

Sons of Neptune



Donald Henry "Buster" Brown
CPO1 (Ret'd), MMM, CD

Sons of Neptune

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This is a preliminary release of Donald "Buster" Brown's book titled "Sons of Neptune". It appears that he completed this book in 2012. No changes to the document were made in this release, however it was formatted very close to what the author would have wanted and made into a readable pdf document. Many sailors who knew Buster have asked to 'peruse' Buster's book, hence this quick release of the material we were given by the Brown family.

It is released with permission of Gerri Brown, Buster's loving wife, and his family.

A few years back I had asked Buster how he was coming along with his book. He told me that he was still working on it but, knowing Buster as a bit of a perfectionist, I think he wanted to get it done to perfection. In my view, it is perfect as it is and a great read.

Buster's manuscript was edited and formatted by me, a friend of Buster. Any comments, dedications, suggestions or otherwise can be directed to me.

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Foreword

This is Buster's story. It shows his character through and through. Submariners have character and this is the life of one of them. Buster was unique but we all have parallels with his experiences. That is what makes this book so enjoyable a read by submariners, sailors, those who have served in the Canadian military and those who have lived life. It is Buster's autobiography from birth, through a Canadian military career to retired civilian life.

I knew Buster closest from the mid '70s until the early 80's when we "sailed" together on HMCS/M Okanagan and in the Submarine Squadron Technical staff. He advanced from Petty Officer 1st Class to Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class and Chief Petty Officer 1st Class while getting his Certificate 4 Engineering Charge Certificate and Order of Military Merit during this time. Among many technical issues, we discussed his consideration of becoming a Commissioned from the Ranks Officer and his transition from submarines to the surface fleet. Our families and children were of the same years. He served from reserve navy ordinary seaman to the highest non-commissioned officer position in the Canadian Navy - Command Chief Petty Officer – advising five Admirals commanding the Navy. Readers can relate their naval experiences with Buster's.

Matelots can relive their naval life through a reading of Buster's expressions and experiences. His focus, knowledge, leadership, joy for life, and character shines through in all that he did, in his relations with others, and this personal history. Jack will identify with other portions of Buster's life: in the reserves, at recruit school in HMCS Cornwallis, on exchange duty, during workups, as Coxswain or working with officers or even on a run ashore. Everyone that knew him can see some of their own and his character in his stories, "dits", tales and memories.

Enjoy your time with Buster.

Captain (N) Sherm Embree (RCN retired)



Donald Henry “BUSTER” Brown, CPO1 (Ret’d), MMM, CD2

It is with deep sadness, yet immense pride, that we, his family, announce the crossing of the bar of D.H. “Buster” Brown.

Born in London, England, in 1941, he immigrated to Canada with his mother in 1946, and grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He began his military career by joining the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets in Winnipeg in 1954, prior to his enlistment in the Royal Canadian Navy in 1958 as an engineering mechanic.

During his first four years as a sailor, he served at sea aboard the minesweeper HMCS Fortune, completed a four-month tour in the Far East aboard HMCS Crescent, and was later drafted to the destroyer HMCS Micmac based in Halifax.

By 1962, he had completed further trades training and volunteered to go on exchange and undergo training with the Royal Navy's submarine service in the United Kingdom. In so doing he served in Her Majesty's Submarines Grampus, Andrew, Anchorite, Alliance and Aeneas.

During that six-year period, Buster served in home waters, the Mediterranean, and spent two further years in the Far East with the 7th Submarine Squadron based in Singapore. He was promoted to Leading Seaman and was awarded the Malay Peninsula clasp for service at sea during the Indonesian Confrontation.

In 1968 he returned to Halifax and served aboard the submarine HMCS Onondaga and later that year commissioned HMCS Okanagan in Chatham, England. His time aboard Okanagan was highlighted in by the RFA Grey Rover incident, when she was accidentally rammed by the British tanker in 1973. Buster remained on Okanagan through 1981, rising in rank to the position of Chief Engineer, and appointed Submarine Squadron Chief ERA.

Due to qualified personnel shortages, Buster was then drafted to the destroyer HMCS Skeena as Chief ERA and was to receive indoctrination training aboard HMCS Nipigon in the NATO Squadron in Europe. By 1984, Brown served on staff of the Commander Sea Training, Atlantic, as Chief ERA, charged with the task of training and working up ships' crews in achieving operational status at sea.

In 1988, Buster was named Coxswain of the tanker HMCS Protecteur, and a year later returned to the submarine service as

part of the inaugural Submarine Sea Training Group's Chief ERA. During this time, with the deployment of three ships to the Gulf War operational theatre, he was recalled to assist in at-sea training preparations and sailed aboard HMCS Terra Nova.

Upon returning to Halifax, Buster was appointed to the Admiral's staff as the Command Chief Petty Officer, Maritime Command, a post he held until retiring from Canada's navy in 1995.

Following his retirement, he was engaged as a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command's Defence Committee, with which he remained active until well into his 70's. Buster participated as Legion representative in both the Canadian Forces "Showtour 2000" in Bosnia, and the commemoration of the 65th Anniversary Korean War Armistice in South Korea in 2008.

Buster was lured into the Hollywood movie business in 2001, working as Submarine Technical Advisor on the feature-film production "K-19: The Widowmaker", filmed primarily in Halifax and starring popular actors Harrison Ford and Liam Neeson, in 2001.

Buster was also chairman of the Submariners Association of Canada (East), a board member of the Royal Canadian Naval Association, and a long-time member of the Atlantic Chiefs & Petty Officers Association in Halifax.

Concurrent to his illustrious military career, he remained active as a volunteer in his community, organizing a Mens' Dart League at the Herring Cove & District Volunteer Fire Department, and acted as head coach for hockey teams in the Chebucto Minor Hockey Association in Spryfield throughout the 1980's and early 1990's. A talented handyman, a meticulous gardener and lifelong sports fan, he ardently supported the Montreal Expos and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

Most importantly, he was a devoted and loving husband to his wife Gerri, proud father to sons Jeff Brown and Brent Rigby, themselves military members, and adoring grandfather of Colin Brown, Benjamin Rigby and Lucas Rigby.

He was predeceased by his parents Donald Ramsay Brown and Nora Katherine Hopgood.

He is survived by his stepbrother Dan Colleaux of Winnipeg, his wife Gerri (nee Keefe) of Halifax, his sons Jeff Brown (Anne) of Halifax and Brent Rigby (Nicole) of Greenwood, N.S., grandsons Colin Brown of Halifax and Benjamin & Lucas Rigby of Greenwood, aunt Mary Brown of London, England, cousins Patricia Brown of New York, N.Y. and Clive Brown of London, many loving and nieces and nephews and countless friends, shipmates and fellow submariners all over the world.

“It’s all about attitude and adaptation.”

We have the watch, Chief.

INTRODUCTION

I had retired from the navy. I was busy doing things with an unfamiliar independence. I was with my wife all of the time. I renovated our home . . . renewed the roof . . . worked in the garden, and did everything else that had withstood neglect during all the years ‘the mob’ took precedence. While all that was going on, I needed to relax and give my mind some diversion. The shock of leaving the navy, dismissing from my memory everything and everyone within it, and having all of this unaccustomed time on my hands meant just one thing . . . write a book.

I had never thought of myself as an author, nor was I aware of the minefield out there for anyone hoping to get a book published. As time passed and my fingers patrolled my keyboard, (yes, even an ancient stoker like me can type) a pile of pages grew, and I began to feel at ease as I laboured. Since I had met so many people and experienced so many unique events during a lifetime spent serving my country, somehow this had to be conveyed and I needed help. So, I set out to contact and re-unite with past and present blue-blood shipmates and old oppos. In those rambunctious get-togethers, I had been accused of having a clear memory. But in stirring their memories, vivid recollections began to abound. They now realized that they too had a story to tell. And so, it began. . . as an extension to my own experiences.

Compiling this collection of hilarious, ribald, dramatic, sad and unique experiences was an opportunity to do something very significant on their behalves. Alas, what good are memories if they can’t be shared, however regrettable that every memory just can’t be represented in a single book. *Sons of Neptune* is a true story of what matelots said and what they did.

I have blended my own experiences with accounts that come from the spirited enthusiasm of my mates and colleagues, the people whom I have had the distinction of serving and sailing with. These personal observations and cherished memories stand out in our minds, and are as accurate as the passage of time, imagination, and motion allow! I have described as best I can how together we lived above and below the seas and ashore, in times of high spirit and moments of adversity.

So how would I put it all together? Spin-offs that begin with the forging of a simple young lad from bomb-shattered “Hope and Glory London” of WWII, then into someone in a navy . . . somewhere else. That someone was to be me; that somewhere else became Canada. It was when I joined the sea cadets and instantly knew that someday, I might be a Chief Petty Officer in the RCN. I reflect of how fortunate I was to be so sure of where I wanted to go at such a young age. How fortunate it was too, to be challenged in so many aspects of going to sea and on every rung of the ‘lower deck’ ladder until I retired. How rewarding was the sense of accomplishment, the experience of adventures, and the comradeship of a life at sea, in many ways unimaginable for those who were not privileged to share our calling. It is viewed by many that a Chief is the mainstay of the ‘lower deck’ and everybody except a chief, knows him to be the backbone of the navy. The ‘lower deck’ is where the majority of men and women in the navy serve. They are the people who represent its prestige and purpose; and that is where I remained for my entire career.

The account blends naval customs and traditions and their harmony in day to day life in a blue . . . then green . . . and well-received transition back into a blue uniform once again. It also speaks of the cunning and silly things that sailors did and might still do, but perhaps more in conflict

with the restrictions shovelled upon a modern navy in these times of social and political correctness. The songs, the rhymes, the antics that followed might still be acceptable, and the concealment of befitting morals and fastidious values of sailors of a yester-navy might also attract a little scorn from a wholesome, but haplessly informed society.

So then there came the adventure of stealing a sod-turning shovel that turned into a symbolic trophy. How it travelled around the world for over thirty years touching Royalty and a Canadian Prime Minister, all the while drawing together allies from the Australian, New Zealand, American, and British navies, the RCN and the Canadian Armed Forces.

For all the years that sailors gave to their country, most in peace and others in war, their tales are genuine and unique, consistent with the lingo, the sea, and the life. I am proud that I was a part of it through five decades, and feel both affection and sympathy for those who left us as early in their careers as they did. Did they give the navy and themselves . . . a chance? A great majority of naval war veterans, who are honoured by present sailors, served in the navy for only the duration of their respective war campaigns. Some may perhaps discover a new-found regard for those who spent multitudes of years at sea, albeit in the Cold War and in peace, but confronting the rigours of a life on the 'lower deck' that demanded stamina, patience, and determination in spending almost a lifetime to qualify as professionals. Would they, the wartime veterans, have done it too?

In this book I have portrayed people and events as I and others witnessed them. To do this accurately, I must relate the speech as it was spoken as everyone else heard or said it too. To comprehend the jargon, slang, and expletives means average readers may have difficulty, but they

should 'lighten up' in the knowledge that this is a sailor's book. The curious point about matelots is that they have a colourful vocabulary that expands beyond common parlance. They have taken many of the most indecent symbols and expressions in our language and deprived them of their original meanings by using them as harmless pronouns and adjectives. In a matelot's language they serve the purpose of emphasis. Thus, this unique language cannot sink to indecency. Custom has sterilized them and a sailor's speech and the navy's, is a convention, coarse as it may seem but not a form of swearing as is erroneously supposed. In the usage of 'lower deck' messes in the days of sail, if any subject under discussion was not suitable for tender minds, then "Breadcrumbs!" was the order to stop their ears, "Fishbones!" to shut their eyes, and "Matchbox!" to seal their mouths and endure strict silence. Such demands find no place in these chapters.

There is a division within society. Of those unfortunate and perhaps envious many who are deprived of a unique spirit and camaraderie by not having served in the navy. For those who did . . .they quietly smile and thumb their nose in their private joy of pride, commitment, and belonging. I do not remember them only for their gallant accomplishments and unique experiences while serving our Queen and country, but because my own life is richer for having had their friendship. These are the SONS OF NEPTUNE

CHAPTER ONE

LONDON

“I fink, 'n I fawt, 'n I come frum 'Smoke!”

(“I think, and I thought, and I come from London!”)

In 1941, the war in Britain was worsening. Germany was overwhelming the entire European continent. Hitler had his country and its people behind him, yet only the world beyond Germany knew of this man's evil threat to the world. In London, the blitz was over, but the raids still came. Every day, bombs would drop on this vast city endeared by the Cockneys as “Smoke, mate!” Londoners, and especially those in the east end, suffered daily losses to both home and family. In the west end, or better known to Londoners all as “up the city,” the Burroughs of Turnham Green and Chiswick Park W4, had their share too. Tucked away in this relatively calmer area of London was the Perivale Maternity Hospital in Acton, where a boy was born on June 30th. He was to become an individual with an adventurous life. His father, Company Sergeant Major Donald Ramsey Brown of the London Regiment, 2nd Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, was away fighting in North Africa with the Eighth Army. Young Donny didn't know much about him, for even before the war had begun, he was a peacetime infantryman serving in India.

