

On my return to Canada in January 1957, I was posted to HMCS GRANBY for diving duties at CANOCDU ONE, which at that time was located alongside at NAD Dartmouth. Co-located at NAD were the two concrete barges that housed the Diving Training Section, which was under the control of the Fleet School in HMCS STADACONA, on the Halifax side of the harbour. At this time the Diving Tender fleet consisted of

YMT 5 and YMT 7, both equipped as Standard Dress(Mk 5) Diving Tenders

GREENWOOD, a “Longliner” type boat, used as an utility boat

YMT 6 and YMT 8, purpose-built MCM(Mine Counter Measure)Diving Tenders, in that they were built with non-magnetic materials, as far as possible, and equipped with degaussing coils.

These last two Tenders were brand new, having been delivered to CANOCDU ONE the previous year, I think, but only YMT 6 was operational.

My first assignment at the Unit, was to “commission” YMT 8, and to prepare it for use as a general purpose harbour Diving Tender, utilizing CABA as first line diving equipment. CDBA was carried, and all Divers were CD’s(Clearance Divers), therefore qualified in the use of CDBA in the event it was required for specific operations, such as ship night attacks(Sabexes) to exercise ship’s “Operation Awkward” procedures. For the next year I learned that almost a full year’s training with the RN, as described in Part 5A, had qualified me to supervise, and dive with, CD’s to clear underwater sewer outlets from HMCS STADACONA, search for some CO’s lost glasses at Jetty 5, recover cases of whiskey lost overboard while replenishing the Aircraft Carrier HMCS BONAVENTURE, etc, etc. In other words, I learned the daily life of diving in the RCN at that time. While the harbour operations were becoming more and more varied, the role of mine countermeasures was assuming more importance. As a result, YMT 8 was sent to Shelburne, Nova Scotia in the summer of 1957, to participate in a SWEEPCLEAR Operation involving Canadian Minesweepers and USN Minehunters. In conjunction with a team of USN EOD Divers, we recovered the mines which had been located or swept. This was followed in the Fall by a road trip to Charleston, South Carolina USA by the same Team to participate in another SWEEPCLEAR with the USN. A third deployment took place in the Spring of 1958, when the same Team embarked in the Canadian Minesweepers for the voyage to Charleston. The role of the Canadian Diver was expanding. During the first year at the Diving Unit, I also got to meet most of the interesting characters, already described by CPO Red Larsen, LCdr’s MacAlpine, Cook, Ackerman, Lt’s Lawther and Loney. From that I learned a lot about the transition of diving in the RCN, and where we newcomers fitted in, as the old timers “Faded Away”. This didn’t become immediately obvious in the day-to-day work, but only later as underwater operations became more technical and sophisticated, and as our training with the USN became more advanced and up to date. It was all becoming very interesting!

Then in June 1958 I was posted to the Destroyer HMCS HURON 216 for more” necessary” sea time training!! For the next two years I did a lot of steaming, visited a lot of interesting places, and did get in some diving as the Squadron Diving Officer in such places as Malta, at the Mediterranean Fleet Diving Unit, with the Italian Navy Divers in Naples, and with French Navy Divers in Toulon, France. An interesting dive in Bermuda was to assess the damage to HMCS HURON’s port propeller, when it tried to carve a chunk out of the Jetty wall. At that point I was transferred to HMCS HAIDA while HURON limped back to Halifax, NS on one screw! This then was my introduction to the newly minted RCN Diving Branch. What did I learn? Following transition from DV(Diver from WW II) to CD(Clearance Dive in the 1954 era), all training was based on the RN methods employing CDBA. Not only were Officers sent to England for training, Senior NCO’s were also sent to England for training to form the initial cadre of instructional personnel. However, as I said before, the day to day employment of the Diver required the

use of the newly acquired CABA equipment, and it was CABA that shaped the changes to all major underwater operations concerning HMC Ships, which had hitherto been performed utilizing Mk 5 equipment – but more about that later.

**ADVANCED TRAINING FOR CLEARANCE DIVING OFFICERS.** In 1957/1958, three more Canadian Officers were sent for training with the RN, LCdr Ward Palmer, Lt. John Kerr-Wilson and Lt. Monty Seeger, however it was becoming obvious that the RN training was no longer suitable for Canadian requirements. As a result, training with the USN was investigated, and it was concluded that it would be more suitable. In 1959 LCdr Dickinson with Lt. Art Rowse and Lt. Roy Busby were sent to the USN Deep Sea Diving and Salvage School in the Washington Navy Yard to undergo the USN six week salvage course and, following that, it was decided that all future CLDO's would complete the same course. Further, in 1964, LCdr Dickinson, with Lt. Roy Busby and Lt. Mike Lafontaine were sent to the USN EOD School at Indian Head, Maryland USA to undergo the USN six week EOD refresher course. As this course was primarily about US mines and bombs, and some Soviet, it was obvious that the RN training, which had been geared to WW II British and German mines and bombs was no longer applicable. As a result, it was decided that all EOD training for future CLDO's and Senior NCO's would be undertaken on the six month USN EOD course at Indian Head. With this decision, it meant that all future training would be carried out on this side of the ocean.

