



**SPECIAL  
 POINTS OF  
 INTEREST:**

- Patrick O'Neill
- National Updates
- Just For Giggles

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The family of the late CPO1 Clearance Diver Patrick Joseph O'Neill was looking for information concerning his time in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and, more specifically, the Diving Branch. His son, Mike O'Neill found the CNDA website navydiver.ca in which his Father's name was listed in the "In Memoriam" section, but had no asterisk beside it which designates he was a WW II Veteran. He then contacted the CNDA National President, Wally Green to see if this could be corrected, and asked Wally if any other information about his Father might be sent to the family. Wally had our Webmaster, Tim Flath include the asterisk immediately, and then forwarded other photographs and an 8mm film to the family, which showed Patrick in them. Mike informed us that "This site on the internet is a wonderful discovery, as it lets us be able to read and appreciate the stories of your fellow Divers, gives us an ability to appreciate and understand the training and capabilities that our Dad, and all of you, have endured in your careers in the Navy. You have proved that navydiver.ca and CNDA as a group care about your Members, and their history!". The O'Neill family wish to thank Wally Green for the tremendous assistance he has given to them in bringing forward the photo's and film to them. Mike O'Neill also forwarded a bit more information about his Father, which peaked the interest of Chuck Rolfe towards compiling a story of the early days in the Diving side of the RCN. With the family's approval, he commenced to collect, write and publish an article about CPO O'Neill's early days of working in the RCN as a Diver. That article follows...

**C1CD4 PATRICK JOSEPH O'NEILL (1925 – 1963)**

Patrick Joseph O'Neill was born at Rockport, Ontario to parents Owen and Anne O'Neill in 1926. His parents had immigrated from Ireland on the ship SS MARBURN three years earlier in August 1923. His Father, Owen O'Neill had served as a Sergeant in the Irish Light Horse Cavalry Regiment of the British Imperial Army during WW I. It is noteworthy that there were over 70,000 Irishmen serving with England (probably because many were looking for work) since at that time Ireland was still considered to be part of the United Kingdom, only becoming an Irish Republic later on. Patrick O'Neill married Bernadette Scully of PEI and had 5 children:- Patrick, Michael, Anne, Maureen & Stephen. When WW II broke out and, even though he was only (almost) 14 years of age, he fudged his documents to become older, thereafter joining the RCN at that young age, serving as a Naval Gunner throughout the War, and also fighting in the Korean War. His Official Number in the Navy was 6529-H; all personnel joining the Navy were given either the -H, or -E behind their Number. It meant that if you joined anywhere from Port Arthur (now called Thunder Bay), Ontario to the East the -H was for the Halifax Port Division, and if you were from anywhere West of Port Arthur, the -E was for the Esquimalt Port

Division, supposedly then you would serve on your applicable Coast. After fighting in these two Wars, Patrick was seconded to the Royal Navy for training as a Navy Clearance Diver in England. He successfully completed his training at Horsea Island, the Royal Navy's Diver Training Establishment on the North shore of Portsmouth Harbour, qualifying to work with both the Mk 5 hardhat diving equipment and SCUBA gear. In those days, they still retained their basic Trade (his was a Gunner) but were authorized to wear the Divers qualification badge (a hardhat) six inches up from the cuff on the left hand sleeve, indicating their secondary qualification as a Diver. In the 1940's, 50's & 60's the Rank structure started as an OS (Ordinary Seaman), then AB (Able Seaman), then LS (Leading Seaman), then PO (Petty Officer), then CPO (Chief Petty Officer) after which one could progress to a Warrant Officer (commonly called a Mister). The Trades Grouping (with its commensurate increases in pay) commenced at Trade Group 1 and went to Trade Group 4 as one increased in Rank. There were standard rates of pay across the boards for all Ranks and Pay Groups, however Divers were also authorized additional pay for the time/depth of the dive, plus added pay for hazardous operations such as handling explosives, etc. Upon Patrick's return to Canada, and promotion to Petty Officer 1st Class, he served aboard the Supply Ship HMCS CAPE BRETON and the Icebreaker HMCS LABRADOR (before it was turned over to the Department of Transport to become a Coast Guard ship). At one time, the RCN carried Divers on board ships, rather than the Ship Team Divers, as is the current situation!