Donny was brought up where his mother did her share toward the war effort as a ‘clippie’ admiral on the ‘double-deckers.’ When the bombs dropped, it wasn't too bad because it meant he could put on his rubbery-red Donald Duck gas mask. As dad was never home on Green End Road, where their flat was, Donny was often over at nana's in Belmont Grove near Chiswick High St., where all the hustle and bustle was, so it seemed.

Granddad, in his late fifties and still very capable, worked at the Firestone Tyre factory on the Great West Road, further west in the city. His wartime contribution, in addition to manufacturing brown jackets for the tyres (Donny never knew what they were), was as a volunteer fire brigade man in Chiswick's fire brigade hall, quashing the flames and debris and rescuing those poor devils who were victims of Hitler's nightly bombing raids. Granddad was a veteran of the First World War. He was then a cavalryman with the Royal Horse Guards in the Household Brigade, the blue jackets. He often spoke of burnishing his breast plate and grooming both his issued steed and helmet plume each night before

lights out. Granddad, as a civilian, was a proud man who always had shiny, bra-a-a-an boots and a suit whose creases would cut a finger. He was a veteran of the Battle of Mons, the first fighting between Britain and France in the great war, and many other campaigns in Flanders and Germany. As a near-fatal reminder, he had a scar from a bayonet stab just above his right hip. With a mix of pride and sad memory, he would waltz about the flat in his undervest and suspenders at the short trail, while he shaved and prepared to go whistling off to work . . . sometimes at night on the last bus to the Great West Road or early in the morning to catch the first of the day. In the dark from Belmont Grove, Donny could hear him whistling his tune as the click of his footsteps would take him to the high street just around the corner to fetch the bus. Of course, granddad, being such a proud and traditional Londoner, always found some time and a few bob to go round to the pub for a pint of mild, and when the horses were running, get a bet on for the day. And each time he went out for his brief period of pleasure, he was dressed immaculately with suit, tie, casket . . . and his 'form.'

Donny well remembers the war in London as a boy, of the food rationing and nana whose responsibility it was to stay home and mind him, as well as Kay and Jim . . . the dog and the cat. She would go on her weekly shopping trip to get in the ration queues and return home much later in the day with one egg, four ounces of butter, a little bit of tea, and maybe two rashers of bacon. That one egg was kept aside for granddad, as he was the real deserving member of the household. Donny would drool when nana made "The one egg, egg custard wiv' nutmeg on it" that was put aside for granddad only. To emphasize the shortage of luxury food, it wouldn't be until 1946 that, as a five-year-old, he saw for the first time what a banana looked like and why the taste of ice cream, if you could get it, was so popular among wartime children. Meanwhile, as infrequently as he was back at Green End Rd. when the bombs were dropping, it was an adventure to sleep out in the Anderson air raid shelter that bunkered below a pear tree. This was more fun because over on Belmont, the shelter was a brick one built right on the pavement, and everybody sat on benches looking at each other. It seemed more private to be underground in the Anderson with just mom. As you got in behind the mildewed canvas curtain, you were safe and far away from danger . . . if a young boy ever thought that there was any!

Donny remembers the drone of the Heinkels and the whistling of the bombs as they rained down on London. As the war years dragged on, those sounds became overwhelmed by the noise of the unmanned V1

“doodlebugs” and V2 “buzz bombs,” and when those noises stopped, the grownups would gasp, look up, then squint and shudder with their fists clenched. But why, thought Donny? The noises had stopped . . . after all! Somehow, he was beginning to realize that there was a danger, and it wasn’t really fun to go in the shelters anymore.

Donny, as a young sailor in the sixties, returned to Belmont Grove for the first time in over a decade. Nan’ would then tell Donny of how he saved her life when jerry was dropping his bombs over the city one night. Granddad was at the factory and mom was on the busses, and he would share the big bed with Nan. He woke up from the noise of the falling bombs and cried for a drink of water. Both Nan and Donny got out of bed and headed to the scullery, where the flat’s single water tap was. She poured a glass of water. Then a bomb dropped on the high street just one street away, destroying the big church and surrounding shops. The noise and vibration were so terrific that the heavy wire-reinforced plaster ceiling overhead came crashing down onto the warm but empty bed. In the years that followed, the story was frequently retold, and he always wondered why it was Nan’s life he’d saved, but what about his own?

Dad was still on the battlefield having combed North Africa in 1942 from El Alamein to Tobruk, Tunisia, and Alexandria. He was one of “Monty’s boys,” who swept the desert in the fight against Rommel. As a Company Sergeant Major, his charges consisted of many younger men who were but 18 and 19 years old infants who had volunteered at or after the outbreak of the war. In late 1943, Dad was then on the landings in Sicily and the march to Rome. The quest for Monte Cassino became a tactical objective, and had Germany been more perceptive, five of its divisions in particular would have been repositioned for the invasion at Normandy. They weren’t, and through lack of that perception remained well-established to defend Monte Cassino. In contrast, only two Commonwealth divisions were to come ashore to stage the offensive at Anzio Beachhead on the 16th of February 1944. Unaware and invariably outnumbered, it was to be a massacre . . . and Dad was killed in action. Had he lived for almost four months more when the allies reached Rome, he would have been branded a ‘D-Day Dodger.’ Had he been destined to Normandy on D-Day instead . . . he just might have lived. Donny was only three then but he remembered things in the flat back in London. Word was received of what had happened. Mom was crying and nana was as well. Granddad, the cavalry veteran, never stopped whistling but this time it had a quiver. Donny had only recollected his father on two occasions so nothing would affect him

then, but it did as he became older. Company Sergeant Major Donald Ramsey Brown was buried at the British Commonwealth *Anzio



**The cemetery is marked with 2,312 plots and is indeed, a British Commonwealth burial ground. Sailors, soldiers, and airmen from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Pakistan are buried here. Notably, there are several Canadians' graves therein, comprising West Novies', the Special Service Forces, and members of RCAF Bomber crews. Royal Navy personnel are there too, members of the Combined Forces, probably amphibious landing craft crews.*

Author's observations from visits in 1983 and 1994

Beachhead Cemetery in a small village, Villa Claude (cloud), just 8 km north of Anzio and the beachhead. Donny would be the first and only member of his family to visit the gravesite after 39 years, in 1983.

R.M.S. Lady Rodney sails to Halifax ... how come it moves around?

By war's end, mom was still on the busses and by now was getting out to the Hammersmith Palais, the ever so popular wartime dance Mecca in London's west end. On one night there, she met a Canadian soldier. He was a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Signal Corps. His name was Albert Colleaux, and Donny, now a little older, began to see that this was a nice man because he always had a big grin on his face. He used to play piggy back, take him to Regent's Park Zoo and do all sorts of things that Donny had never imagined a young boy could do. He often came to see mom and every time he did, he brought sweets from the canteen. For the first time, Donny had tasted chocolate and he remembers well when

getting to bed one night in his clean pyjamas, he awoke in the morning covered in a melted Oh Henry nutty bar.

On the high street in Chiswick, the huge church that got hit in the raids still had its front wall and main entrance. Something called a wedding had taken place at that wall, and Donny's new dad's army buddies and mom's friends were there too.



On the steps of the church wall. From 2nd on left, front row: Nan, new Dad, Mom, Granddad....and Donny

The war had ended, and for some reason the lights stayed on at night, black curtains were taken down from the windows, and everywhere a young boy went it seemed as if everyone was so happy and gay. In fact, there was a street party right on Belmont Grove, and we would find out in years to come that it was a celebration for V-E Day. Donny had never seen such good and many sweet things to eat. London was alive and he remembered the cranes and wrecking balls. They were in the rows, groves, lanes, and high streets, knocking down the countless air raid shelters as many lorries drove about London moving tons of bricks and rubble. To a young boy and his friends, this was fascinating, and all of this activity gave them lots to do every day. With all of this excitement

going on, he came to realize that he was going to go to Canada with mom but his new dad would come much later. What he couldn't imagine, though, was that Nana and Granddad weren't going to go with them and this was a big puzzle and very sad to him. R.M.S. *Queen Mary* and many of the other great liners remained busier than ever at war's end with Trans-Atlantic crossings taking the troops back to Canada and the United States. Along with them, but in other ships, came the war brides and their children in as many thousands. It was soon time to depart in September of 1946, to leave England via Southampton to New York and then by train to Canada. Mom wasn't too pleased, for Donny broke out with the mumps. All the anticipation and anxiety to leave for Canada suddenly deflated and the journey was delayed until the mumps vented off and the



VE Day on Belmont Grove. (circled) Donny and his Nana

fever went away. To get over the illness and book a new passage caused a two-month delay. In Donny's mind, though, there was plenty to do 'round Chiswick.

Passage to Canada was going to be in a ship that would sail to Halifax. The *Lady Rodney* was one of five Canadian National's 'Lady' ships, which were on the West Indies route carrying bananas and sugar cane before the war. They were converted to hospital ships or used as troop transports but if all five were massed together, still couldn't match the 80,000-ton *Queen Mary*. Donny, many years later, would meet an ex-

merchant seaman, Quartermaster Robbie Blackburn, who sailed in both *Lady Nelson* and *Rodney* during and after the war. In a confident tone, assured me: “The ‘Ladys’ weren’t much more than 6,000 tons and would make great blood buckets [life boats] aboard ‘Mary!’” Nevertheless, mom



R.M.S. Lady Rodney beyond her war years

and Donny would sail in *Lady Rodney*, the only ‘Lady’ ship that went unscathed in the war. (*Hawkins*, *Drake*, and *Somers* were sunk and the *Nelson* was torpedoed alongside in Castries, St. Lucia, but was raised and sailed again.) Donny was pretty excited because no matter if ships were the ‘*Mary*, *Franconia*, ‘*Elizabeth*, or *Lady Rodney*, they were all huge, titanic, and mighty in his youthful eye, and something about the odour, the din, and their mammoth proportions was attracting him.

Taking the train from Waterloo to Southampton was an adventure and to see all the ships and activity at the Southampton docks was exciting. As *Lady Rodney* cast off, many moms were crying and sobbing and waving from the upper decks. Soon after, the winds and heavy seas in the English Channel picked up and Donny wondered that if the ship was so large, why would it move about so much? This wasn’t supposed to happen in his mind. They were meant to cross the Atlantic, he understood, instead of going up and down it.

The noise, oil-laden air, and the vibrations from the engine room below were catching his attention and he wanted to go down there and

have a look. Instead, he got tugged around and had to go and sit in the parlours and staterooms while the women gassed away, not so bad though because there were new children to meet and play with. And of course, this is where the banana and the ice cream adventure took place. “Well, this going to Canada seems like a pretty good thing after all. But why was everybody crying all the time?”

The next morning, they entered Le Havre in France, and Donny remembers seeing more bomb ruins along the wharves and in the distant city. It seemed to a young boy of five years old that this is supposed to be that way wherever you went. Later in the day, the ship left the wharf and guided her bows to the open sea, and Donny would be leaving Yew Kay for many years to come.

Several days later, the ship finally stopped rolling and *R.M.S. Lady Rodney* entered Halifax harbour. Donny didn’t understand why there were no damaged buildings and no rubble everywhere in this very small, but different-looking place. Donny took mom’s hand and went to the upper deck. As ‘*Rodney* drew closer and was gently tugged into a cavernous pier numbered “21”, there were ships of every size and type in the harbour. Ferries, tankers, freighters, passengers, and warships! He could hear a marching band on the wharf below playing music that everyone sang to that he learnt was called “Here Comes the Bride.” There were trains on the pier, and cranes and gantries lifting crates and sea chests to the dock below. Everybody was kissing each other. “What is going on?”

Meanwhile, there were queues everywhere. Finally, Donny and mom got on a train, and there they sat for what seemed like hours. Nobody was allowed to go to the lav’ and all the moms were getting restless. It was cold and damp too. Donny had on his short flannel trousers, a blazer, and a tie just like the rest of the kids who disembarked from *Lady Rodney*, and as he looked back at the ship, the last link to nana, granddad, and England faded away. He said, “I ‘fink I might loik this, but I neva’ ‘fawt it wou’ be dis cold!”

It was nearing winter in 1946, and travelling on a train in Canada was very different. Any time you took a train in England, the journey would be over in a few short hours, and the time between stations was every twenty minutes. The journey took almost four days, and the time between stations seemed like twenty hours. It was an exciting time though, and the warmth and comfort of the train provided a security against the emptiness and harsh cold of the passing wintry countryside. There was so much country out there with forests, hills, and farmlands that you

could see through peep-holes in the frost of the ice-laden coach windows that grew smaller as the train sped on and into the nights. It was fun to sleep in a bed with curtains around it, and in the morning, he and his mom went for breakfast in the dining car. They would pass through the countless vestibules that adjoined the coaches covered with miniature snowdrifts and frost with the smell of smoke, steam, cinders, and that unique odour that emits only from railway cars. Two hours later, after getting back to the coach, the beds had disappeared and became seats for the rest of the day.

As each of those emotional days passed, the war brides and those with children began to gradually disappear as the train headed further west. Again, there were farewells, hugs, and crying from Mom's newfound friends from Lady Rodney, and as they stepped down from the train at each stop . . . it was hard to imagine that in the years to follow, they were never going to be seen . . . or heard from again.