**EMPLOYMENT OF DIVING TENDERS(EAST COAST).** Following my two years at sea, I was posted in 1960 to what had now become FDU(A) Fleet Diving Unit(Atlantic). Once again I was given charge of YMT 8 and, although we still carried CDBA, 90 plus % of operations were carried out with CABA, going to deeper depths and undertaking major underwater operations. No longer was the big, heavy stage and Mk 5 being used to change ship's Sonar domes, it was being completed without a stage, and utilizing CABA Divers. In fact, the new Sonar domes were being designed to facilitate underwater replacement by Divers. Examples of deeper depths included inspection of the deep degaussing ranges in Bedford Basin(now being done with CABA), demolition of underwater towers off Hartlen Point down to 140 feet, recovery of trial hydrostatic fuzes down to 165 feet for NRE(National Research Establishment), etc. The list goes on as Divers became more and more capable, and technical authorities became more confident with the Diver's capabilities. Concurrent with these operations, Lt. Mike Lafontaine embarked with his crew in the Gate Vessel PORTE STE. LOUIS(it may have been PORTE STE. JEAN) to carry out underwater screw change trials on HMCS COLUMBIA, alternating between Halifax and Bermuda. With the successful conclusion of these trials, screw changes by Divers became routine, all utilizing CABA, and employing strategically placed eye pads in the ship's hull. Once again the technical authorities had been convinced of the FDU's capabilities! With this new-found confidence, the Command technical authority reluctantly gave approval for an operation that had never been accomplished before, the replacement of the gland packing in one of HMCS BONAVENTURE's stern tubes, while afloat. This meant making the stern tube completely waterproof from the outside. With some helpful advice from the ship's Engineer Officer,

YMT 12's crew successfully wrapped the external part of the shaft, thus enabling the renewal of the packing without docking the ship. This, and the outside patch on the 18 inch catapult steam exhaust aperture, which enabled repairs on the inside below the waterline, also while afloat. I throw these in as examples of the technical skills that Clearance Divers have acquired in a few short years from the inception of the new Branch. A further addition to the Diver's capabilities was the introduction of YMT's 11 and 12 to the Tender fleet in 1962/1963. These Tenders, fully equipped with Mk 5 Standard gear, with an onboard recompression chamber, meant that diving operations could now be safely increased to 250 feet. The bottom of Bedford Basin was no longer inaccessible to us. Further, the

improved living conditions onboard meant that diving operations could be scheduled further away, and the Tender deployed for longer durations.

**EXCHANGE POSTINGS.** As further examples of the growth and expansion of the Clearance Diving Branch, other countries became interested in what Canada was doing in the diving and MCM(Mine Counter Measures)field. At an ABC(America, Britain and Canada) Diving and Mine Countermeasures meeting in Vancouver in 1964, the USN proposed an exchange posting between a Fleet Diving Unit in Canada, and the USN EOD Facility at Stump Neck, Maryland. This was approved, so in 1966 I went to the USNEODFAC, and USN Lt. Tom Kelly went to FDU(P) for two year exchange postings. After one year at Stump Neck, an RN Officer was posted in on a similar exchange from Britain and, as there could not be two LCdr's in charge of the Underwater Facility, one had to go. The RN Officer was senior, so I went to the Washington Navy Yard for my second year of exchange duties, as a Project Officer at the USN Experimental Diving Unit(1967/68). While I was there, Lt. Mike Lafontaine and LS Bill Lukeman arrived as part of the Team from the "Man in the Sea Project" – SEALAB III – to undergo their saturation diving qualification dives at the USN's Experimental Diving Unit. When I left to go west as the XO at FDU(P), I was replaced at Stump Neck by Lt. John "Dinger" Bell, but not immediately replaced at NAVXDIVINGU. A couple of years later, an exchange position opened up there again, and Lt. Barry Ridgewell, from DCIEM became the incumbent. The story of that posting, and a later exchange posting with the RN at their Experimental Diving Unit at Haslar, Portsmouth, will have to be addressed by people from DCIEM at that time, or those who were posted, ie. Barry Ridgewell or Ken Brown. Also, the later exchange posting with the French Navy, by someone else!

