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LISA MARSHALL/MORNING STAR

NAVY DIVERS from Victoria prepare to explode a mortar found at the bottom of Kalamalka Lake Tuesday morning.

Divers detonate explosive

Second World War mortar found in Kalamalka Lake

BY RICHARD ROLKE

MORNING STAR STAFF

The year wrapped up with a real bang in Coldstream.

Navy crews exploded a Second World War mortar 48 feet under the surface of Kalamalka Lake Tuesday morning. It had been discovered near the Kinloch Drive boat launch during the Okanagan Dive Club's solstice dive Dec. 21.

"I swam up, saw it and didn't know if I should touch it," said Sandra Peacock, a club member.

However, Peacock was quickly warned by partner J.C. Schweizer to leave the area.

"I knew I was looking at a mortar. It's an unusual place to find it," said Schweizer.

It's not known how the mortar came to be in the lake, but what is now Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park was used for military training during the Second World War.

Mortars have been located in past in the park and in the Commonage.

Members of the dive club marked the site with a buoy and then called the RCMP. The navy's fleet diving unit in Victoria was then contacted and a four-

member crew arrived on scene Tuesday.

One diver went into the water to place an explosive charge on the mortar, while three others assisted from a pontoon.

"It's starting to corrode so the mortar's unsafe to move. Being that it's older, it could be volatile and more sensitive to explosion," said Don Morris, petty officer first class.

Once the crew was safely out of harm's way, the mortar was detonated, with the explosion shaking up the neighbourhood and churning up the water.

Morris admits that his unit is kept busy across B.C.

"Typically it can be a grandfather with souvenir grenades or local areas that were ranges," he said, adding that he is pleased with how the dive club handled the situation.

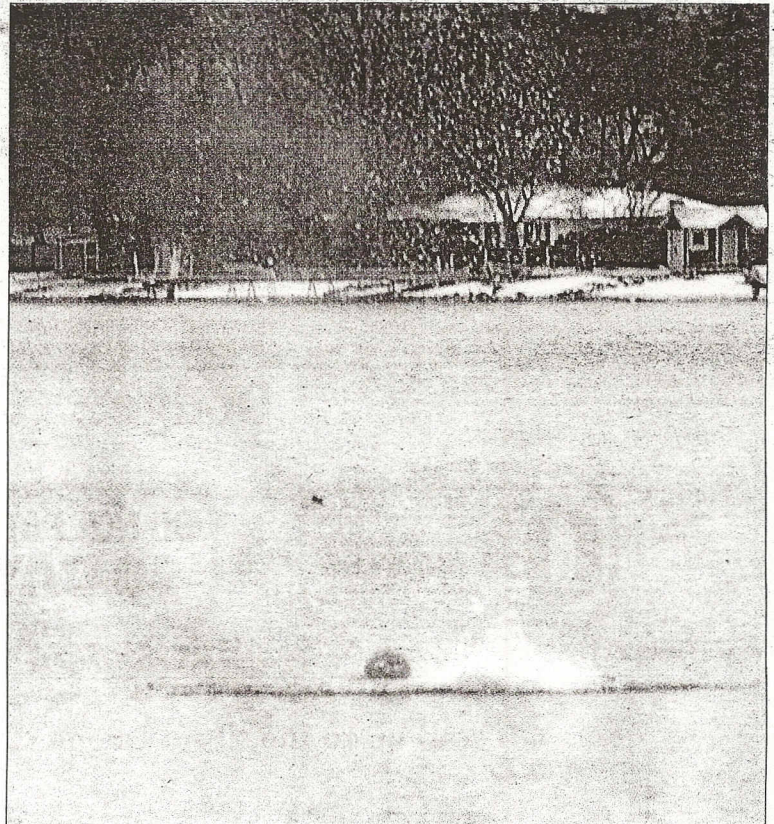
"They did the smartest thing — marked it and then called police. It would be easy to say it looks harmless, kick it and boom. If you see something, please don't touch it. Report it."

The mortar is just the latest adventure Schweizer has experienced since taking up diving.

"That's the beauty of diving. You never know what you'll find," he said.

And Schweizer plans on heading back into the water this Saturday, checking out the spot where the mortar exploded.

"I want to see how big the hole is," he said.



A SECOND World War mortar is detonated 48 feet under the surface of Kal Lake.