Finally, they arrived in Winnipeg where he met a new aunt and uncle. These were Donny's new dad's sister and brother-in-law and they were to stay at their home until dad would arrive from England some two months later. The first thing that had to happen was to get some winter clothes, for all he had to wear were his traditional English boy's short pants and blazer. He got a new coat and a hat and went out to roll in the snow and make snowballs. At aunt Martha's, there was all kinds of food and plenty of it. One morning, he became inspired by this very strange but fascinating silvery, shiny object on the middle of the breakfast table that he had never seen before. He reached for it with his hand to pick it up and have a closer look when zowie! It was a plugged-in toaster with drop-away doors. Donny became very aware of that hot thing and for the next two weeks, with a bandaged hand, had to get help to butter his toast.

**R.C.S.C.C. John Travers Cornwell V.C.
... largest in the commonwealth**

Adjusting to this new life in Canada hadn't been easy. Following the military occupation of Germany, Dad Colleaux finally arrived home to Canada. He got a job at CNR and bought a post-war, four-room bungalow at 401 rue Des Meurons in St. Boniface, across the Red River from Winnipeg. This very small but complete city was the largest French-Canadian community outside of Quebec. It was also liberally dotted with different nationalities from the old country, and of the twelve homes on

the block on Des Meurons, the neighbours consisted of Scot, Ukrainian, Flemish, English, Jewish, and Irish families.

Now that mom's new surname was Colleaux, and there were only three people in this new family, Donny assumed the same surname. It was never done officially, but as a young boy, it sure saved a lot of confusion in this new land, especially when it came time to register in school for grade one. L'Institut de College du Provencher was run by the Marianist brothers and was very strict. It was an 'all boys' Roman Catholic institution consisting of twelve grades, either French or English, and further sub-divided at three high school levels. In junior high years, the numbers of Protestants were never more than fifty and on the last Thursday of every month, the whole school would break off and head to mass and confessions at the St. Boniface Cathedral. The few Protestants would stay behind and either move school furniture or attend mandatory self-study periods until the bell went at the end of the day. Meanwhile, the sin-cleansed mobs at church got to go home early in the forenoon.

By 1949, Donny was rewarded with a half-brother. Along he came and although there was an eight-year age gap, Danny and Donny Colleaux did a lot of boyhood things together. Two years later, Mom got her wish. She was always wistful about things back home in England. It was a complete and welcome surprise when dad returned from work one day and brandished three return tickets to cross the Atlantic. Mom and the two brothers were to go to England for four months. They went by train to Quebec City and boarded the Cunarder R.M.S. *Samaria*. They took passage to Southampton via that other familiar port called Le Havre.



Cunarder R.M.S. Samaria

Samaria was a much larger ship than *Lady Rodney*, at about 19,000 tons displacement. The familiar odours and clamour from the throbbing engine room below once again roused Donny's attention, but this time, there was an unpleasantness about being on the Atlantic that he hadn't experienced in *Rodney*. He got awfully seasick.

Arriving in Southampton, there were steamers everywhere. Both of the 'Queens' were alongside the quays, along with other Cunarders' *Scythia* and *Franconia* . . . and what a sight they were! From there, it was the train to Waterloo for a glorious visit back to Smoke once more. Nana and granddad met them at the station and those few years since 1946 hadn't changed them much at all. What had changed was the face of London, where most of the bomb ruins had been cleared away and many new buildings had risen.

For Donny, it wasn't going to be a complete holiday after all. In Canada, the norm for kids was two months of glorious summer holidays starting in June. This was to be abruptly shortened by getting back to the grind almost immediately after arrival in England. Grade six in Canada became a puzzle to the administration at Stavely Secondary School in Chiswick. He was shifted from class to class to class until it was decided that his level of mentality was best suited for first-year secondary B. Talk about colonialism, but one thing remained, in that they were just as strict at Stavely as they were in Provencher. The difference was that instead of starting the day with the "Hail Mary," it was "God Save the Queen," with some teachers uttering "King" out of preferred habit.

In November, the trip home to Canada was not only on the same route they'd taken over, but it was aboard the same ship. '*Samaria* was to navigate the St. Lawrence River via the Strait of Belle Isle on the last trip up the river before the freeze-up, arriving in Quebec City once more in early December.

It was exciting to return home to Winnipeg. There were a lot of things that Donny had missed as he quizzed dad at the station and on the way home. He learnt that the Regina Roughriders had won the Grey Cup . . . there were new flood dikes built around Winnipeg. . . and everybody at school and all his buddies in the neighbourhood were anxious to see him home. It would be ten years before Donny would ever get to England again.

After the Christmas holidays, it was time to get back to school and pick up where everybody else was miles ahead. What Donny had learnt at Stavely had little in common for a Manitoba grade sixer. Apart from

the culture shock he had endured, in his mind, he would have been less confused if he had stayed out of school altogether.

Provencher school was very unique in Winnipeg for not only was it all boys and taught by a catholic brotherhood . . . it had an army cadet corps. The Brother in charge was not an army officer nor was he even in uniform. Brother Laurin had been a disciplinary Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army during the war and had decided to take up a lesser form of the cloth by joining the Marianists and ending up in Canada teaching school. Some arrangements existed with the local militia that a school army cadet corps was a feasible means of training in discipline as well as fostering school spirit. Laurin made sure it worked, for we trembled in his presence.

In grade seven, you were conscripted so to speak, and having some choice, the idea of playing a bugle seemed a lot more exciting than marching around in circles. Time in that first year passed and it became clear that being in school army cadets wasn't exciting and unique enough for a certain Donny's liking. It seemed that the emphasis began in the late winter months where on one or two evenings a week, the school auditorium became a parade ground and daytime classrooms were now used for drum and bugle practice.

Activities would increase. As the snow melted, the warm sunshine began to dry up the streets and parks surrounding the school, and the cadets finally took to the open air. In everyday school clothes, there were practice marches and parades around a four-block area that probably gave the onlooker an impression of a bunch of organized refugees trying to march to the cadence of 'out of tune and rhythm, drums and bugles.' It must have looked like a dog's breakfast.

Finally, the big day arrived when out came the mothball stench uniforms. Here's a brightest of emerald green berets, a tunic. . . two sizes too big, a shirt, a tie, and a pair of pants. "Take them home and get mom to press them! Try to wear black shoes and socks, but if you can't, we suppose ox-blood loafers will do. Next?"

The first event was the annual inspection by a senior general from Prairie Command of the army. It appeared that only three or four cadets, with all kinds of badges, seemed to know what they were doing. They would holler and scream orders and pound their feet into the ground, but what puzzled Donny was why they looked so immaculate in uniforms and badges that sure didn't look much like the rest of the three hundred cadets? But when the General finished his inspection, he proclaimed how smart and immaculate they were and that they were the best cadet corps

he had ever seen anywhere in Manitoba, or maybe anywhere in the prairies, and possibly Canada. It was Donny's first lesson in how words can be cheap because as he looked around, the General's comments didn't seem to match the object of his praise. But as they stood in their different shades of shoes and intervals of non-matching tunics and trousers, they remained so very proud.

After the annual inspection, the Decoration and Victoria Day parades found them articulating through the downtown streets of Winnipeg. It was an exciting time as they marched and strutted to compete with hundreds and maybe a thousand so it seemed, of other people in uniform. The navy led, followed by the army and air force, the police pipe bands and Shriners, and finally, the cadets.

“I,” no longer “he”!

Then it happened. I was in awe when I saw the sea cadets. Their huge band was a brass one, led by a blue jean-collared drum major bedecked in white webbing and leopard skins who wielded his mace with precision, and sometimes hurled it high in the air catching it effortlessly. They sounded exceptional. A very naval colour party then swaggered by, followed by a 50-man armed guard and a contingent of nearly 400 cadets. They marched intently, efficiently, disciplined, and above all. . . in step. Where we thought we were not too bad, and for all the encouraging words we had heard from the Prairie Command General during the inspection, it seemed we no longer qualified. Beyond that, for all the hype and anxiety it took to prepare for those few occasions, everything now just fizzled away. It followed that only the older army cadets were off to summer courses in nearby Clear Lake, Manitoba, or Dundurn, Saskatchewan. That left us punies to return our uniforms to school and wait for next winter again. Something was missing.

On the other side of the tracks, my other friends whose schools didn't have cadet organizations weren't without an opportunity. Richard Adey, a close friend, used to kid me about being an army cadet. On top of a piano in the living room of his house rested portraits of his two much older brothers, Ron and Gordie, in navy uniforms with black caps with letters that read **“H.M.C.S.”** Richard talked about how they were at sea during the war and how Gordie had been torpedoed and rescued somewhere in the Atlantic. Richard's father was an energetic man and loved to take us camping and fishing. We would get into his little maroon

1950 Mayflower, whose boot was chock-a-block with camping gear, and head for the “Whiteshell Lakes” in eastern Manitoba. He was a very friendly man who walked with a limp and drove a transit bus for a living. When we were sitting around the campfire at night, he would tell us wartime stories. He was in air force rescue power launches in the English Channel and had spent long hours in the water when he was sunk several times himself.

With the Adey family, I became intrigued with the stories and tales not only of Mr. Adey but also of the two navy brothers who, from time to time, used to visit. So far in my life, I only knew of soldiers and one Royal Marine, an uncle. My granddad, my father, my stepfather, my mom, who was just about to join the militia in the W.R.A.C.S., and my school pals were all influences. Now even wearing an army cadet uniform indicated that anything to do with the war or events thereafter involved the army and the army only.

The summer of 1954 had come and gone, and now it was time to return to school. There would be no school cadets activity until after Christmas. In the meantime, Richard was joining the sea cadets and surprisingly, he would put on his uniform once or twice a week in the evenings and report to this place he kept calling ‘the ship.’ I was filled with admiration but confronted with loyalty to the school cadets . . .but then if there was no cadet activity at school then why couldn’t I give these sea cadets a try? Secretly, I went to ‘the ship’ with Richard on Thursday night, September 9, 1954... and that’s when it was all to begin.

This so-called ‘ship’ was the stone frigate in downtown Winnipeg on Smith St. known as HMCS *Chippawa*. When I crossed the area called the quarterdeck for the very first time, I was in awe. Someone hollered ... **“Come to attention when you cross my quarterdeck trapper! Smarten up and go fall in against the after bulkhead!”** Well, I was shaken and by the time the night was all over, “What’s a quarterdeck, my name’s not trapper, and what in the hell is an after bulkhead?”

Joining the R.C.S.C.C. *J.T. Cornwell V.C.* Sea Cadet Corps was to become a shaky decision insofar as school was concerned. The brothers at Provencher weren’t overly taken with a sea cadet in their midst, and school grades could easily be at risk with that kind of disharmony. At JTCVC, learning had a new dimension. We were shown once how to put on this very fuzzy jumper, that when you hung it up, you did so inside out. Only finally succeeding in tying my shoes just two or three years before, now it was time to tie this length of ‘lettered’ ribbon known as a cap tally. Stow the collar the right way, fold, sew, and press a silk to exact

dimensions, dove-tail your tapes with “No pennants, d’ya hear?” and getting that lanyard done up right was like trying to unravel a granny knot. The trousers were also hung inside out after learning that the complications of seven-seas pleats were now obsolete in the RCN, and so too were they in sea cadets, being a great help apparently. They were itchy and never had a fly—just a seven-button flap depicting that of the seven seas? . . . and they were called “bells” . . . not the kind that go ding-dong. That was another dimension that an older cadet Petty Officer named Moskovitch, who began to educate us in ship’s time keeping. It all seemed logical until we got to the dog watches. With the aid of chalk and a blackboard, he illustrated the numbers of bells that corresponded with the time . . . as chalk dust fluttered down on our brand new uni-bags. He put down the chalk while dusting his hands, and looked at the class as if we were entirely stupid. “Now why do you think that there’s only one bell for 1830, me lads?” he inquired with a sneer. “Don’t know I s’pose! Well listen up trappers!” He changed his stance and placed a fist upon his hip. “Seems there was a mutiny at Nore one time long ago and the mutineers had a signal that when five bells sounded, that was the time to mutiny. Well, the buzz got out about what these wags were up to, so the order came down to strike one bell only, and the arranged signal of five bells in the last dog was never given. So there y’are. The time of 1830 is one bell! Don’t forget it!”

He then continued on the topic of bells. “Seems that when some people warm the bell, they’re skivin’ off before they’re s’posed to. Can any of you trappers tell me how the expression “warmin’ the bell” all started?” And without looking at the class for a raised hand, he immediately went into an explanation. “From the navy, of course! Where else? Sleight of hand prevailed, and back in the times before clocks and wristwatches were aboard ships, the watch would change at the sound of the ship’s bell, just like I told ya’. But when did you know when to strike the bell?” No one seemed to have an answer, even if you knew it. The P.O. then went on to say, “From an hourglass that took four hours for the sand to ooze from top to bottom. That’s how! But when the man on watch used to want to get relieved a little earlier, he’d cheat a little. He would place his hand around the neck of the hourglass and warm it up so’s the sand would run through quicker. When the sand was all through, proof was that four hours had just gone by, and he’d strike the bell for the watch to change. Up the relief would come, not knowing he’d just been seen off for ten minutes or maybe even half an hour. How ‘bout that then?” inquired Petty Officer Moskovitch. With an element of not wanting to

stick a neck out, or at worse be raked into a one-way exchange, no one would dare ask what happened to the sand for a two-hour dog-watch.