Patrick was drafted (there was no such thing as a “posting” then, as is the current procedure – that is what the old Army and Air Force called the movement of a person!!) as an Instructor to the Atlantic Diving Unit on board HMCS GRANBY located at French Cable Wharf, just North of the Naval Armament Depot on the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour. French Cable Wharf is no longer in existence, as it has all been bulldozed down and the wharf removed. At GRANBY, as a P1CD3 he was the Instructor of the first Conversion Course that amalgamated the DV Divers with the so-called “Swimmer Divers” (who used SCUBA gear), so that all became CD’s, or Clearance Divers on the East Coast in 1955. In Wally Green’s 1955 Course Graduation photo showing all the successful CD3 Divers, were:- Vince Patcheson, Ike Eisnor(died), Wally Green, Stan Stephenson (RIP), Bill Allen (RIP), Bill Stevenson, Course Instructor Patrick O’Neill (RIP), Course Divisional Officer Lt Alan Sagar, and Art Beaumont. During his time at HMCS GRANBY, Pat and many of his Diving buddies served in the High Arctic on Operations (OPS) supporting resupply missions to various DEW LINE sites by ships of the RCN and USN. This would include Beach Reconnaissance, blasting ice and large rocks, and generally assisting in storing procedures, as necessary. Canadian Diving Teams were tasked with assisting the US NAVY in their OPERATION BLUE JAY & OPERATION DEEP FREEZE to resupply Weather Stations at THULE, Greenland and on Ellesmere Island in Canada’s High Arctic. In one Operation, the Divers laid down an underwater grid of pipelines from which pressurized air bubbled to the surface near the Jetty, thereby keeping ice from forming, which allowed the ships to move freely, rather than be icebound. The USN Task Group Admiral, operating from the USN Icebreaker USS EDISTO, forwarded a Letter of Commendation to the Canadian Dive Team stating “***We would never have completed our Operations, were it not for the competent professionalism of the Canadian Divers***”. This is just a token indication of how the Canadian Naval Divers conduct themselves: they work hard, play hard and always enjoy their family life after completion of their diving tasks. They are a very close-knit group, who tend to socialize with each other on a regular basis outside of their working environment. Some of Patrick’s diving buddies were: Vern “Mel” Melanson (RIP), Robert “Wiggy” Wigmore (RIP), Russell Connelly, Jim “Tug” Wilson, Yvon “The Bear” or “Ging” Gingras(RIP), Ab Hanley (RIP), Jim “Bomber” Balmforth, Leo Goneau (RIP), Ivan “Varmint” Cripps (RIP), Peter Nicholson, Bert Drake (RIP), John Brown (RIP), Dave Pilot (RIP), Keith Powers, Arthur Faulkner, Norman Mitts and Francis McArthur. Also, Stanley “Freddy” Watts, who drove their car over to the residence on PEI when they moved there after their Father’s death in 1963. Patrick was awarded the following medals for his Military Service, 1939 to 1963:

1939 – 1945 Star  
Canadian Korea Medal

1939 – 1945 War Medal  
UN Service Medal, Korea

Canadian Volunteer Service Medal  
Canadian Forces Decoration

Patrick O’Neill’s daughter, Maureen recalls their Aunt Catherine saying “*Patrick decided to join the Navy because he wanted to see the world – through a porthole!!*” His son, Patrick Jr. recalls that when his Father said for him to do something, and I questioned it, he would state “*Because my name is Patrick O’Neill, and what I say goes!*” I would reply “*No, my name is Patrick O’Neill, and what I say goes*” which would amuse his Dad no end. We, as Naval Divers, do remember those who set the precedent for those yet to come.

Article by Chuck Rolfe

## National Updates by Chuck Rolfe

### MORE DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDALS

We have been informed by Kevin McNamara that **CPO1 MARCEL MAYNARD** (RSM/Cox’n of the CF Counter IED Task Force) and **PO1 ALEXANDER “SANDY” MacNEISH** (Device Exploitation Technician attached to the Deployable Technical Analysis Lab), both Clearance Divers working for the Army HQ Staff in Ottawa, have recently been announced as being awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. As can be seen, even the Canadian Army recognizes our best – congratulations from all your peer group at the Diving Units, and from CNDA.