During my three years as XO at FDU(P), it was as if I was in diving limbo. Routine diving operations were carried out as required. The Training Department was busy training Ship's Diving Officers and Ship's Divers and, if I remember correctly, we also trained Land Force Combat Divers and I believe we initiated the training of SAR(Search and Rescue)Technicians, although I believe this was only a pilot project. I am sure there are other ex-West Coasters who can confirm, or correct this information. Other than that, for most of the time things went smoothly for me as the XO. Then, in the summer of 1969, out of the blue, I was tasked, along with two "newly minted" Ammunition Technical Officers, to develop the syllabus for an EOD/IED Specialist Course to be run at CAMP BOUCHARD, Ste Therese, Quebec. Upon approval of the syllabus, as Chief Instructor, I was told to run 3 two week courses, and to qualify as many EOD/IED specialists as possible. The courses were made up of commissioned and non-commissioned personnel from all three Branches of the Service who previously had EOD training. This was the birth of the "Green Card". As a result of the successful completion of the courses, I became the proud possessor of Green Card 0001. We were very fortunate to have as a guest Instructor, Sgt. Cote, who headed the Montreal Police Bomb Squad and had considerable experience dealing with IED's which had been placed by the FLQ – the Quebec Liberation Front, a separatist Marxist-Leninist paramilitary group in Quebec. I, and the other two Instructors, were invited along on several occasions to accompany Sgt. Cote to suspected IED locations, both real and bogus. This was around the time of the "October Crisis" in October 1970. From this rather hastily put together beginning, disposal of IED's became another skill to be included in the training of Canadian Clearance Divers.

When I previously said that I was in limbo, what I meant was that we were aware that things were happening at FDU(A), DCIEM and in NDHQ concerning possible acquisition of a submersible, but that we were not in any way involved. That is until LCdr Art Rowse, who was now the CO of FDU(P), and I were invited to do a dive in Pisces III, the submersible operated by CanDive, Vancouver. As a result, we did a 1200 foot dive in Pisces III at the Winchelsea torpedo test range to recover a Mk 48 torpedo which was stuck nose down in the mud on the bottom. It was night and pitch-black down there, and when we homed in on the "pinger" through the small portholes, it looked like a giant tree growing out of the bottom – scary!! From there, the program went to Pisces IV, and eventually to the Beaver Mk 4 twin

hull submersible, that became SDL 1. Any further information on the submersible program will have to come from LCdr(ret) Bob Coren, as it was his project, and he will have lots of very interesting things to say about the program, I'm sure.

**ADVANCES IN DEEP DIVING OPERATIONS.** In 1971 I was posted to the Directorate of Maritime Requirements at NDHQ, as the Staff Officer for Diving and Mine Countermeasures. During my seven years in this position, several major programs were developed to enhance diving capabilities. DCIEM in Toronto, who by now had close ties with the USN and the RN, were busy developing personal diving equipment to enable dives to deeper depths. This included a vastly improved helmet, Diver heating equipment and improved communication equipment. To assist in these developments, a deep diving "wet" chamber system was installed. More about these developments can be better explained by those personnel who were posted to DCIEM during those years. CPO(ret) Red Larsen and CPO Ken Whitney will be preparing the story about their times spent at the Experimental Diving Unit at DCIEM in another Part to the RCN DIVING BRANCH HISTORY. Concurrent with these developments, trials of the submersible SDL 1 were being carried out, using a leased launch and recovery platform. It became obvious that the diving organization required its own deep diving and submersible support vessel. As a result, a program was developed to acquire a laid-up stern trawler fish factory ship from Italy, then perform major modifications to it, including the addition of a Vickers "A" frame launch and recovery system from England, to provide the required vessel for submersible support operations. HMCS CORMORANT was born!!! Another program with which I was involved during my time in NDHQ, was the design of, and approval for, a distinctive new diving badge for Clearance Divers. After overcoming a lot of resistance from other Branches of the Service, it was finally given Royal Approval, along with a distinctive badge for Ship's Divers. Clearance diving could now be considered a "specialist" Branch along with Submariners and Aviators! We have to thank Barry Ridgewell, and a Service Photographer (can't remember his name) for the final design that was submitted for approval.

**IN CONCLUSION.** It was at this time in 1978, that my involvement with Canadian Naval diving came to an end, at which time I was posted out of NDHQ. In the twenty two years since 1956, when I took that first fateful dive in Tortola Bay, and then qualified as a CLDO, the whole Canadian Naval world of diving changed from a fledgling organization into a full blown Branch, and I am so proud to have been a part of it. Little did I know, when I volunteered for a "years holiday" in England, what an amazing career it would open up for me. In closing, I would like to make an amusing, perhaps startling statement, that from the moment I stepped foot back in Canada I never, ever wore CDBA again!!!!

I have written this as a sort of biography, because I found that the memories seemed to flow better when I made it a part of my life. Attempting to complete it in a chronological point form, I seemed to keep getting lost. There are many things I touched upon that I feel others in the Branch can explain in more detail. There are some things that I'm sure I may have missed, but others reading this will surely be able to fill in any gaps.