Well, after that litany among us, his new-found whispered nickname became “Long John, two-legs, negative-parrot,” but nevertheless, everything he said seemed to make sense and was an introduction to how deeply the navy was entrenched in its customs and traditions. On other nights, “Two-legs” would go on with more. “Before the invention of the rudder, a ship was steered with a long oar fitted over the stern to the right. It became known as the steerboard and later, starboard . . . and it had nuthin’ to do with the stars. But in order to get the stores aboard and ashore, the ship couldn’t secure starboard side to, ‘cuz this big oar, that later became a rudder, was in the way. So a plank was put ashore from the inboard side and it became known as the ladeboard. Then it became loadboard and later, larboard. Now larboard and starboard rhymed and everybody got confused. So by 1580, the French came up with a way out. They cut a loadin’ door in the ship’s side to handle the cargo . . . and door in French is porte. Now there ya’ have it . . . port and starboard! Don’t forget it!”

“Two-legs” went on at every opportunity, one time explaining admirals and how the Arabic, emir-el-bahr transformed into almirante by the Spanish, the French to amiral, and the English to admiral. Vice in vice-admiral meant in place of, and so was subordinate to the admiral. “The rear admiral comes frum’ when a fleet required a vanguard at the front and a rearguard for protection. Now ya’ know what the guy in charge of the rear was called. Hope you trappers are writin’ this all down cuz’ here comes the lieutenant!” He would continue by explaining, “It’s the French word for ‘holding a place,’ or a position, for somebody else. Just like a Lt. Governor to a Governor-General. The U.S.A. pronounce it “loo-tenant,” almost like the French. The navy’s obsolete pronunciation of “le-tenant” is close, but the army’s “lef-tenant” is a corruption of the worst!”

Well, after we finally escaped the clutches of P.O. Moskovitch and his weekly classroom tirades, there was boat work, semaphore, and seamanship classes. But then it was time for the parade square. Never so impressive was how orderly and with precision nearly five hundred cadets could be smartly corralled into three companies of five divisions each, “Or else!” While front and centre stood a 50-man guard, rearguarded were an equal number in JTC’s popular and nationally famous brass band. It was amazing and equally awesome in that a mere

teenagers' band sounded and even looked as impressive as one of the Royal Marines. It made the Provencher drum and bugle ensemble sound like noisemakers from the Spike Jones Orchestra. Led by Lt. Riggs, graceful and nostalgic strains and crescendos would come forth



beautifully, taking these young wannabe sailors through the passages that traditionally accompany the inspirational and acceptably drawn-out Naval Sunset Ceremony. To this day, I still feel the shivers of emotion and pride whenever I hear the hymns and bear witness to the “Sunset,” “Last Post,” “The Rouse,” and “The Queen” as colours are slowly hauled down and

disappear from view. It was an unforgettable introduction, and all of this, once the ceremony was completed, re-energized future sailors as they proudly ‘marched past’ in quick time to “Heart of Oak,” the naval march past. In turn, each platoon saluted the Captain on the dais with a very snappy “Eyes right!” Thus would end yet another evening of training in very naval tradition. Sign on! Sign on!

By the following summer, we were off to R.C.S.C.T.E. *Comox*, the sea cadet camp on Vancouver Island. This was an old wartime naval establishment that taught the hands-on fundamentals of seamanship, rope work, parade drill, signals, and rifle range that we had trained for in theory. It also taught young stropky sea cadets how to take orders, get up at night to stand a watch, make a bunk, and then find out that the sparkle on your real black boots would soon vanish as you fell in on this huge area of deep and sun-baked beach sand called the parade ground.

With a bundle of naive enthusiasm, we went by train to Vancouver. All the excitement of getting there through Regina, Edmonton, Jasper, and Revelstoke meant fun to us teen-aged, parent-ridden boys. We smoked, spent our nickels and dimes, were cocky with the girls, and stepped ashore at station stops struttin’ about like young salts. Once in Vancouver, it was time to board the CPR ferry, *Princess Elizabeth*. While crossing the Straits of Juan de Fuca to Nanaimo, the whir, rumble, and odour of the engine room below were there yet again, and thoughts of *Lady Rodney* and *Samaria* returned.

Once we got to Nanaimo, we were hoarded aboard an RCN 3-ton stake truck. As the truck swerved its way through the towns and villages towards Comox, astonished onlookers heard loud, continuous, and “please milk me” mo-o-o-o’s emanating from the back of the canvas-covered, slat-built box. That all stopped when we arrived at the pontoon jetty in Comox as this horrible, booming voice hollered, “**Right, you**

shower of scran-bags. Get fallen in on the marker and pack up the cackle!” . . . and there we stood at attention in the scorching sunshine on this rocking pontoon until the last of us were shuttled by a cutter over to the sandpit where the camp was situated.



Ceremonial Divisions. HMCS Chippawa - Fall 1954
“The Fear of God among us!”

Once there, the fun dwindled. There were times to be at places, and those places needed to be shipshape and Bristol fashion. “Lend a hand!” meant to volunteer, and “Bear a hand!” was an order. They both came as orders. If you were nailed as “swingin’ the lead” . . . you were slack and lazy. If you “cast a lead,” you were doing your job properly. Trying to get up at 2330 to get to the quarterdeck for a two-hour watch was not easy. Wearing half-blues and dungarees in the scorching heat of the day somehow just didn’t equate with the cool, frigid temperatures of the long night ahead. The mountain air was invigorating, but the snow on top of

them sure cast an effect on those long watches on the quarterdeck during the night.

The next year, we would return to *Comox* once more. Things had changed. The parade square had been paved, the cutaway boiler tubes that formed a walkway on the sand to the rifle range had been replaced, and most of all, the name “Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps Training Establishment *Comox*” had been stood down and re-commissioned as HMCS *Quadra*. We felt we were a ship in the RCN. After cutter-pulling, sailing the Service dinghies and whalers, and rifle drill for a week, we boarded a bus and headed for RCN Barracks, HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt for a two-day familiarization trip. We spent long hours on the bus, but immediately on arrival, we were taken to the dockyard to see the ships and then the barracks in *Naden*. The next day, it was on to downtown to the Legislative Buildings and Beacon Hill Park to watch a 100-man Guard, Band, and Colour Party carry out a ceremonial demonstration and an inspection. In my mind as well as others, the navy had set in.



In the following year 1957, I had the opportunity to attend a seven-week summer course at *Naden*'s Fleet School. Living in the brand-new cabins of 'Nelles Block' (Nellus) and diving into the scran from its sparkling galley was to be an introduction to shore-bound life in the navy. It was quite an improvement over the 'H-hut' wartime dormitories and the galley cookhouse we had become accustomed to at *Comox* (*Quadra*) in the previous two summers. Commodore P.D. Budge was the Commodore of RCN Barracks, and he had taken a grave interest in the three divisions of senior sea cadets that assembled in *Naden* from the four western provinces. He had begun his naval career on the lower deck as an OD 'sparker.' Word up in Nelles Block, however, was that he was a Martinet . . . a stickler for punishment named for the Marquis de Martinet who ran his army with iron discipline. On the parade square at ceremonials, the Commodore wasn't that way at all. He was a lesson in making you think. "Cadet! What's your name?" he asked. "Leading Seaman Colleaux sir," I replied. "You have an Irish Pennant hanging from your right armpit . . . Lift yore arm!" I did so trembling. "Mother sew it up before you left home?" he mused. "No sir! I did . . . just before parade!" "Can't sew yet, eh cadet?" he concluded. "Put it down!" As he strode away, I thought, "Shoulda' blamed mom."

Each of the divisions was destined for training in Leadership, a second would be generalized as Quartermasters, followed by a new course just

formed that year. . . Armourer's Mate. These were the only courses available to Western cadets, but on the east coast, in addition to Leadership and Quartermaster courses, there were also Quarters Rate, Air Fitter, Regulating, and even a Stoker Mechanic course.



I was to learn to be an Armourer's Mate. I suppose the teachings were similar to a Trade Group One (TG1) level. We were introduced to the operation and basic maintenance of 4-inch, 3-in/50, and 40 mm guns, along with Mk. 9 and A/S 43 torpedo, hedgehog, A/S 4 'squid,' and A/S 10 'limbo' underwater weaponry. The venue for

the course was pretty fascinating for it was conducted on *Naden's* harbourfront on the Ordnance Jetty which was also used by HMCS *Ontario* and weather ships *Stonetown*, *St. Catherine's*, and *St. Stephen*. Across the harbour, we were fascinated by ships named *Sussexvale*, *Stettler*, *Jonquiere*, *Antigonish*, *Oshawa*, and *Sault Ste. Marie*, whose names illustrated the very Canadianism of the navy. All these things together were seducing me into wanting to be a sailor. By now, I was consumed by an interest that completely dominated me as a sixteen-year-old young man. Nothing else was as important, nor worth pursuing.

Of our crowd of some 75 cadets, it was at this time that I met two in particular. One was from Edmonton, and the other, Vancouver. Their names were Dick and Cliff, and although they weren't chums with each other or myself for that matter, they were very interesting and, just by their presence, cast a solid example to all of us. They were both on the Leadership course and received top honours when the courses later ended. They were a pleasure to know as young men then, and extremely fine and respected gentlemen some 35 years later. Anybody who spent time in the navy from the fifties to the nineties will know the rest of the story. Rear Admiral Richard C. Waller retired from the navy in 1994, shortly after CPO1 (Shipwright) former apprentice Cliff Chamberlain ended his naval career. Although I hadn't had the pleasure of sailing or even seeing Cliff since then or throughout my career, I certainly had the distinction of serving with Admiral Waller. I was also regarded as one in a few in the modern-day navy who knew him when he had hair.

Half way through that summer, we took a one-week pause from the classrooms and were assigned to MCB 151-HMCS *Fortune* ships throughout the fleet. We were scattered, and if the ship was to sail you'd go with her. If you were less fortunate and destined to remain alongside, at least you'd get a little exposure to shipboard life. I was put aboard HMCS *Fortune*, a Bay class 'sweeper from the 'Woodpecker Fleet.'

Along with her sisters in the 2nd Minesweeping Squadron, *James Bay*, *Miramichi*, and *Cowichan* (there's that Canadianism again), we sailed for a 6-day trip that would take us to the inside of Vancouver Island. We then split up into twos, each pair to visit the ports of Squamish and Port Colbourne in Howe Sound.

Further west . . . to the Far East



MCB 151 - HMCS Fortune

**“D’ya hear there? Special sea dutymen
and cable party close up. Single up.
Hands to stations for leaving harbour.
Close all screen doors and scuttles.
Assume ABCD condition “Yankee.”
Senior hands take charge. Report by part ship!”**

Soon after getting home and attending parade one night, it was announced that senior cadets were invited to apply for a four-month cruise to the Far East from Esquimalt. I talked it over with mom and dad as well as the brothers at school whom to my surprise, thought it was a great idea . . . as long as I took my books with me. They all agreed that

there was no better education than travel and being prairie types all, a four-month sea voyage was an unimaginable opportunity.

On the 16th of January 1958, I sailed from Esquimalt for the Far East aboard HMCS *Crescent*. *Crescent* was senior ship of the 2nd Escort Squadron and aboard was D2 with his staff, Captain M.G. Stirling. Like *Algonquin* on the east coast, she had just completed a major conversion and her most prominent physical change was the addition of an enclosed



DDE 226 - HMCS *Crescent* in 1958
(note funnel w. black band as senior ship 2nd Canadian Escort Squadron)

bridge. It didn't take long for 'Jack' to put a name on such strange looking, hard to get used to ships . . . 'The Cardboard Cartons.' In company for the trip were the three brand new destroyer escorts (DDE), *Skeena*, *Fraser*, and *Margaree*, along with the Tribal class destroyer *Cayuga*.

We were to visit Long Beach, California, to pick up a convoy and proceed to Pearl Harbor. Beyond there, there would be stops in Tokyo, Yokosuka, Okinawa, Hong Kong, Saigon, Okinawa and Guam, and then return to Esquimalt via Pearl'.

Lookin' over the side for . . .”B-i-i-l-l-l!”