## National Updates by Chuck Rolfe - Continued

**Tom Sawyer** writes from Oakville ON "Hi Chuck, *many thanks for reminding me that I am falling behind with my Dues. That is not a normal thing with me, but I do subscribe to a dozen other Military organizations and Museums. The drawback is that the Dues period covered does not start on the same date for each one, i.e. the Submariners Association of Canada(Central) is in the Fall, while most others are at the end of December Fiscal Year. A solution for this comes from the West Coast, where they stamp on the envelope "MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES ON \_\_\_\_\_" Any chance of doing it this way?"* Chuck Rolfe replies: For those receiving their information and DIPPERS DIGEST's via the internet, they are informed by each Chapter's Membership Director when their membership is about to (or already has) expired. For those receiving a hard copy (have no computer), in the Ottawa Chapter they send out a membership renewal form in the mail with the September Issue of the DIPPERS DIGEST. The East and the West Coast Chapters do their own method of letting their members know it is time to pay their Dues.

On 9 February 2013 we forwarded an Email showing photo's of a very eclectic number of unique aircraft, helicopters, Wurlitzer record players, ancient dress fashions, baby buggies, propeller fan-powered bicycles, motorcycles, ancient gas pumps, locomotives, old & modern cars, old European tractors, threshing machines, Panzer and other tanks, Nazi Command Cars, WW I & WW II halftracks, artillery, etc, etc, on display at the Sinsheim Museum in Germany to all our members for their information. Our Member in Thorsby AB, **GARY SCHONEKESS** wrote back that these were great pictures, bringing back good memories for him, as he had visited the Museum with one of his buddies about 10 years ago. Gary said his Father(they had come from Russia to Canada) owned a 750 Zuendap motorcycle with a sidecar, and that it also had a sidecar drive. Additionally, the Sinsheim Museum had the biggest Russian Cargo Plane on display for public viewing when they were there. He said that they had lost the photo's taken at the time when his camera disappeared, thanks for sharing all the photo's, as they were great to see!

**GEORGE ONLEY** sends us greeting from Callander ON and thought it was time to send us all an update on some of his projects he has completed. I have fully completed the following models: HMCS HAIDA, HMCS ASSINIBOINE, HMCS NEW GLASGOW, HMCS ST. LAURENT, HMCS UGANDA, HMCS PRINCE ROBERT, HMCS BONAVENTURE, a FAIRMILE and the RCN Tug HEATHERTON, all of which I duly presented for display purposes to the Navy Museums of Canada. The ship HMS HOOD, all 6 ft. 7 in. of her, I have on permanent display at the Royal Canadian Legion in Callander. I am now in the throes of building an MTB 465, a full 42 in. in length, which will be a remote controlled working model. For my work on preserving Canadian Naval history, I was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal last year. George goes on to state that when the Queen was in Toronto, he had the honour of being introduced to Her Majesty at Queen's Park – the Lady is amazing! It was 28 degrees C outside when she reviewed the Honour Guard, and walked about for a full 40 minutes – *I should be in such good shape!!*

Our Member in Houston, Texas USA **KARL REITER** Emails that he wishes to renew his membership with CNDA, and wishes all the best for his Canadian Navy diving friends. He was trained as a Diver in the Royal Canadian Navy when he served here from 1949 to 1957, retired from the RCN and moved to Texas to work as a Salvage Diver. He said his last commercial salvage dive was in 1997, on a job in Nigeria. As a Marine Surveyor & Consultant, he currently owns his Reiter Marine Service Company out of Houston, Texas USA.

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**DREW BREMNER** in Tortola, British Virgin Islands wrote us on 5 February 2013 that he would like to renew his membership with the Ottawa Chapter for a full 5 years, and will arrange for a Canadian cheque to be sent to you, since I am out of the country. Roy and Georgina Thiele (he is my Brother in law) came down to visit for a year and really enjoyed themselves while here. We had a riot, and now really miss them a lot. They returned home to Shawnigan Lake BC to take care of their house and kids. It might even be that there could be a Bremner and a Thiele challenging each other on the next Prelim Course – wouldn't that be cool! Drew says that his wife, Eunice is Georgina's sister and that we had introduced Roy Theile to Georgina some time ago – Divers always end up with the best wives, don't you think! My wife, Eunice is the Charter Manager for the largest crewed Yacht Charter Company in the Caribbean!! Craig Shannon was also down for a visit on his way back from visiting Pico Poirier in Spain. Tilley is here with his LILLYANNA'S RANDSOME but very busy setting it up, and I haven't had a chance to get him over. Used to see Steve from the Fullerton Sherwood gang every year, but he has stopped coming in the last few years. My son, James Bremner is doing very well, and now is in year three of being clear of brain cancer, thank god. The guys and gals at FDU(A) took great care of him, and even posted him there while he was in treatment – I owe them large!!! Eunice and I have sold the sailboat and purchased a Trawler, officially making us "trailer trash" - Neil Connors might appreciate that, Jules V8 for sure! The only guy I ever saw jump off the wheelhouse top, onto the cabin top, onto the deck, and then into the water, fully clothed in the dead of Winter, for no apparent reason. Jamie Harper and I laughed so hard, we almost let him drown before fishing him out. His pants were so frozen by the time he got to the Hangar, his knees wouldn't bend. Jordy Walsh and I have another story like that about Rankin. Glen Canning and I have one like that also, only it was me that went into the water in that one! I think I see a pattern here---- anyway, back to work. Take care all of you!

