end of the self-contained mixed gas portion of the course, and no one was sorry, as it would no longer require us to work up a sweat on the rocking cylinder pump, ie, the Oxygen booster pump. The next piece of equipment we trained in was the Standard Dress Mk 5 suit, which everyone had been waiting for, because when you think of diving, you automatically think of the Mk 5 hardhat. The six of us who were new to the equipment thought it was excellent, but for Stan Stephenson it was just another day! Using the Mk 5 was great, it had great visibility, you were dry most of the time, but by far the best thing about it, was that you had voice communication with the surface, as well as you had the weight to carry out tasks that you could never do in the swim configuration.

I still have some of my Diving Log Books, so I checked to see what we were working on in Standard Dress, and find that most of the work had to do with the degaussing range in Bedford Basin, the marine slips in Shelburne NS and on Sonar(Sound Navigation Ranging) domes on ships. The next piece of equipment was the Desco Light Weight Diving suit. Our instruction consisted of a lecture on the use and care of the equipment – there were no dives in this suit! Then on to CABA which, at this time was in the process of replacing most of the other gear we had trained in. The equipment we used was a mixture of single stage and two stage regulators. Once we had completed the diving portion of our course, we went on to the use of explosives and demolition charges. This was greatly enjoyed by the entire class, as it is not often that you have an opportunity to make things go BOOM! We were instructed on how to handle the various types of explosives, and where to place them to obtain the best results. The types of explosives in use at that time were the one and a quarter lb. charges, the Naval cavity charge, the line charge, nitro, cortex and C3. We then moved on to underwater explosive devices such as; British, German and American moored mines, ground influence mines, and sabotage mines such as, the clam mine, limpet Mk 3, and Italian limpet mines.

My first job as a CD was on YMT 6 on a job in Sydney NS, working on the marine slips there. Next was on a bottom survey in Eastern Passage NS for an Operation called "SWEEPCLEAR". In June 1956, LCdr Ben Ackerman, P1 Norm Mitts, P2 Harry Thompson, AB Stan Stephenson, AB Art Beaumont and AB Wally Green were attached to the RCN Icebreaker HMCS LABRADOR for transportation to the DEW Line (Distant Early Warning) sites in the High Arctic. Our duties involved carrying out beach surveys, and clearance of any obstructions at the various sites, however the Brevoort Island site still stands out in my mind. Here we had to erect a tide gauge to measure the tidal ranges, and to accomplish this, we had to record the water levels hourly, on a 24 hr basis. It required that we take turns staying awake to record the hourly levels. Next morning, when everyone was awake and having breakfast, LCdr Ackerman asked what we would do if we saw a Polar Bear; apparently Ben had seen one during his shift but hadn't informed us as yet. On thinking back, I believe that the consensus was that we would depart the camp – as fast as we could! The Dive Team then went on to survey and clear all of the DEW Line sites and, when completed, we returned to Halifax by air.

**In October 1956 the Operational Diving Unit and the HMCS GRANBY were amalgamated into a single Unit, commanded by LCdr Charles Smedley, with Officers Lt. Ross Dickinson and Lt. Alan Sagar.**

In November 1956, YMT 7 (Yard Maintenance Tender 7 - or 7 Boat) was sent for a refit, and GREENWOOD was utilized as the Standard Dress Diving Tender. Then, in December 1956, our second boat YMT 8 arrived (intended for Swimmer Diver use), however she still had to be fitted out for diving. 1957 was a busy year for the Diving Unit as Lt. Roy Busby arrived in January, and Lt. Jean Vincent arrived in February. **On 18 July 1957 the HMCS GRANBY, the Barges and YMT Tenders were all relocated to the FCW (French Cable Wharf) site in Dartmouth NS.** The ship HMCS GRANBY, the Barges and the YMT Tenders were located in the camber, while the Barges were located at the far end of the T wharf. In September 1957, a new Siebe Gorman double chamber RCC was received, and was placed in the old shed on the dock adjacent to the railroad tracks. This was only possible because, as a part of the move to FCW, we had acquired a large shed located between the dock and the railroad tracks. The new RCC was a big improvement over the small, single chamber RCC's that we had been using up to that time. The new RCC was a double chamber unit, and you could carry out pressure tolerance tests down to 2500 ft. During our time at FCW, YMT 6 and YMT 8 carried out most of the work, while YMT 7 was used mainly for jobs that required physical strength and long endurance. In 1957 (or maybe it was in 1958?) the first Diving Branch Trade Badge, consisting of a Mk 5 helmet with a maple leaf was issued to qualified Clearance Divers – I still have mine. *NOTE, bold underlined sentences are seminal events for the Branch. Wally Green retired from the RCN for an appointment as a Program Manager in the Department of Foreign Affairs, from which he retired in 1992, and is fully enjoying his retirement thereafter. He has been the President of CNDA (Canadian Naval Divers Association) from 2012 to the present date.*