All of this was very exciting, but an ugly memory of *Samaria* quickly returned. On the first night out, we hit Cape Flattery at the entrance to the Pacific, and I became violently seasick and absolutely prostrate in my bunk when I could get there. As a sea cadet, a lot of the ‘odes’ in *Crescent* took great entertainment in seeing this young kid and others who were so sick. Why, I should never know. Maybe it was to hide their own recent encounter with it or to give an impression that they were ‘old salts’. In years to follow, I felt extremely sorry for anyone who was. If anything, I would encourage them to do the things that gave me at least some defence in a condition that to most and in my own experience, is the most horrible feeling in the world. Sleep on your stomach, stay in a noisy area and get low and in the fulcrum centre of buoyancy within the ship. (found that out in a tribal boiler room) And as time went on . . . scupper your tot in one (with water only) and guarantee the beholder that in a few short minutes, he’d be “Linin’ up at “Hands To Dinner.” It worked every time as this newly-recovered and reborn soul looked to you as if you were the greatest saviour in the world. The modern-day navy now issues what looks like a disc-shaped band-aid that is stuck on behind the right ear. Whether it works or not or has other effects, seems to be the question. It didn’t take long to pin a name on this one too. In ascribing how the navy maintains a preferred comparison between the west coast and the east coast, the former is colloquially referred to as the “left” coast, not the “right” one. Therefore, the device was obviously dubbed, the “West Coast Command Badge?” Meanwhile however, in coping with this indescribable-to-a-landlubber malady was that if I was ever to become immune, the navy was not the place to be. I often wondered what I might have done or how I did it, when I crossed the North Atlantic in late fall of 1946 aboard the pint-sized *Lady Rodney*, and never, ever did get spewy. Aboard *Crescent*, to hear that solemn and haunting pipe in the last dog watch, “**Cover . . . guns!**”, the order in protecting armament mechanisms from heavy seas, was in this 16-year old’s mind, a cerebral signal that tonight will be yet another encounter with pure hell. The head of the ship would staggeringly rise, then dwell at its height, then shudder three to four times like the prow was to fall off, and finally drop in what seemed like an endless mile to meet yet another heavy crest. “Milestones” they’re called, and that’s exactly what they felt like as the ship rode over them relentlessly battling the forces of nature. You wanted to be elsewhere. Standing up to your neck in a cess-pool was a better

place to be, just for the opportunity of being still. Eventually, seasickness became less of a daily battle, but it still wasn't gone.

The whole trip became a rare adventure but running parallel, the environment and ambition to self-study was just not conducive. As I had taken training as an Armourer's Mate, I was quickly detailed to turn to with the Ordnance dept. It consisted of six Torpedo, Gunnery, and Control armourers and two mates, "Tiny" Graham and "Joe" Podesta. Those two were like sea-dads to me and I was quick to learn to "do as I say and not what I do," in a hurry. Tiny and Joe were badgemen and very seasoned sailors. I worked very hard for them. "Get the grease!" . . . "Get the wrench!" . . . "Get the hand cleaner!" . . . "Scrub out the shop!" . . . "Get the coffees . . . and you can bring one back for yourself!" . . . and grow up in a hurry. Tiny especially, was a close friend and tutor who was sincere and like a big brother. He continually whistled and sang to the old wartime tune: "Cocaine Bill and Morphine Sue."

Under the RCN's 1950's recruiting advertisements, the alluring motto was, "Join The Navy And See The World." I used to think that as the navy did that for you, fed you, gave you a place to live, and even issued clothes to wear, you shouldn't have to be paid. Well they did, and even as a sea cadet, I was rewarded with \$20.00 every two weeks. Well ten of that went to the canteen for nutty, fags, soda pop and dhobey dust and the rest, well . . . I soon learnt about the messdeck term . . . "Get ashore and spend it." By the time we got back to Esquimalt, I'd been tattooed, sold a pint of blood in Hong Kong, drank coloured water with geisha girls in Tokyo, and was trained on by a machine-gunner in the streets of Saigon. In all, I had little doubt about joining the navy. Once cured of seasickness, I was convinced that there was to be no other destiny. Convinced too that the lure of the Engine Room branch would be my vocation.

Apprentice? . . .do that later!

I had another home-town friend whose name was Al Irwin, and like his older brother Bob, he was going to sign on as an apprentice too. I wanted to join immediately, and thoughts about how to get in it, really took over now. Being only sixteen, there was an opportunity to apply for the RCN's technical apprenticeship plan but by then, I hadn't achieved grade ten to qualify. That was another matter because marks at school were taking a beating from two angles and the opportunity of passing

grade ten were dim. A sea cadet just returned from a trip to the Far East with four months of purported self-study in a school full of pongos just wasn't the right mix for educational success at Provencher.



*HMS Tamar Jetty, Hong Kong - February 1958.
Sunday Ceremonial Divisions - Ships' Companies Crescent, Cayuga, Skeena,
Fraser and Margaree, negative duty watch personnel.
Standing alone and facing in with his feet well astride, 2nd Canadian Escort
Squadron Commander, Captain "D", Captain M.G. Stirling.*



Time passed however, and joining at seventeen became a reality. In the meantime, another trip came up which invited cadets to sail to the Mediterranean in the east coast 'tribal', HMCS *Iroquois*. Well, as I broke that one open when I came home, Dad hit the deckhead shall we say. School was becoming a difficulty as my popularity with the 'brothers' was slipping away quickly. I was too far behind, so I quit and got hired

with the CPR Telegraphs as a junior bookkeeper. By the winter of 1958, I came to despise that job, and what I had to look forward to. The same bus every morning, the same people, the same routine, and the bitter cold. As a life-long vow, I promised myself that when I'm in the navy and if there's ever a time when I was fed up and might want to leave, always think back to this day, the boring possibilities and how much I loathed it. I used that for all the years to follow . . .and thankfully, it worked.

CHAPTER TWO

HMCS CORNWALLIS

You will. . . LEARN TO SERVE. . .or else!

Well the time to join the RCN had finally arrived and I was a year late. Cadets had been so challenging and I had become second senior in the corps. I had a gal named Jean from P.E.I., a reserve wren, who was something special and with that combination stayed with the CPR, and went the distance as a cadet. Now at last, I joined the RCN. I made application at the downtown recruiting office and then I was told to report to this place called HMCS *Chippawa*



by the killick scribe on duty. I was to do a medical, get sworn in, and work manual party for the rest of the week until the Friday that I was to leave for *Cornwallis* by train. The writer asked, "Do you know where *Chippawa* is?" I replied, "I think I do!" Then something strange hit me. For all of my familiarity with and exposure to the navy, it occurred that I was right back to square one and

all bids were off. It took a lot of getting used to, and having the simple name of Brown back again, was a major adjustment. Among documentation required for signing on, the two that became offsetting were my birth certificate and my letter of recommendation from the CO of the Sea Cadet Corps that talked about this real good guy named Colleaux. My young life was suddenly changing.

The next day, I reported onboard but instead, entered the main Quarterdeck used by Reserves and the Regs' only. It seemed very irregular that this huge old building and all of the familiarity and supervisory capacity I had for over four years had simply vanished. I felt like I was stepping aboard for the first time in my life. The place now had a completely different dimension. Just two weeks earlier on the *Chippawa* parade deck, I was the Petty Officer G.I. in charge of a 100-man guard on passing out day. Today, I was to pick up a pot of ship's side grey, proceed onto that very same parade deck, and commence to dibby-dab the gun shield of the 4 in. mounting, something of which by the way, was never a requirement for an Armourer's Mate. Later in the day, I would bollock the ship's bell and be present to lower the white ensign with the duty quartermaster at 1600. Still in hope that the apprenticeship plan was an option, the recruiting office said it best . . . "Get in as a stoker, do a

correspondence course for your education, and slap in after!” That sounded pretty good to me and by being a stoker, at least I would be in the right ‘part ship’.

On the Friday of that week, I left Winnipeg on a train leaving Mom, Dad, and Danny on the platform . . . awfully sad that girl-friend, Jean wasn’t there too. The dumb ‘spud-islander’ went to the CNR station instead. It didn’t take long to cheer up at least for the moment, as I met five other guys that were headed for *Cornwallis* too. Among them was Barry Towill, the brother of a futuristic Cdr “Gary” Towill (ret’d), the former stoker, come engineering officer. As the train headed further east and by the time we arrived in Montreal, the group had grown to almost forty guys. It was a warm summer’s day in June of 1959, and when it’s hot at the Windsor St. Station in Montreal, everybody heads for the Alberta Cocktail Lounge just across the street. That we did, and it became apparent that this was going to be quite a stick-together crowd in New Entry Training. After another night on another train, we arrived at Saint John N.B. and boarded the CP Ferry, S.S. *Princess Helene* for Digby N.S. There was that familiar throb again but this time, I was destined as a stoker and I was bound to get my anxious fill of that. On the way in to Annapolis Basin, to port, passed the “Digby Flyer,” HMCS *Buckingham*, on another week at sea taking the likes of us lot out to sea. I wondered what it would be like on a frigate after being to sea in a ‘sweeper and a destroyer.



At the dock in Digby, an RCN semi-trailer hauling a livestock box was our means of transportation to Deep Brook . . . and HMCS *Cornwallis*. Our zany group had now grown to nearly seventy bods’ and like Comox, I led the boys in mo-o-oing and ba-a-aing through the red clay and gravel streets of Digby. And like Comox all over again, the skylarking would come to a grinding halt within the half-hour. As we drove through the main gate of H.M.C.S. *Cornwallis*, we were hushed by the attention-getting billboard-sized message that emblazoned the front of the mammoth drill shed across the parade square. **LEARN TO SERVE** it said and it was now time to straighten up and crack down on why we were here. A code of friendship was within us.

The first fourteen days

The truck rattled up to Joining Block, where we discovered that this would be our temporary ‘digs’ until moving into the brand-new Fraser Block. In the doorway stood three men in blue jean collars, one of whom started barking his head off. I detected a west-country accent. He was a two-badged AB by the name of Malcolm Stocking who immediately introduced himself as “**SIR.**” As it turned out in years to come, I would sail with Malcolm in *Onondaga* and for the present, he had just transferred as a submariner from the Royal Navy. He, along with two other oppos, AB Robin Cox, also from the RN, and a killick AA rate who took the position of being the quiet one with the hook while the two AB’s, “Sir” and “Sir,” did all the screamin’ and shite-disturbing for the next two weeks. Their job was to prepare us for the start of N.E.T. that began in two weeks for kit issue and marking, learning how to wear uniform, do medicals and in general, just get introduced to this very new and uncomfortable routine.

To the barbers we did go and I swear that I’ve never seen 75 people in and out of a ‘Barbarosa’ within the space of an hour, finding out that the price of the haircut would be deducted off our pay . . . as some arrived with no lolly in their pockets. Then we fell in, sorta’ . . . and headed to ‘slops’ to get kitted out, and this is where I found at least a little bit of a niche. I already knew how to set up and wear the naval uniform and that was the good news. The bad news was that everybody and his dog said, “Brownie! . . . Can you show me how to do this?” or “Willya’ fold this for me?”, “What was the width of the silk again?”, “How come your getting’ a good shine?”, “Wot does he mean . . . a hospital corner?” and here it came . . . “Brownie! Can you help me tie my cap tallies?”

Well, a cap tally is the most tedious and cumbersome item of uniform to initiate and my help was in obvious dire need. Unless you were familiar, just try to tightly adjoin a neat and tidy bow onto a one-inch piece of long black ribbon while making sure that the gold lettering is centered on the cap. Just how does a brand-new civilian recruit deal with that? One of them innocently asked as he handed me his tallies: “What does **H.M.C.S. CORNWALLIS** stand for Brownie?” I could only respond with what this less than gorgeous WREN once said to me:

“**Hold Me Close Sailor, Cuz’ Our Royal Navy Won’t Allow Loose Lovin’ In Ships.**”

We were supposed to get up every morning at 0530 regardless of what time it was . . . because it was always dark. As we fell in on the roadway

in the pouring rain with oil-slickers on, it was too gloomy to see ‘the hoist’ on the flag deck of the Seamanship School. The hoist established the ‘rig of the day’ and this is where we got our first lesson in assumption. Up the hill we doubled, thinking that we’ll get there before the senior divisions and as long as there’s no skylarkin’, we’re going to get a hot meal on dry aluminum mess trays. As we were passing the flag deck, the hoist was clearly visible. It was a green and yellow pennant, the signal for #2A’s (half blues), not two balls, the signal for ‘Slickers’. **“Fraser Divishun . . . At the dubb-awl . . . Aba-a-t Turn!”** came the order from Sir Stocking. **“Eft, oit, eft, oit, eft, oit!”** Clump-clump-mutter-mutter-clump-clump . . . **“Keep the cackle down! Dubbawl smawtly you bawstads.”** and we were back down to Joining Block, sweat combined with rain down our necks, and puddles on the cortisene deck that had to be wiped up before we fell in once more on the roadway . . . this time in 2A’s, negative what-you-need-to-keep-the-rain-out. Up the hill we doubled, now looking forward to last in the line, cold runny eggs, and puddles of galley dish-up water all over the aluminum mess trays. Among the thunder of the doubling boots, some determined body grunted out with a confusing remark. “I’m gonna pass out from this fukkin’ place on time . . . no matter how long it takes.” The comment created a few audible titters. The titters created Sir Stocking to bark out once more. **“I said**



keep the fukkin’ cackle down or y’ll be doin’ this all bloody mownin’!” As we passed the flag deck, now soaked to the skin, the rain stopped, the sun began to shine, and the hoist now read, pennant and two balls . . . 2A’s, carrying slickers over the left forearm, just in case it rains. Sir Stocking kept us going this time ‘cause the galley would be shut down from breakfast in ten minutes, and it wasn’t even 0630 yet.