*Note from Editor. Everyone reading the stories in the DIPPER, each and everyone of you have similar tales to tell, all you have to do is give me the gist of this, and I will put it in print – just one reminder, let us know the full names of the people as not everyone is aware of who such a person as "Jim" or "Steve" might be – thanks.*  
*Chuck Rolfe.*

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Our thanks to the many responses (Tom Essery, Bill Mallot, Tony Dubois, Jack Lewis, Joscelyn Paquin, et al) to our request to identify a dressed Diver, sans helmet, standing on the deck of a Diving Tender, likely Halifax Harbour circa 1940's – 1950's. The consensus is that it was a very young CPO1 Peter Nicholson. Bill Mallot took his Ships Diver Course in the Fall of 1958 and was then drafted back to his ship, HMCS ALGONQUIN in December 1958. He returned to HMCS GRANBY, located at the French Cable Wharf just North of the Naval Armament Depot (NAD), on the Dartmouth side of Halifax Harbour, in the Fall of 1959 to commence his Clearance Diver Course and, ultimately the rest of his Naval career in the Diving Branch.

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**MELANIE GRAY-WOOLLEY** has forwarded a membership form and her Diving Personnel Database Form to the Ottawa Chapter as of 23 January 2013. She qualified as a Leading Seaman Port Inspection Diver, serving at HMCS CARLETON, after passing her Course at FDU(P). After retiring from the Naval Reserve in 2000, Melanie became a Civilian Search & Rescue Technician, a K9 Dog Handler, and Investigator for the Ontario SPCA, and an Auxiliary Police Constable with the City of Cornwall Police Service. She also founded the Canadian Service Dog Foundation, which organization supports Veterans with operational injuries and/or PTSD. A very remarkable young lady!!

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## National Updates by Chuck Rolfe - Continued

### REQUEST FOR CNDA INFORMATION

**JOHN CONSTABLE** writes that he came across our Website and would like to know about us. He states *"I worked with the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) and took the Fleet Diving Unit's Clearance Diver Training as a member of the CCG in the early 1980's. There are probably about 100 of us from both the East Coast and the West Coast who completed this Diver training, starting in the 1970's. I am asking if membership with the Canadian Naval Divers Association is limited only to Military members, or is it open to civilian personnel, such as us, who took the Fleet Diving Unit's Diver Training Course? If it is open to us, what is the cost of membership?"*

**CHUCK ROLFE, CNDA Sec/Treas.** Responds: We are pleased to hear that you have located our Website navydiver.ca and are interested in whether you can join our Fraternal Organization. Our Constitution with regards to "Regular Members" states they are those persons who have trained and certified as Naval trained Divers by the Diving Units and have been accepted into CNDA as Regular Members. Foreign country's Military trained Divers may be accepted as Regular Members if they meet Canadian Standards. Additionally, our CNDA Public Information Pamphlet states:- Membership is open to all Navy Trained Divers, such as: Clearance Divers, Ships Divers, Ships Diving Officers, Coast Guard Divers, Reserve/Militia Divers, Fisheries Divers, Combat & Police Divers as Regular Members.

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Membership Fees for all 3 Chapters (Eastern, Ottawa, Western) is \$15.00 per annum (from 1 January to 31 December) with no pro-rating of Dues. Therefore, in regards to your query about CCG Divers becoming CNDA Members, the answer is Yes they can.

