

Waking up as a fleet diver

By Sarah Gilmour

He wakes up in Colwood, B.C. every morning, not knowing whether he will spend the day in the office, or dive 76 metres underwater on a rescue mission.

This is because Leading Seaman Paul Trimble is the proud owner of a clearance diver dolphin badge—signifying his qualification as a clearance diver.

LS Trimble, 30, is a member of the Fleet Diving Unit (FDU) Pacific.

The FDU Pacific is based out of Colwood, and acts as the eyes and hands for all naval underwater operations requiring manpower.

Originally created after the Second World War as a mine countermeasures diving unit, the FDU also helps other government departments and research projects.

The quest to become a diver on the elite FDU team is no easy feat, explains LS Trimble. Candidates must serve on a ship or be a member of a combat diving team using SCUBA/Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA) equipment. From there, candidates must complete what the FDU Web site calls a “gruelling” two-week preliminary course.

In this first course, candidates are assessed while competing for a limited number of spots on the FDU course. Once on this second course, divers learn how to do a range of underwater tasks, and are finally awarded the dolphin badge.

LS Trimble has been a member of the FDU for four years, and has lived to tell the story of the sometimes risky, always exciting world of underwater clearance diving.

“We received a call one morning to an overturned fishing vessel at the mouth of the Fraser River,” said LS Trimble. The FDU was called to the scene to do recovery, where LS Trimble had a humbling experience seeing a father who had just lost his wife and child. “Seeing the extent of the personal and psychological injury that occurred, you realize the value of life.”

Days like these do not paint the entire picture of life as an FDU diver, but they do happen, said LS Trimble. “The level of camaraderie with the other divers is nothing like I ever experienced sailing,” said LS Trimble, who served in HMC Ships *Protecteur* and *Winnipeg*. “You train with them for over a year, you get to know everyone really well, you rely on them.”

Another benefit of the job, LS Trimble said, is the chance to train all over the world, and experience different cultures. LS Trimble and other members of FDU Pacific deploy to Chile June 1-17 for Exercise TEAMWORK SOUTH. LS Trimble is looking forward to the trip, and to show divers from different nations the FDU Pacific’s skills.



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LS Paul Trimble works as a clearance diver for the Fleet Diving Unit (Pacific).

Le Mat 1 Paul Trimble travaille comme plongeur-démineur au sein de l'Unité de plongée de la Flotte (Pacifique).