Joining Block is considered the foundation of everything that evolved in *Cornwallis* for the whole three and a half months of N.E.T. Not only do you quickly get yourself into a teamwork routine, but added to the scrub-outs, changing linen, standing fire watches, attending PT classes, doin’ your dhobeyin’ and marking your kit, all free time was spent

stitching your name and number into every piece of cloth kit you were issued. Three radiant colours of white, red or gold, the latter for # 1 items of uniform only. Dungaree dress was done in white with red for towels, hold-all, housewife, pyjamas, long johns, shitnicks, kit bags, blue jerseys, PT gear, blankets, #'s 2 and 3 uniforms et al. It was done with a blanket stitch, (homeward bounders) which heightened the speed at which the stitcher attacked the stitchee. After inverting a pepsi bottle between your knees that served as a workbench, the monotonous work began. Every night after scrub-out and from Saturday noon 'til Sunday evening, interspersed with a night-time first or a middle watch as fire sentry.

My embroidery pattern was D. BROWN above 46490-H. "Not bad . . . just fourteen characters!" Though with a nickname like "Alf" for alphabet, or the "Human Eye Chart" describing the workloads of G. DEGOESBRIAND and R. VANCAUGHENBURGH with stock numbers as well, meant two things. They'd better get somebody to stand in as middle watch fire sentry for them, and use thimbles on all ten fingers to ease the pain. Sir Robin with a shit-eatin' grin, declared of the human eye charts . . . "You poor bawstads!" while eyeing a very fortunate namesake, A.COX, who turned suddenly jubilant. Sir Robin then offered some sage advice to those graced with the long names. "Ya' might think about puttin' a photo of yourself in your locker. That's so if ya' forget how to spell your names, you can still find your gear."



HMCS Cornwallis - Deep Brook Nova Scotia circa 1958

Then there was the other stuff . . . boots and sandals were metal stamped with a number, caps required stencilling only (somebody put his

on the outside), and your pusser's dirk. This was the nucleus of a sailor's kit but I, like other destined stokers, thought we should have a wheel spanner instead. The sailor's dirk, the most rigid and effective of Sheffield Steel, that every man-jack was issued, didn't have a point on its blade in keeping with custom. In days of old, men who sailed the seas were lawless and easily roused to anger. The possession of a knife with a sharp point would certainly lead to a stabbing if a quarrel arose, so if such a knife were seen in the hands of a seaman, his oppo would snap off the point. Then as seamanship abounded and ships carried more sail, it was necessary to handle them. If the stops and sheets needed cutting during times of gale winds and heavy seas, there was great risk of damaging the sails while trying to hold on to the yards of a rolling and pitching ship . . . which was no mean feat. In the meantime, back in the calmer seas of Joining Block . . . "What do I do with this, Sir?" He would reply seriously, "You only need your number on the hand-grip! Sew it on the tally band with steel wool!"

Fraser Block...an accomplishment

The day finally arrived, and after what seemed like two years of toil accomplished in two weeks which flashed by like two days, we graduated



*In the business end of the new Fraser Block
"Everything gleaming and you will keep it that way my son!"*

'out' of Joining Block to our permanent digs in 'Fraser'. This would be

a fine building and was full of the comforts. Comforts that provided you with ironing, sewing, washing clothes and scrubbin' out with greater convenience. The block was brand new and with newness came more rigidity in keeping it that way. That was to be the difficult part. A couple of the lads had dwindled and were released. They followed along the lines of the reputation of one desperate wag in a senior division who tried anything to get a release. Everywhere he went on the base, he mimed himself as being upon a Harley-Davidson motorbike complete with verbal drivel of nauseating acceleration, a backfiring exhaust, and even a horn when people got in his way. After three weeks of these uncontrolled daredevil biking escapades around the base and even in buildings, his case was heard and he was granted release. As he was doubled away and back to the block without his bike, his div' chief wanted to affirm of his mental stability. He asked, "What's with you anyway?" After five weeks in this place he remarked: "My sister's expecting a baby, and I don't know if I'm going to be an uncle or an aunt." Two days later, as a parting gesture approaching the main-gate on his bike to his freedom on the other side, he pulled up to the sentry, dismounted, and threw the make-believe ignition key at him with the accompanying declaration . . . "Thanks pal. I won't be needin' this anymore!"

By moving into 'Fraser', meant that we were now installed as a regular and competitive division among fifteen others. Our Divisional Officer was Mr. Dixon, a commissioned T.A.S. branch officer with modest poise and little to say. His manner told of his honour and integrity. The Divisional Petty Officer was P1QM Walker, a tall and also quiet individual, whose personality was similar but with a power of command much different than we had anticipated. Strict, thorough, but merciful. Together, they soon gave an impression that we must serve correctly or at least try . . .and there would be little to say. It was up to us, as we quickly learned, that we were in control of our own fate. Just do it. You had to earn your way to excellence and this was the very naval way. We were the juniors and everything in terms of privilege and perks were relative to our divisional output in "Sports and Proficiency." Block cleanliness, parade precision and turn-out, kit musters, test scores, punctuality, attitude, stamina, endurance, morale . . . were all point-getters for proficiency. Keep a sense of humour. That . . . and night watches as fire sentry, were the only two things we were allowed to. Sports, playing a big part, soon meant that whatever competition you might not have tried before you joined the navy, here was your compulsory chance to do it. I got knocked out cold in boxing, after

dozens of futile attempts, finally made it to the top of the gym roof rafters by climbing a rope, came fifth in a race of 125 cross-country runners, and played inside-right and centre on Fraser's soccer and football teams. Football became a concentrated effort because of the constant practice and preparation. It was done after working hours that overloaded your day in preparing for other activities for the next one. If you were fire-



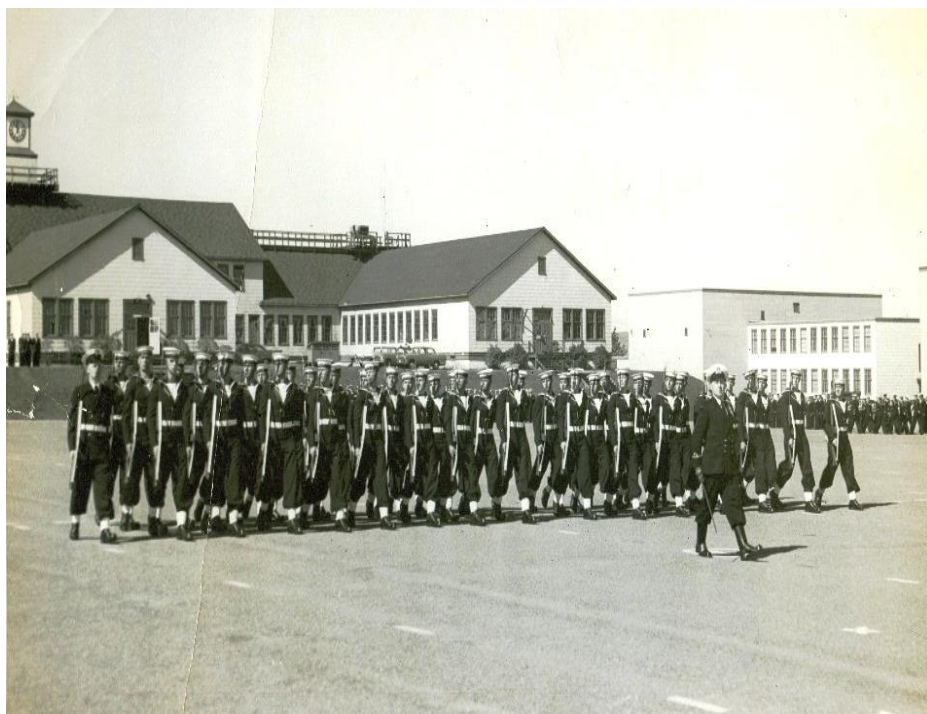
sentry during the middle though, you might be able to get a little bit of ironing done as long as you never got caught. In football, or any other sport for that matter, you soon realized that getting injured might slow you down and get you back-classed, hence, a longer stay in *Cornwallis*. Luckily, we relented and the only remarkable injuries came in bruises and cuts and the odd sprain or broken finger. One guy was lost from the team because he broke his nose. The merciless coach reacted

with, "How do you go about getting a nose in condition for football?"

All of these sports plus more required a team spirit therein and were factors that added points. And if those points amassed enough, by Saturday at the end of week six, we were granted shore leave from 1400 to 2200. "What a run!" . . . Annapolis then Digby, or for variation . . . start in Digby first. The goal was to end up wherever "Annapolis Polly" could be found. We managed to get ashore three times in three and a half months.

A large part of our time was spent on the parade ground in the scorching summer heat. Continuous doubling often took its toll on the lads and it's guessed that one honest lap around the *Cornwallis* parade ground is exactly one mile. To double around that one at the "high port" for not having your fingers together or holding your head high enough made Roger Bannister look like a chump. For the most part, the G.I.'s were all products of HMS *Excellent*, the Royal Navy's gunnery school

on Whale Island in Britain. This is where they learnt how to be mean, horrible, and how to get things done smartly by hollerin' your head off. Their trademark gait and stride on the parade square was evidence to the fact that was fashioned from constant wear of studded and clicker-ed



boots that thundered at every step. And as we shook in fear on those hot afternoons, a G.I. would sometimes draw near, emitting odour of some lunch-time tipples. In that period of time in the navy, it was seen as a privilege and not a shortcoming. A drill instructor with beer on his breath simply reflected of privileges he had earned and was entitled to enjoy after his noon-day meal. After all, if he were at sea, he'd be entitled to a tot and where now he was ashore, a couple of cold beers served as a self-acclaimed substitute in upholding the privilege.

The Kit Muster. . .a major obstacle

One of the most rattling episodes that every 'Ode' in N.E.T. will tell you is the infamous kit muster whose functionality remains questionable. Over fifty years later and much like many other attics of departed matelots, some items are still in untouched, pristine *Cornwallis* fashion

and sit in a kit bag in my attic too. Three times, a muster was demanded of you throughout the training period . . . once at ‘Joining’, the second in the seventh week and your final in the second last week before graduation. It was designed to progressively get your kit up to scratch from a lowly mothball smelling flop on day one to a level of unprecedented excellence by week 16. Apart from every one of the 150 items of kit laid out that had to be spotlessly clean as a given, was the intricacy of rolling each item into 8-inch cardboard reinforced lengths bound with string at two ends with a reef knot, negative ‘irish pennants.’ Kit was to be displayed on your pit, with name and number evenly dressed and exposed for the inspecting party. They would come to your cubicle and observe certain items whilst you stood there trembling in hope that soon, they'd disappear and stow kit you wouldn't use carefully away until the next inspection. Mr. Dixon and Petty Officer Walker were pretty practical in their methods of inspecting, however in blocks nearby from guys in other divisions, we'd heard horror stories about their encounters with dogmatism. One inspecting officer became frazzled by his alarming sense that there was black shoe polish still engrained in the bristles of a boot brush. To produce evidence to his belief, he made a few harsh strokes with the brush on the shoulder of the owner who was dressed in half blues. His white front forming the top half now brandished a misty black stain. The officer then went on to note that six pair of black socks . . . ankle, 4 . . . tropical, 2, were neatly rolled together ‘bun style’ with embroidered initials exposed. He picked up a bun, held it to his mouth, and began to suck on it declaring very quickly and in disdain, “Ordinary Seaman Barnes! These socks have soap in them! Haven’t you learned how to rinse out your dhobeying?” Wadda’ wanker!

Gun’s Crew, Guard & Band

Fraser Division was detailed to form the guns’ crew as part of the Sunset Ceremony(s) that were scheduled throughout the summer. Along with Columbia Division who formed the honour guard and the Band of HMCS *Cornwallis*, we set about on training with two, gun and limber carriages. I was detailed as #4, the number with the “lanyard at the breech” on the port gun.

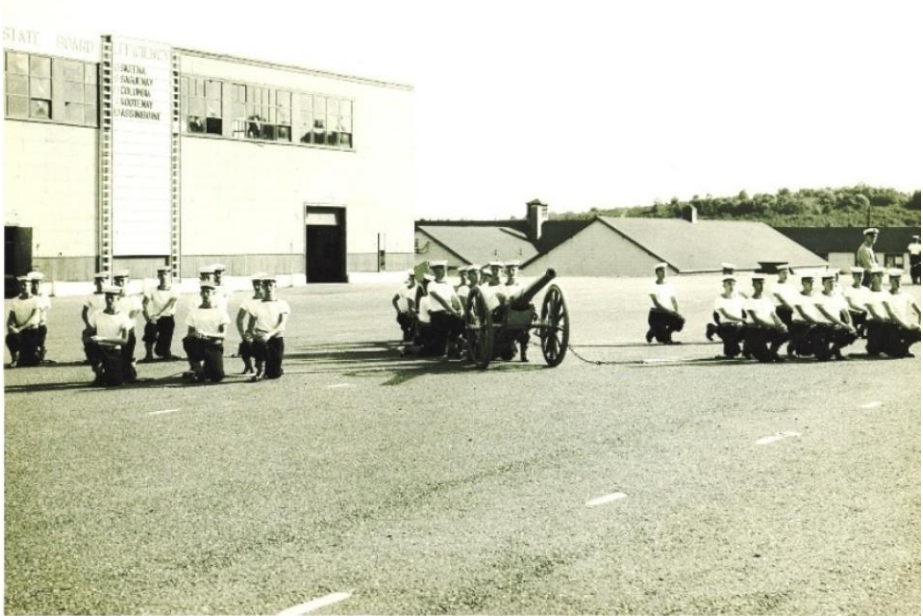
In spear-heading the splendour of the 50-piece band, it was led by none other than Petty Officer “Butch” Bouchard, the drum-major who marched so smartly restrained, and swaggered like he was holding a

peanut up his arse. His fame was notorious however, for constantly hurling his mace some thirty feet in the air and ‘the buzz’ had it that he



was ever yet to drop it. But lose it once, he did. Say-soers tell us that he was once leading the band to the strains of the Naval March-Past during a community event in the town of Lunenburg in Nova Scotia. He had hurled his mace so high into the air that it never came back. Somehow, it had appropriately lodged itself right into the heart of a very old oak tree. Had that tree’s life begun as a sapling in 1759, it may have been the very one that inspired David Gerrick in writing the song “Heart of Oak,” to commemorate the Royal Navy’s victories of Harlequin’s Invasion at Quiberon, Lagods, and Quebec.