Prospective CCG retired or serving Divers need only complete our Membership Application Form, attach a cheque for \$15.00 payable to the Chapter selected and send it in to one of the 3 CNDA Chapters – we like to get some documentation showing their qualifications as well. The applicant will then be given the password to allow them to open the file on our website to read the newsletters published three times a year. DIPPERS DIGEST (hard copies will be mailed out to those who do not have access to a computer upon request). Each of our 3 Chapters have meetings and social functions within their area, and there is a Divers Reunion held every three years, alternating between the East and West Coast's. The last CNDA Reunion was in Halifax NS in September of 2012, therefore the next Reunion will be held in Victoria BC in September 2015. We trust this answers your query. Please feel free to contact us should you have any further questions.

Dear Friends,

Our AGM was held on May 26 at Lake Loon Golf Center and 58 Members and Guest attended. It was a "brunch meeting" with steak and eggs followed by the meeting. President Dale Silvester conducted the meeting. Minutes of the last meeting were read and approved, Andy Desrochers gave a financial report and a 2012 Reunion report. New business was discussed and included Ike Eisener memorial and the change of command at FDU (A) this coming June. Election of Directors follows: Gary Reddy our past Vice President became President. Mark Simonsen was voted in as Vice President . Glen Gillan was voted in as Secretary and Andy Desrochers volunteered to return as Treasurer and Membership Chairman. An "open floor" discussion followed and many "sea stories" were told. John Baker was the winner of the raffled "Pusser Rum". Gary Reddy adjourned the meeting at 13:55  
 Andy Desrochers

## MISSIVES

Hello All;

Jules Verhage has manufactured a brass arm and clapper for the YMT 12 Bell. He also mounted it on a nice piece of Oak and is now on display in the CORMORANT LOUNGE at FDUA. Gary Reddy has the best story of how the YMT-12 Bell found its way to the FDUA Mess Deck. Also mounted today is the YMT-11 Bell that was donated by CPO2 (ret'd) Jimmy Larder.



In between the two bells is the Classic CDBA Silhouette Picture taken by LS Wayne Catchpaugh off of Vieques Island, Puerto Rico on 03 May 1975. The two Divers swimming over and above Wayne at a depth of 25 fsw were LS Larry Dooling and LS George Scott. Thanks to Jules, Jimmy and Wayne for these outstanding memorabilia and conversation pieces.

Cheers,  
 Mark Simonsen



To all CNDA Ottawa Members:

The images above will give you some idea of what retired Divers can do with all the artifacts they may have collected from their days in the RCN. Both FDU(A) & FDU(P) would be more than happy to have any artifacts that you may want to send their way. I personally have given all my various diving gear/equipment to Museums across the country and to FDU(A), because I know that when I am gone, my children will simply throw it out as it is of no use to them, and they really don't know that it may be valuable to the Units. I would strongly urge you to make any donations now, rather than have it thrown out later.

Best regards,  
 Chuck Rolfe,  
 CNDA National Sec/Treas.



### Indefinable Mystique

Glorified in movies, but hidden beneath the waves in service, submarines have an indefinable mystique. They left harbour in the dark of night and returned the same way, their crews coming and going quietly, dressed simply as regular dock workers. It was for good reason that Canada's Cold War submarine service was known as the "real secret service".

The Museum of Naval History is a "Sub-station" of The Elgin Military Museum of St. Thomas, Ontario. The interpretive centre, to be built in 2014, will house an extensive collection representing the history of the Canadian Navy with an emphasis on the Cold War.

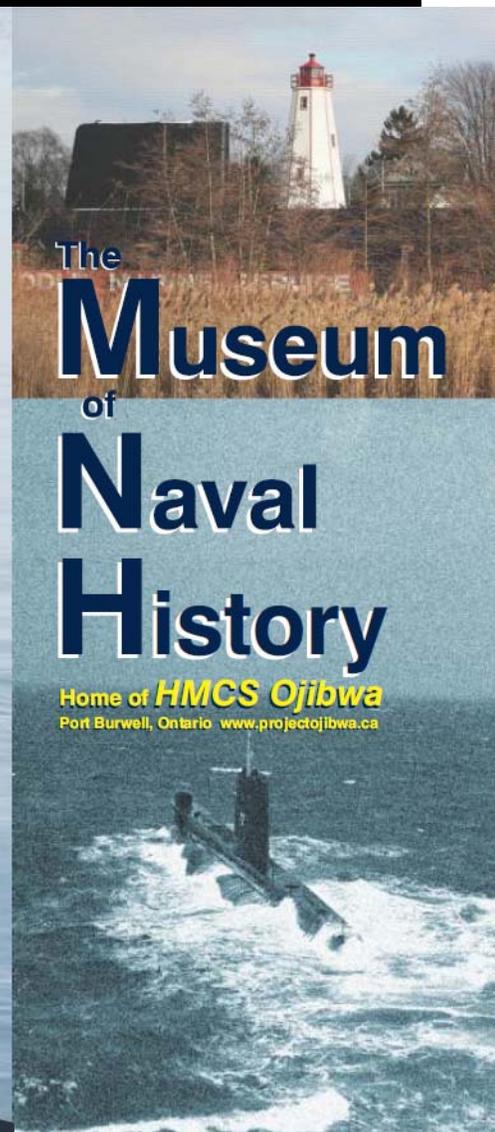
Just a short drive south of 401, this unique museum is within a day-trip of many major centres in Ontario and the northern US.

