

The Big Picture – Army Divers' School

Master Sergeant Stuart Queen: It comes as a surprise to many people to learn that within the Army, there is an elite group of specialists who wear two uniforms. One is the uniform of the United States soldier. The other is the more complicated gear of a professional diver.

During a military operation, the safeguarding of ports is the Army's responsibility. To obstruct harbors and destroy fort facilities is always a prime objective of the enemy. Helping to maintain those facilities or restore them after the battle is the job of an Army Diver.

From Korea to the Arctic, Army Divers perform underwater salvage, rescue work, construction, underwater repair of Army vessels ranging from troop ships to scows.

Today we are visiting one of the Army's most unique installations: The Military Divers' Course of the Transportation School at Fort Eustis, Virginia, where apprentice divers learn one of the toughest, most difficult and most adventurous jobs in the world.

Narrator: Any Army officer or enlisted man may apply for Divers' School, but to enter he must pass one of the world's most stringent physical examinations and demonstrate that his intelligence is also well above average. During their 17-week course, these men will spend hundreds of hours on the bottom of the James River, often waist-deep in mud. It is work requiring strength, endurance and ingenuity.

At the recompression chamber, the aspiring diver gets his first introduction to the natural phenomena which make diving the taxing, complicated craft that it is. The recompression chamber is both a training device and a...