

By Chuck Rolfe 2014

An official letter dated November 2014 from RCN NDHQ Vice Admiral Mark Norman, under the heading **DECLARATION OF SURPLUS – NAVAL AUXILIARIES, YDT 12** states *L1 Advisors are authorized to declare as surplus materiel that is not a major weapons system, or major support system and valued at less than \$40M. Based on engineering surveys and financial estimates for repairing and operating the platforms, it has been concluded that it is no longer economical to operate the auxiliary YDT 12 Granby. It is declared surplus to requirements, and identified for disposal. The RCN point of contact is Director Naval Operations and Plans 3-3, LCdr David MacArthur, Email: David.McArthur@forces.gc.ca and Phone: 1-613-945-0651*. The CNDA National Office ensured this information was widely disseminated through our communication network.

LCdr Stephan Julian, CO of FDU(A) then wrote: *“Gents, I would like to salvage as much as possible from YDT 12 for CLD heritage”*.

Bud Nuquist contacted Andy Desrochers asking him *“What’s going on here, mate?”*.

Mark Simonsen proposed to CO of FDU(A) that if we can’t even sail it in Halifax Harbour, maybe we could just have a BBQ on the Barge alongside, with a Keg of Beer, etc. Maybe have some sort of ceremony, short speeches, with an invitation for CNDA and Veteran Naval Divers to attend. You could call it a “Fast Cruise”, like they do for Engineering Trials on the Destroyers, without leaving the Jetty.

Roy Busby wrote to Mark Simonsen, what a sad day for a “Grand Old Lady”. I sailed her brand new out of Ferguson Industries, Pictou NS, and drove her as OIC for four years, until I left for the first Exchange Posting to NAVEODFAC at Indian Head. In those days she was known as “YMT 12”. Mike Lafontaine had picked up YMT 11 the year before, and there was a great rivalry between the two Boats. The only real difference between them was that YMT 11’s Chamber was on the main deck in the after housing, with the entrance out to the Quarterdeck, while YMT 12’s was down below. We always maintained that we were half a knot faster because we kept the bottom cleaner!!!! Over the four years that I had YMT 12, she visited many places, including: St. John’s, Argentia, Cornerbrook and Stephenville NFLD; Sydney and Shelburne NS; Charlottetown PEI and Riviere-du-Loup QC. She was a very busy lady, with many fun trips. I suppose after 52 years working out of FDU(A), she deserves to retire. If there is a “ceremony”, have a tot for me. I know that Bud Nuquist has fond memories of her too, specially after all the super work he and his crew accomplished on the wrecked oil tanker “ARROW”, when he was on YMT 12.

Mark Simonsen wrote to Roy Busby, thanks Roy, and we will raise a glass while thinking about you and the rest of the absent crew members.

Bud Nuquist about YMT 12 1968-1971. When I arrived in Halifax Nova Scotia, Canada on an USN Exchange Posting, I was escorted to the Wardroom where I officially met the Commanding Officer, LCdr Alan Sagar, & his Executive Officer, LCdr Don Hope. As best I can recall, there were also Lt. John Cole, Lt. Barry Ridgewell, Lt. Tom Essery and Lt. Peter Hill. Each Officer seemed to have his new assignment for the year, and I was to be placed with each one for about a week or more, which would rotate me through all the sections of HMCS GRANBY. This would include Mobile Diving Team & YMT-6, Attack Team & YMT-8, FDU(A) Clearance Divers School, YMT-11 and, of course, YMT-12. YMT-12 at the time was under the OIC of Lt/CD/EOD John Cole. YMT-12 was quite busy with ship repairs and sonar dome testing, and some replacement work. When free of ships work, YMT-12 would do as many diving equals as possible up in Bedford Basin. In September 1968, while observing Deep Air Dive equals, I noticed that every once in a while the Diver was told that they were testing his depth, and this warned him that they were turning off his air supply totally, to record his depth. I got rather upset over this procedure, cancelled the operation, went into the CO’s office and expressed what a terrible system this was, as one never really knew what the actual depth was during the dive. The first official advice then of this new USN Exchange Officer, was to rig the stations with nemo hoses married to the Diver’s lifeline/cable hose, where the man on the air-rack could maintain an accurate read of the depth without securing the Diver’s air. This change, after being tested, was set up on all diving stations on all the

Diving YMT's. About the end of 1969, Lt. John Cole departed FDU(A) for Exchange Duties at the USN EOD Facility in Indian Head, Maryland, and this ol' Yank was assigned as OIC of YMT-12. Over the next two years, she became quite the "work-horse" that tested the limits of her and the Diver Crew. My memory is being "tested" to its fullest here, some forty four years later now, but what I am reporting to you is still what she did back in both 1970 and 1971. There were four tasks that fell into the class of outside the routine daily repairs, as shown below.