After you visit us, there is much more to enjoy on Canada's sunny south coast from Port Dover to Port Stanley and beyond. Beautiful beaches, great restaurants, charming B & B's, theatres, museums, wineries ... the list is endless. Port Burwell is the new "must see" for everyone visiting Southern Ontario.



**The Museum of Naval History**  
 3 Pitt Street, Port Burwell, Ontario  
 Canada N0J 1T0  
 519-633-7641  
 info@projectojibwa.ca [www.projectojibwa.ca](http://www.projectojibwa.ca)

A "Sub-Station" of  
**The Elgin Military Museum**  
 30 Talbot Street, St. Thomas, Ontario  
 Canada N5P 1A3  
 curator@elginmilitarymuseum.ca  
[www.elginmilitarymuseum.ca](http://www.elginmilitarymuseum.ca)



To all Canadian Naval Diver Association members:  
 The new exhibit of the decommissioned RCN Submarine HMCS OJIBWA will be open for public tours of both the inside and outside as of 6 July 2013. This is a good opportunity for all those interested to see what condition she is in, and to remember all the glory days of our time in the Navy. We urge you to go to Port Burwell for a look see. There is a nice little restaurant right beside the display for you to enjoy a good meal. Let your buddies know about it also.

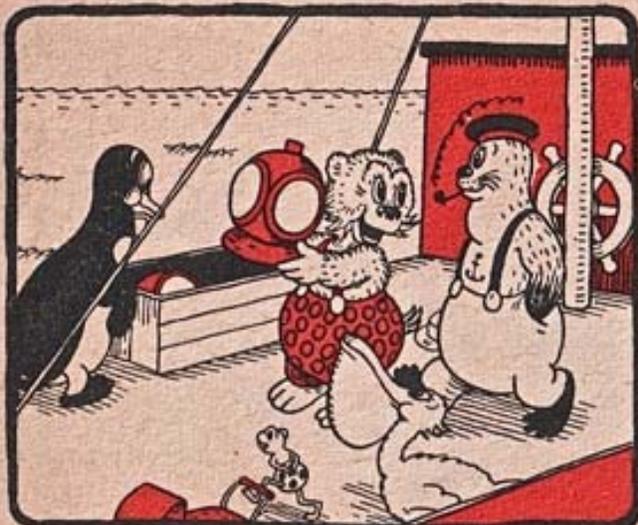
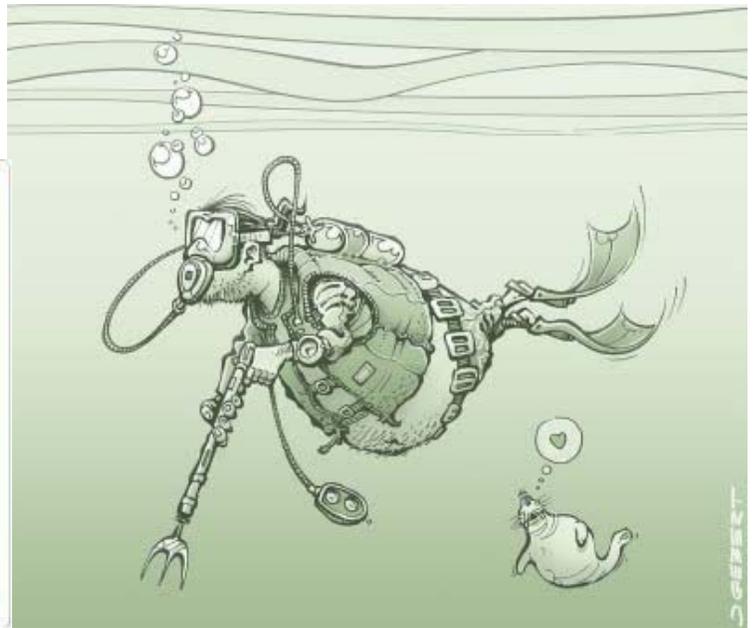
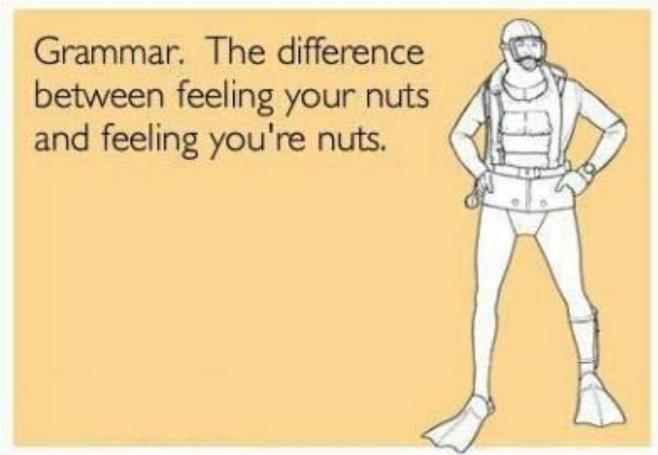
Best regards,  
 Chuck Rolfe,  
 CNDA National Sec/Treas.