**Roy Busby** wrote to Wally Green that I thoroughly enjoyed your story about how you got into the diving trade, and your experiences during those formative years at the beginning of the CD Branch. There are so many great stories of that era, and I wish more people would put pen to paper to help fill out the history of those times. I know it sounds a little pompous, but we were pioneers of the Branch as it is today. We had the opportunity to try out all kinds of new kit, and I know we thoroughly enjoyed it (or most of it!!) although when I look back, knowing what I know today, it's a wonder some of us didn't kill ourselves. I remember the training with the Royal Navy, all in CDBA in one version or another, and being told about such things like "Oxygen pete", soda lime cocktails, embolism, hypoxia, anoxia, bends, etc, etc. It was such a relief to come back to Canada and start using CABA!!! And, even then, we pushed the Aqua-lung to its limits. I guess that "ignorance is bliss", but we enjoyed ourselves anyway. Thanks for the memories.

**Ken Whitney** wrote to Wally Green with many thanks for your schematic showing the layout of the Diving Unit after we moved to FCW. As the Unit aged, the Training Section moved the Barges to the outboard side of the jetty, across the jetty from HMCS GRANBY. Diving training was conducted off the

stern of the GRANBY as well as from the diving Barges, and both the inboard and outboard on the side towards NAD was still being utilized for Jackstay swims/training, for both CDBA and CABA.

I successfully completed my Ships Diver course in November/December 1958, with Chief Peter Nicholson as the Instructor, together with Ivan Cripps, Norm Mitts, and I believe that Curly Vemb was the Standby Diver. It was shortly after that they put out a request for volunteers to go to the Arctic with the Northern Arctic Team – UDT 59 BRAVO. I volunteered and was accepted, as were L/S Jim Poidevin, L/S Roy Everts, L/S Glen Frauzel and myself, L/S Ken Whitney. After four months in the High Arctic, we returned to the Diving Unit in Halifax. Glen Frauzel and I requested to transfer to become Clearance Divers(CD's) and, after the Admiral and the Diving Unit finished their haggling, we were accepted for CD training. Our Course Chief at that time was Peter Nicholson, but due to the length of the course, our Senior Instructors would change from time to time. By the end of 1960, out of the 60 who started the course, only Dan MacLeod, Tony Dubois, Roger Giroux, Johnny Profit, Herman Erbick, Glen Frauzel and myself were successful in completing the CD course. I can still remember doing the CDBA O2 swims on the NAD side of the Camber, and the splashes that would welcome us if we popped up to the surface from the underwater Jackstay, caused by the lead weight balls that Kipp's Hayward would throw at our heads, to make us stay down!

It was during the 1960 period that the finger jetty towards the NAD side was condemned, with the training Barge moved up to the outboard side of the jetty, sitting across from the GRANBY, which by that time the side canvas had been removed from the GRANBY. The Diving Training Section had started to move to the new Training School in the long building, with other changes as per later sketches. The Camber eventually housed YMT's 6 & 8 Boats tied up to the GRANBY, with YMT's 11 & 7 Boats alongside on the other side of the Camber by the buildings.

I can remember(my youngest son was born that year, 1962, and I didn't hear about it until a month later while still at the High Arctic sites)being part of the Northern Diving Team for the DEW Line(Distant Early Warning) 1962 supply summer, which included Chief "Tug" Wilson, Don Smullen, Bill Mallot, Charlie Doyle, plus a couple others and myself. The Divers were split into two separate Teams, who would more or less leapfrog ahead of each other, doing beach clearance surveys and explosive works as required. I believe that I had another trip to the Arctic again in 1964, but my recall is kind of sketchy at this time. I was drafted to DCIEM in 1965. While at DCIEM, I went north to CFS ALERT three more times, where we used explosives during the second and third visits – now there was a tale to tell sometimes later!!

**Red Larsen** wrote to Wally Green that in reading your documentation of your time at the East Coast Diving Unit, it sure paints a good picture to us West Coasters since, as you know, there was very little communication at the Lower Deck level between the coasts in those days. In fact, we knew very little of what went on in Halifax, and likewise, you guys would have almost no information about is in Esquimalt.