1. Changing out both damaged propellers of an HMCS Frigate class ship over the weekend.
2. Proceeding to sea to travel 300 miles to Les Isles-de-la-Madeleine, Quebec, to locate & identify the sunken fishing trawler Lady Lydia in dives of over 300 feet.
3. Proceeding to sea off Sheet Harbour, Nova Scotia to locate and recover a CS2F Tracker aircraft sunk in approximately 300 to 325 feet, diving in Standard Dress on air.
4. Proceeding to Chedabucto Bay, near Arichat, Nova Scotia where the oil Tanker SS ARROW went aground on Cerebus Rock, breaking in two. We were tasked with removing 3.5 million gallons of Bunker "C" oil from this sunken Tanker.

Since there are full reports(or semi full)written about each of these tasks, I will try to give a short overview of each of the above numbered events.

- 1 During the holiday period between Christmas and New Years, we were informed by CANMARCOM that a key ship, a Canadian Frigate class ship had damaged both propellers, and required they both be replaced ASAP, since the Drydock and Lift could not be cleared before the next Tuesday. It was decided that old YMT-12 and USN Lt. Bud Nuquist as OIC , and with crews from all divisions of the Unit, would be tasked to work around the clock in the following three shifts, 0800 – 1600, 1600 – 2400 and 2400 – 0800 until the completion of the work, or until availability of the Heavy-Lift Drydock occurred. As soon as the ship was tied up at the working pier, YMT-12 moored alongside, together with the cranes and screw trollies for underwater screw handling equipment. Both damaged screws were removed within 20 hours(it was now into Saturday)and the two new replacement screws in place 24 hours later in Sunday. By the time we completed torquing the boss nuts, placing in keepers and dunce caps, it was now Sunday night, with all inspections and tests completed before midnight. It can be said that YMT-12, and her mixed crew from the Unit, completed this urgent job under mounting pressure and in cold water in jig time, in fact this task had been finished in a record time which has not been met since. MARCOMHQ's Vice Admiral John Charles "Scruffy" O'Brien, noting that it had been accomplished using required step by step procedures that the whole Diving Teams could be proud of, declared "**Bravo Zulu**" to all personnel , YMT -12 and HMCS GRANBY!
- 2 In 1970, it had been reported that of five fishing trawlers built by one Company, three had been lost at sea, with the most recent one being the Lady Lydia off Les Isles-de-la-Madeliene. The Department of Transport(DOT) had approved the construction of these vessels and requested CANMARCOM to investigate what they could ascertain from the sinking of the Lady Lydia. YMT-12 with Bud Nuquist as OIC with a DOT Representative onboard, was tasked as follows:
 - A. Proceed to area reported by the DOT Rep and establish a Search plan in the area.
 - B. Locate the vessel Lady Lydia, observe and report the situation to DOT Rep.
 - C. Positively identify the vessel as being the Lady Lydia.
 - D. Mark and buoy the vessel's location.
 - E. Upon completion of the task, turn all paperwork and records over to the DOT Rep.
 - F. When relieved by DOT Rep, depart the area and return to FDU(A) Halifax.

The depth of water was usually over 300 feet, and this job was were we started using the first type of Decompression Computer that was designed to never have "stops" like that required by the US Navy Dive Tables. Instead, the Divers depth line followed a slow decompression line all the way to the surface. As crude as it looked, it worked wonderfully through many 300 foot plus

dives, without a recorded "hit" of any kind. Upon our return to Halifax, we got a signal to proceed directly to the CANMARCOM Pier, where we again received a "**Bravo Zulu**" from Vice Admiral O'Brien. We also had many questions asked of our dives, and some "Off-the-record" queries.

- 3 Another project, the Sheet Harbour CS2F Tracker Aircraft Search and Recovery, called for YMT-12 and her crew to investigate. It started off with Bud Nuquist being called over once again to CANMARCOMHQ, where my orders were given directly to me, and very clearly by the Admiral: *"You will proceed to the area off Sheet Harbour, Nova Scotia to conduct a Search & Recovery operation on a crashed Canadian Military Aircraft, with its tail number being given to you by an HMCS SHEARWATER representative, who is assigned to YMT-12 until he is relieved. The estimated depth of water there is about 300 feet plus."* We proceeded to the area and met with a Canadian Frigate class, who transferred a chart and witness report to us, then departed the area. At this time, the weather was bad, with 8 to 10 foot seas, so we proceeded into Sheet Harbour for a safe mooring overnight. The following morning the HMCS SHEARWATER Rep came aboard, together with a Canadian Mountie, who will coordinate the recovery of any human remains found. A marker buoy was dropped to mark the centre of an area where most of the fuel and oil was seen, with the depth being recorded of 295 to 325 feet. The Divers were tethered to the stage and lowered to about 40 to 50 feet off the bottom. The new Diving Computer was again used with total success. The configuration of the bottom was drawn on paper as the reports were received from the Divers, and the wreckage area appeared to be in an area about ½ mile in diameter. As we commenced our recovery phase, we sent a message to HMCS GRANBY that this would be an ideal place to do some search and testing with the new SDL-1 Lock Out Sub. It appeared that this joint operation worked very well in Search & Recovery Ops. The aircraft's wings, both engines and complete tail assembly were recovered, as well as four of the five crewmembers. Due to the depth and the hazard to the Divers at 325 feet, the last mass of wires and jagged metal, we could not even confirm the presence of the last crewman. With the approval and request of the parents, a full Burial at Sea ceremony was conducted on the fantail, with the parents and Chaplain present. All charts and items recovered, were turned over to the SHEARWATER Rep. Upon arrival back in Halifax, YMT-12 received another "**Well Done**" from CANMARCOM. We made good use of that first Canadian Diving Decompression Computer, with many dives at, and exceeding 300 feet using air, without a single diving decompression accident.