The idea of a bunch of matelots hauling on the gun carriage drag ropes



that were obviously meant for horses to do, came to us as an enigma. The

naval custom arose however, from an incident that occurred at the funeral of Queen Victoria in London in 1901. In the final stages of the ceremonies at Windsor station, an artillery horse-drawn gun carriage stood ready at the exit to convey the coffin but there was for a moment, a perplexing interruption. Two of the team of horses became so restive that it was impossible to proceed with them. The threatened mishap was remedied by the resource and readiness of the men of the naval guard of honour stood by anticipating the Royal Salute. The team and unruly horses were taken out and harnessing themselves to the gun carriage bearing the body of the Queen, the matelots drew it all the way from the station to the final resting-place at St. George's chapel. To all who witnessed it, there seemed a peculiar fitness to this last service rendered to the Queen by men of the navy. Since then, sailors have been drawn from HMS *Excellent*, the RN's Gunnery School, to draw the carriage at state funerals and because the carriage belonged to that school, it was determined that they also supply the lads to pull it. This direction and invariable custom of the Royal Navy then transcended into the Commonwealth Navies, which of course included the RCN.

Now that we'd been boned up on all that, the prairie boys and farmers among us felt we had one up and pulled all the harder. We adopted new names such as Dobbin, Nellie, Queenie, Silver, Trigger, Sea Biscuit, and Francis the mule, the latter describing well, the perverse character of our Eddie Morris, the class captain. There were no stallions among us as we had forgotten what it was like to be ashore.

One of the areas that I was keen at from sea cadet training was rifle drill. Although I had now graduated from the Lee Enfield 303 to the FN, it took little adjustment for me in handling this new weapon. By the time N.E.T. was nearing its end, I was upset to hear that I had not been selected for "Best in Parade Training." Oh well . . . I was a stoker now and all that dedication to parade squares and marching like a drum-major with the aid of a peanut, was going to be a thing of the past.

Week 16 had arrived and you could feel the perks that came with it. We beat the obstacle course, we didn't have to double anymore, our division was at the top, wakey-wakey came much, much later at 0630, we ate in the ship's company's W Galley, we had free gangway on the Rec' Centre, and leave was piped both Saturday and Sunday. Our winning ways in soccer, running, boxing, and winning the football championship had bolstered our 'sports points', but best of all . . . with one week left, it looked like the whole division was going to make it through.

The day had finally come. . .

“Passing Out Day” had arrived. Gone was the Div’ patch, off went the



webbing, up went the trade badges, and in came a draft chit. We marched onto the parade ground and halted in line with the dais, with all of *Cornwallis* N.E.T.'s and the guard, band, and ship's company behind us. We stood at attention bolt upright in our number one uniforms like a gaggle of chorus boys from HMS Pinafore. You could feel a mixed sense of both pride and relief in that it was finally over. Pride because you beat the challenge and relief because you could now resume in making your own decisions . . . well most of 'em anyway. After the 'Advance in Review Order', we were inspected by the Commanding Officer, Captain Fred Frewer, who was soon to be CO of *Bonaventure* and a man we would see close up for the first time. The Captain then returned to the dais where it was time for awards. "Best in this . . . Fraser Division" . . . "Best in that . . . Fraser Division." followed by individual awards. "Best Kit . . . Ordinary Seaman Bicknell" . . . "Best Athlete . . . Ordinary Seaman Cundill" . . . "Best in Parade Drill . . . Ordinary Seaman Mallette" . . . "Best All-Round Man . . . Ordinary Seaman **Brown.**" Complete shock! I took one pace forward . . . turned left smartly, and marched, for a change, toward the dais and up the steps to square in front of the

Captain. I was trembling with complete surprise and overwhelmed with emotion. I saluted and he returned it, and then he passed me an award that to this day, I still possess an engraved cigarette case. He asked me where I was drafted to in finding that by going to HMCS *Micmac*, he had recently been CO in her in the rank of commander.

Our time had ended and I wouldn't see most of the guys until Halifax a month or so later. Departure also meant that I would never again see those heading to Esquimalt save one or two in many years to follow. We that would remain were to discover that eighty percent of the division would not spend longer than their basic hitch in the navy, for whom many of them later in life, might wished they had. As we boarded the bus and headed to Digby, we felt the joy that only Odes from *Cornwallis* could know, at being outside the gates of hell. We sang and shouted obscene dits about the staff and everybody called "Sir." It was our way of telling authority, now safely out of earshot, to "get stuffed," because we had three weeks of ease and freedom ahead of us and joining the fleet after that. To what looked like the end at HMCS *Cornwallis*, we swore we'd never return. As time wore on, we would though, just like all matelots who cherish with pride, the ultimate feeling of accomplishment and camaraderie of "going through *Cornwallis*." Whenever we would ever come back through her gates, we would reflect on the most memorable and rewarding times of our lives. We would never admit it openly, but we were proud that we had absorbed it, proud of what we had accomplished, and proud of our fraternity. As we were smartly hushed by that sign on the drill shed as we drove through her main gate twenty-two weeks ago, now we reversed our gaze through the back of the bus and were as equally boisterous, we said to ourselves. We had "Learned to Serve" and we were leaving her.

CHAPTER THREE

HMCS *Micmac*



“Melkedae”
(Half Irish / Half Scotch)

HMCS *Micmac* was one of seven tribal class destroyers in the RCN who with their twenty sisters around the world, bravely served the British Commonwealth for nearly three decades. Canadian tribals served in WW2 and later, with *Sioux* and *Crusader*, saw action in Korea. In her twenty years in the RCN however, *Micmac* was employed as a training ship from her commissioning in 1945 and never participated in conflict. By 1959, *Micmac* and her sisters enjoyed a unique recognition and distinction as the heart of the Royal Canadian Navy. But they were aging veterans and soon to depart.



By November, I was anxious to join *Micmac* for two reasons. I considered this as destiny for I didn't ask for a tribal even if the opportunity was there. It just happened that way and I was mirthful in that I could always lay claim to having sailed in one before they went to the breaker's yard. As well, I was going directly aboard and lucky for not having to filter through *Stad'* pool. The buzz had it that if you were waiting for a ship, you were immediately pegged

as a passenger and put in 'A' block transient section. Here, little mercy abounded and life in a cabin with seven other guys sharing four lockers, was to sleep only. Cabins were briskly labelled 'out of bounds' during working hours, and you were now at the mercy of the yobs in the barrack

control centre. God knows what kind of a day, or night . . .they'd drum up for you.

Joining Day

It was a very wet and cool Sunday morning in November. Typical of a brand-new sailor, with my three-piece luggage ensemble that made me feel like a pack mule. Kit bag, blanket bag, 'tachee case, but no hammock, whose issue at *Cornwallis* had only terminated when the *Maggie* went home and the *Quebec* paid off. [All of the ships now had bunks leaving tribals as the only mick-slingers left in the fleet. Hammock issue came on joining the ship] Civilian clothes were forbidden in ships and with all that personal gear to hump, I wasn't about to complain. After asking a few times for directions, I got a trolley to Barrington and Buckingham streets and transferred to a 'Gottingen'. That would let me off at the Sunrise Cafe at North St. which like the top of a ski jump, led the way down North to the tunnel at the dockyard's Centre Gate.

I went into the cafe where a few sailors were sitting, drinking coffee and filling the ashtrays. I can remember ships' cap tallies like *Outremont*, *Inch Arran*, *Mallard*, or *Swansea*. At the same time, everything about me spelt brand new and fresh out of *Cornwallis* and that was difficult to avoid. I took off my cap as soon as I entered, and seeing my tally, they might think I was ship's company, but my bags were clothing stores quality and Fraser Block cleanliness. My parade boots had one-inch thick soles compared to the shoes that matelots wore ashore on leave. My No. 1's displayed the brightest of a tiddley gold wire propeller that didn't help either.

In the group, I noticed a badge or two and immediately tried not to be obvious or do anything that would rouse their awareness of me. I left my kit bags near the door beside my soaking wet and brand new burberry, dripping from a wooden coat tree with a limp silk scarf. "Gotta put that away! It's not Saturday night." I sat at the counter and felt eyes upon me from the 'hairies' sipping their coffee. I turned and timidly asked where *Micmac* was secured. One with a smiling sneer replied as if he'd tell me but had trouble lowering himself to react to my request. "She's over at the 'slips in Dartmouth!" where another similarly claimed, "She's at sea!"

Not wanting to intimidate the group by acting like a jack, I took their confusing replies seriously. Then the waitress from behind the counter

with a pencil tucked under her bonnet and chewing a wad of gum, blurted in and explained, “She’s under the bridge at jetty four outboard of *Haida*, *Nootka* and *Crusader*!” Well the group as well as myself turned opposite of each other and carried on in isolation. I said thank you to the waitress, then paused for a moment. As she passed in front of me while looking after another customer, I asked, “You wouldn’t happen to know when she’s sailin’ too, would ya?” “Oh yeah,” she replied, “Not ‘til sometime next week.” Then I thought, “How about that? This has got to be the turnstile of harbour movements and every matelot in town must come to the Sunrise or at least, she must go out with a QHM killick now and again.”

As minutes passed, I sucked back my coffee and left my dime anxiously. I looked out the window at the pouring rain and then down at my faded and waterlogged boots, resumed my laden poise and clumsily headed out the door joining the rushes of water down the hill to the gate and jetty four under the bridge. “Yeah . . . was she ever outboard!” I worked my way across four brows and up and down eight ladders when finally, I was standing on the rusted ‘iron deck’ in the pouring rain of a class of ship that was apart from the rest of the navy.



HMCS Micmac

Welcome aboard

I was directed to the stokers' mess and because it was a Sunday, just about everybody was ashore. While I was getting my soaked 'riggers' off, a stoker who I came to know as Jacques LaFlamme approached me. "Hi Colour-a'-shit! . . .with a dig at my surname. He asked if I had a clean



handkerchief and only wanting to please, I quickly replied, "I sure do!" Eagerly, I dug way down into the bottom of my kit bag to recover a kit muster quality, starchy white, initial-embroidered nose-appliance that was still fresh from the ironing boards in Fraser block. Jacques took the handkerchief and rejoined a group of guys on the other side of the mess who were huddled around a table near a hot plate where a kettle was boiling. Moments later he returned, while wringing out this dingy,

discoloured, soaking wet rag, and handed it to me with the accompanying statement, "Thanks Colour-a'-shit! We had to strain the tea." With a reddening face, I pushed to smile. That handkerchief had seen its last kit muster.

I was finding that a Tribal wasn't an easy ship to live in. Many would not leap at the idea of getting a draft to one, but it seemed to me that these rakish, speedy, and weapons-laden ships were where a brand-new sailor ought to be. And because two-thirds of the ship's length was three boiler rooms, an engine room and a gearing room, this was a stoker's niche. Apart from their seemingly harsh and personal opinions, hard-nosed seaman and artisan technicians ranged the lower deck and I came to realize that some of the most seasoned sailors with steeny badges, red

and Paki-gold, were aboard. A lot of them had sailed in “Tribals” in Korea but none of them ever spoke about it. In time, I would learn that many had done three tours over there. It was an honour to sail with them but you wouldn’t utter a word about it. You might display an admiring expression but you had to do that carefully otherwise you’d get an everlasting tally stuck on you along the lines of a “Liberace” or from staging any rebuke, “Color-a’-shit.” I was learning to laugh with them, as such a badgering name faded away.

I was to quickly be reminded from my time in *Crescent* that if you continuously fumbled about or at worse, couldn’t handle your watch because you were often leanin’ over the rail hollerin’ ‘fer Bill, you’d better give in and say so. Your best position was to get stuck down the bilge without a complaint, dhobey after every watch, keep your place as an O.D., and don’t socialize too much with the seamen. If you did these things as an unofficial recognition of your natural acceptance amongst the badgemen of the branch, then you had a fighting chance of surviving. In the many social circles, be they ‘turned to’ or ‘off watch’ down’ the mess, you had to be careful as to when to stick your oar in and if you did, say something intelligent. These guys knew the ship, the ways of the mess deck, life at sea, and they were very proud of it. Some were suggestive while others had mystical ways of showing it. To be one of them, you soon realized that the things you were about to go through were much the same as they did except their dits were beyond anybody’s comprehension, except their oppos.