Capt(N) Mulholland Presents LCDR Tom Essery (Retired) the QEII Diamond Jubilee Medal at CFB Esquimalt

## LAUGH FOR THE DAY

An octopus has eight testicles (Terry, Age 6): Oysters balls are called pearls (Jenny, Age 6): A Dolphin breathes through an asshole on the top of its head (Millie, Age 9): Divers have to be safe when they go under the water. Divers can't go down alone, so they have to go down on leach other (Becky, Age 8): My Uncle goes out in his boat with two other men and a woman, and comes back with crabs (Jimmy, Age 6): My Dad was a Sailor on the Ocean. He knows all about the Ocean. What he doesn't know is why he quit being a Sailor and married my Mom (James, Age 7).



'Whatever is this?' asks Bruin. 'Is it a lamp?'



'It's a diver's helmet,' explains Wilmot, who is wide awake now.



**CNDA**

Founded  
**HALIFAX, N.S.**

1981

President: **Wally Green**

**FOUNDING MEMBERS**

Glenn Adams

André Desrochers

Leo Goneau

Terry Havlik

Michael Walsh

First President: Stanley F. Watts

The mission of the Canadian Naval Divers Association (CNDA) is to keep Naval Divers, both Serving and Retired, informed and aware of what is happening within CNDA and other matters pertaining to Service Diving in Canada. It is also intended to keep everyone in touch with others of the diving community who may have been friends and diving team members from those tremendous days of service in our past.

**Contact Information**

**Tim Flath**

**Editor**

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# Editor's 10 Foot Stop

Once again I am extremely saddened to hear about losses amongst our ranks since we last published the digest. The passing of such icons as Ike Eisner and Gord Benjamin is hard to fathom and reminds each of us every day of our own mortality. I am also very troubled by some recent news that we have several retired divers with some very serious health concerns that are weighing heavily on a great many minds these days. Our prayers and well wishes go out to all (family, friends and the individuals themselves) that are dealing with these various types of crisis in their lives. I will dedicate the rest of this space to a favourite poem of mine that sums it all up:

### IRON MEN

It is said the IRON MEN are gone,  
And only in sentimental song live on.  
Soft living has taken its toll, they say,  
The IRON MEN belong to another day.  
BUT listen now and I'll tell you true  
That IRON MEN still wear Navy Blue.  
For when the cry rises to succor and save  
The Navy's Divers - the first of the Brave.  
Steel ships ripped on a coral reef  
Need steel men to free from grief.  
Ten fathoms below a diver grows chill,  
Works with his hands, his heart and his will.  
Bring back my son from his watery grave!  
Raise that boat- a fortune to save!  
Clear that wreck that blocks the port!  
CAN DO! Is the Divers ready retort.  
From the bitter freeze of the Arctic cold,  
To the heartless heat of the tropic fold.  
Wherever tormenting wind and sea are met,  
Fare forth the Divers with no regret.  
When at last the toilsome deed is done,  
And the fearful struggle with sea is won,  
The Diver sighs a great ..... AMEN  
And takes his place.....with the IRON MEN!