- 4 In the Winter of 1969/1970, the Oil Tanker SS ARROW hit Cerebus Rock in the Eastern approach of the Strait of Canso, near Arichat, Nova Scotia. By the time the salvagers attempt to pull her off the rock, they broke her in half, with the bow hard aground, and the stern section sunk in 100 feet of water. The estimated spill was over 3.5million gallons of Bunker "C" fuel oil. They estimated that there was the same amount still remaining in the broken and ruptured tanks. YMT-12 and its crew met with Sven Madsen, with an idea that Divers might be able to drill into the Tanker using "hot-tap" machines, then with steam and concrete pumps, remove the balance of the oil. They brought in an old Navy salvage ship that we could use, but found it easier to moor right above the ARROW on the mooring buoys we had manufactured ourselves. Everything was covered with oil, either in or out of the water. Our Divers received the nickname "The Dirty Dozen", which was thereafter printed in all the newspapers and magazines. All of the Divers who dove on the ARROW, were referred to as the real heroes of the oil spill and clean up. By rigging 55 gallon drums with air hoses to them, the heavy spool pieces and valves were able to be moved about underwater with relative ease. There were several heavy storms come through the area, which caused us to moor in the lee waters off Arichat. The work day

often commenced about 0400, with "Wakey-Wakey", coffee and breakfast was served while underway out to the site, and as we were getting set tight into our diving position. There are several photographs of the crew setting up and blowing the stack off the ARROW, since the barge and pumping crew did not want to go into their 4 point moor until it was removed as a hazard. Storms would come in so fast and hard that the salvage vessel USS CURB(I think) had to drop all the pumping hoses and get out of the 4 point moor. This left us with a big mess to untangle, sort out & reconnect to the surface pumps and maintain just where and what tanks we were pumping from. This time, upon entering Halifax Harbour, we got another flashing light message from CANMARCOMHQ to come alongside Vice Admiral O'Brien's Pier, as he personally wanted to come aboard to shake every Diver's hand, thanking each one for their outstanding efforts. There are pictures of him shaking the (oily)hands of every man onboard YMT-12. He did give a good short speech, and he accepted an invite into my cabin for "Up Spirits", which he did partake of, and then offered to "Splice the Mainbrace" in proper fashion. Along with another YMT-12 "Bravo Zulu", he asked me if there was anything he could do, whereupon my answer was short and sweet "Do you think that there is any way that YMT-12 could possibly be put in Drydock, steam cleaned and repainted from top to bottom?". Well, when we later picked her up from the Shipyard, she had this new gray finish, with green non-skid decks – shipshape and Bristol fashion!! A few weeks later we returned to Arichat, and the ARROW. This time we were tasked with removing a 10 ton brass propeller out of the forward cargo hold. This screw was on a pedestal about 30 feet aft of the cargo hatch. One slight problem was also that the screw was about 15 feet across, while the hatch opening was only 12 feet across. Meaning they probably handled it through the opening and onto the deck using both a crane and a forklift. We figured that if they put it in there...we could get it out(Divers are quite ingenious, to say the least!). The only reason I could figure that they needed it out, was to stop some enterprising salvage crew from coming along to take it out, thereafter selling it for all it's brass on the market. What caused all this fuss, was that apparently because of some wrongfully accused "bandits" being accused after there was a loud explosion near the stern of the ARROW. When Divers did an inspection of the area for the DOT, it was discovered that the former fully attached brass propeller of the ARROW was.....GONE.....!!! None of the blame was placed upon any of the HMCS GRANBY Divers, because we were the ones working for the DOT...right...! Ol' Bud was once again told to report to the building on the CANMARCOMHQ Base, right next to the Admiral's Landing. He asked me two questions:-

Question One: *How did you ever get a 15 foot screw off a three foot pedestal and out a 12 foot opening?*

Answer: *Diver's skill and knowledge of their Trade!!*

Question Two: *Did any of your YMT-12 crew get involved in blowing the screw from the shaft?*

Answer: *No Sir, but whoever did it, certainly had the skill and knowledge!!*

He followed up with "You know something Lt. Nuquist...you and your crew are really something, we here at CANMARCOM keep sending you and your crew out on what we think are impossible tasks, and not only do you complete them...you all come back smelling like a rose!!". I took that as a compliment, and thanked him. "Now get out of here, and send your Captain in, and return to HMCS GRANBY". Shortly after that, my Exchange Duty time was up, and I left HMCS GRANBY and YMT-12, with all its tremendous memories, returning to my USN Duty. I wish that somehow I could be there for that last Lighted Harbour Cruise during the Xmas Holidays, and a "Tot" or two to ruminate my happy memories.