

# DULUTH TRADING CO.

## Praise for pants lands diver on catalog cover

Deep-sea worker finds himself in the spotlight

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After pulling on his wetsuit, and before donning his deep-sea diving helmet, Tony Thompson slips into a pair of canvas cargo pants as part of his uniform as an underwater construction worker.

The Quincy resident has worked in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic on such projects as bridge foundations, causeways, sea walls, and cable tunnels. Being on the cover of a clothing catalog wasn't one of his ambitions.

But there on the cover of the Duluth Trading Co.'s February catalog is a cartoon depiction of Thompson, wearing the company's cargo pants as he cuts through a steel pipe with an ultrathermic rod.

"I thought it was a good, accurate rendition of me under water," Thompson said in an interview.

Since the catalog came out, a New Mexico newspaper and a trade publication have run articles about him. "It's a little surprising," he said of the attention, "but I'm okay with it."

His appearance on the catalog was by chance. Chafing guards, made of a durable fabric like canvas, are worn over wetsuits to protect them from wear and tear and to provide pockets and loops for tools.

A pair Thompson left out to dry overnight last November blew away, so he went online to find a new pair. Searching for "canvas pants" in Google, Duluth Trading Co. came up.

"I was reluctant to try them," he said. "But I bought them anyway, a little oversize so they'd fit over my wetsuit. I like the pockets much better; they hold my tools . . . more securely than my other pair of pants."

Then he wrote a review on the Duluth Trading website that caught the eye of the company's customer service department.



"We're always looking for great stories to push to our consumers," said Sara Ferden, a company spokeswoman.

"Occasionally, we have a story that rises to the top, a story that we want to tell."

Born in Madrid, Spain, Thompson moved almost every two years because his father was in the Air Force. After graduating from high school in New Mexico, he went to a commercial diving school in Houston and began working on the Mississippi River and in the Gulf of Mexico in 1982.

He moved to Boston and joined the Pile Drivers Local 56 in 1985. He and his wife, Anna Maria, set down roots in Quincy, where they live with their 12-year-old son, James.

Currently, he does work contracted through the union and sits on its executive board.

In his 30 years of diving, Thompson has been in situations that people with landlocked jobs will never see. While working on oil rigs in the gulf, for example, a chef on board was dumping leftover food that became dinner for a few sharks.

Then there was the time the Louisiana state police called on his team to locate a car

that had gone into the Mississippi River off Interstate 10. Most of the Mississippi is black water with little visibility. Thompson found the car when he hit his head on the passenger side mirror. He tore off the license plate so the vehicle could be identified, and a crane hoisted the car out of the water, containing the six bodies police were looking for.

In this area, he has done work on the TD Garden, the Ted Williams Tunnel, cable crossings to Martha's Vineyard, and the pile-lines between Gloucester and Boston.

But dives in deep, dark waters are his favorite.

"Time flies in black water. There's something about working when you can't see," he said. "You develop a . . . sense of what a blind man would go through."