Merry Krimbo and a Happy Scrub Out

The shit-chuckin’ and testing continued. Christmas was around the corner, the ship alongside. We O.D. stokers from the boiler rooms would finally be allowed to go up to the mess at stand easy for a coffee, if there was any left. There on the mess deck tables would be mail from home. Like the other buff stokers, I picked up an envelope addressed to me and discovered that the card had been removed. Glares abounded with an expression of mystery, then AB Wayne DuPlessis declared, “They didn’t care enough to send the very best . . . so we ditched ‘em out the scuttle!”, in declaring of the consequences of the Coutts Hallmark commitment. Reaction was cold but you went mute. Then after you scalded your throat and promptly thundered up the ladder to get your ass down in the bilge again at ‘Out Pipes’, the killick of the mess would hand you a card from

‘Mom’ . . . complete with the ten-dollar enclosure.

Christmas in the ‘yard

It’s hard to describe of the magnificence and ambience that existed in the Dockyard roadways and shops and ships at the jetties at Christmas. Only those within the gates would experience the grandeur and peacefulness of it all as it portrayed of life in another world in another environment. The Atlantic fleet, in an atmosphere of peace and quietness only broken by the din of an exhaust fan or a diesel generator here and there, from those ships unable to be provided with shore power. Huddled together like a large, unsymmetrical family onto their assigned jetties, many classes lie at rest. The hiss and occasional wisps of shore steam rising into a softly cold breeze as the gentle glow of night enshrouded the colourful lighting displays on the backbones, guns, mats, bridges and guard rails of each and every ship. Small balsam firs “close-up” on foremast halyards as the harbour waters gleamed with a kaleidoscopic of dancing reflections. The nostalgia of it all! Meantime, down in the now spacious messes vacated by the married of the crew on holiday leave, us single guys on “Lower-Deck Leave” could relax and stretch out, enjoy a slacker routine. We even got to be treated to sling our micks in the best slingin’ spots in the mess, those of “the ashore and at home messdeck killicks.”

My first all-night ashore

I soon found out that being single though meant I was duty on Christmas Eve. That of course meant being aboard for Christmas dinner and all those good things that went with it. The junior man would pose as Captain for the day and the entire wardroom would serve our dinners by settings in the larger and better accessible after upper messdeck.

However, we were sailing for ‘Checkers’ patrol on Boxing Day to relieve *Sioux* and we wouldn’t return to harbour until well after New Year’s. As it was Christmas day, us odes were granted overnight leave provided we had a legitimate ‘Address On Leave’ on the request form. Mine said, “Seagull Club, Hollis St.” and I rented a room for fifty cents. What that got you was a ten by six cubicle containing a cot, a chair, a butt-scorched side table, a chicken wire deckhead, and a nail behind the

door to hang your uni-bag up. I was puzzled as to why there was chicken wire up there only to find out that it might provide footing for the rats or stopped empty rum bottles from cascading down on you that were hurled in the air from partying hairies in the main flat. If you ended up with a room on the top deck looking down at the main building, there had to be thousands of rum and quart beer bottles littering the roof of the dance hall. They say that is why Oland's went from quart to pint bottles, because the roof at the "Shit-hawk Club" only had a thousand-pound load rate.

Nevertheless, the sheets were clean and it was a treat to sleep in a bed again. On Boxing Day morning at 0630, Mrs. Townsend, the take-charge buffer of the club, came barging into the cabin, stuck a big, wet, sloppy kiss on my cheek and declared, "Merry Xmas Brownie. Get out . . . you're sailing this morning!" She was the mother of P2NS Gordie Townsend from *Micmac*, and she always gave extra special attention to guys from her son's ship. Getting a shake was important at the Seagull Club, if you weren't a "Micmac," you were on your own. I still recall that very intimate shake as that one that got me up faster than the ones when you woke up adrift.

Us and them

Frigates were comfy. They had bunks and a cafeteria, but they were slow 'up-and-downers'. In the fifties and sixties, there was nothing more glamorous than the new DE's. Maybe a little too new for my liking. Who could argue though, when the "cadillacs" were being turned out at the rate of two a year, so it seemed. Life on those had to be a lot better than anything in the fleet but then there had to be a price, no doubt a pusser's routine that was a lot more rigid than the frigates and especially the Tribals and the 'sweepers. The take away on being in Tribals was the loss of the better jolly ports. Instead of 'Lauderdale in Florida, we'd stay off Culebra gunnery range near Puerto Rico. If we got into San Juan, we'd be alongside for a shorter stay, on the so-called Army Jetty with no shore power, auxiliary steaming and diesel watches while the "caddies" would be parked in the old navy base on shore power and steam. The running was different too. The "caddies" were neck and neck with flagships from other navies and the big-time exercises. In home waters, Tribals were relegated to plane guard for *Bonnie*, Shelburne Checkers, and Newfie patrol. Maybe that had a lot to do with the frequent fuelings, for then,

when we were still burning bunker C, you were heading for the nearest fuelling jetty along the coast to bunker up again. As the Tribals were fast ships, by no means were they economically efficient. Monitoring fuel consumption was a constant vigil where warnings went out ship-wide as you descended and neared that infamous figure of “40% F.F.O. remaining.” In the years before the new tanker *Provider* commissioned, it seemed that the only ships that might get fuel at sea from the Sem-I’s were the “cadillacs.” For the most part, they were always in company and when we were on patrol, were left to look after ourselves. By running into any random port seemed to be an advantage to get a run ashore in, but I quickly observed that as soon as we fuelled and the tanktops were secured, we were back out to sea again. After all, I thought, “We’re on patrol, and you’re not if you’re stuck alongside.” But alongside for a night, you never snubbed at.

No patch over this eye

Getting ashore in “Newfie-John” always held a surprise or two. The officers would usually end up at the exclusive Crowsnest Club leaving us to fend elsewhere and that was fine. Us yobs, like other navies in the world, relied heavily upon the sem-I’s for a run ashore and St. John’s was no different. A popular spot was Buckmaster’s Field, a recreation centre



St. John's NF - 1960

within the U.S. base Fort Pepperal, operated by the RCN “reg force” sailors of HMCS *Avalon*. On Sunday afternoon, all the establishments down town were closed, so Buckmaster’s became a good alternative. There was a movie laid on and the make-shift theatre became quickly overloaded. In anticipation of show time, the house lights dimmed as everyone scurried about trying to get a seat. During the shuffle, I was lured to this rather attractive young lady who surprisingly, hadn’t been trapped yet. I quickly asked her if she’d join me to watch the movie on the only seats left, a wicker sofa in the lobby at the rear of the hall.

For some reason, the boys were having a chuckle about something but I didn't really pay any attention as to why.

The movie got underway and she was seated to my left. Almost immediately, she began to lean heavily toward me and I thought, "I'm in like Flinn!" I soon found out though, that it had nothing to do with getting friendly. Because of the dim lighting, I hadn't noticed that this damsel had a visual deficiency in finding out that she was negative eyeball on the starboard side. The view of the screen from the rear lobby was restricted through a double door opening and as her right eye wasn't there, she craned her neck toward me to be able to see the movie . . .monocularly.

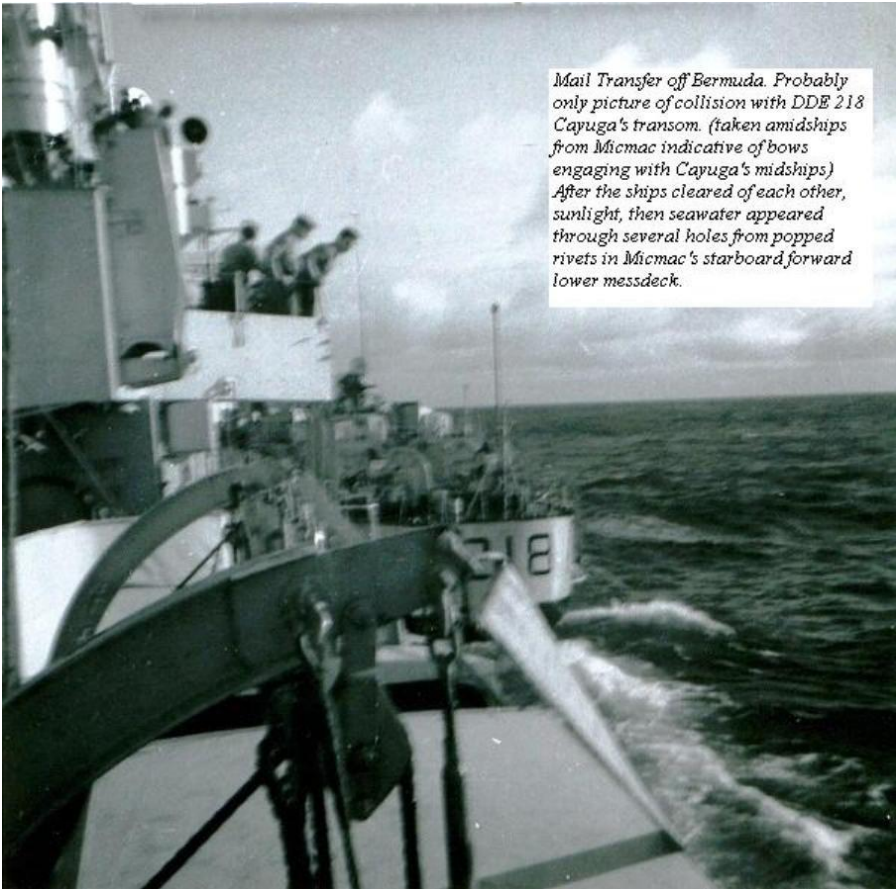
Well, what does a gentleman matelot do about that except to invite her to swap seats, and give her a better panoramic view without getting a stiff neck. It was the longest movie I ever watched and I trembled each time the lights went up to put on a new reel. The place where the eye should have been was sewn up tighter than the stitching on a pusser's kit bag. "Would you like some popcorn Mabel?" She said, "Yes!", and I was gone to the canteen for the longest time.

Tough luck-people too

It is unfortunate that throughout her career, *Micmac* was troubled with several collisions and numerous mechanical breakdowns. She was labelled a "tough-luck lady." Long before me, her most major disaster was the loss of eleven lives as a result of a high-speed collision with *SS Yarmouth County* in 1947. In the nearly three years I was ship's company though, we encountered severe damage from three different North Atlantic storms. As well, two cases of condenseritis, several leaky tubes in number 2 & 3 boilers, an at-sea collision with *Cayuga*, an alongside prang from the frigate *La Hulloise* and a feed water flood in No. 2 boiler room. Add too, a strike by dockyard workers during refit at Saint John Dry Dock, then an electrical arc in #5 oil fuel tank at sea while dealing with a submersible pump to counter a sea water leak while the tank was unballasted.

I had bad luck too. Like everybody who steamed the boilers, we all wore asbestos steaming gloves, which of course provided protection from burns. They also saved your hands from cuts and bruises and in this case, the amputation of my thumb. One night while coming off watch in number 3 boiler, I was just about to shut and clip the very sturdy w/t

access door to the boiler room air-lock when the access hatch to the boiler room began to flutter open. This gave potential to a furnace flash back when the boiler room was equalized with the atmosphere. In one hell of a panic, I leaned back in to seat the hatch with my foot and as the ship rolled, my gloved thumb got squashed in the door jamb of the air-lock access door. Once I nervously got the hatch secured again, I wondered if a flash back might have occurred down on the boiler front. With throbbing pain, I anxiously raised my left arm to see how much damage there was. Streams of blood began to ooze out of the glove as I gently withdrew it from my hand, then to discover that the tail-end end of my thumb was dangling.



Mail Transfer off Bermuda. Probably only picture of collision with DDE 218 Cayuga's transom. (taken amidships from Micmac indicative of bows engaging with Cayuga's midships) After the ships cleared of each other, sunlight, then seawater appeared through several holes from popped rivets in Micmac's starboard forward lower messdeck.

Trying to nail down Doc Fortin to get some repairs that night took nearly an hour. I had traversed the ship several times and finally found him cuttin' hair in a workshop back aft. As he had a number of customers waiting, all Chiefs and P.O.s, he declared that there was no need for

stitches ... just a bandage to hold it all back together and stop the bleeding.

I was to be in pain for weeks and months to come. Infection had set in, and at sea with virtually one hand to lash a hammock, clean sprayer tips, tie up boots, and be able to pass anybody in a gangway without bumpin' it, life would be hell. Today and over fifty years later, I look at my disfigured thumb with memories of *Micmac*, although a little bittersweet never, ever knowing if a flash-back had occurred. My guess is "No!" But damaging a thumb is a mere tribulation . . . nothing like losing your life.

The sea shall have them

Earlier in 1960, we suffered the loss at sea of OSLM 'Yogi' Jelinek, brother to the former Canadian figure skating champion and politician, Otto. Of the many people in *Micmac*, four of them met their fate at sea in short years to follow too. LSER Tom Pitt in the 1965 JP5 explosion in *Nipigon*, CPO2 Bill Boudreau and PO2 Eric Harmon in the *Kootenay* gearbox explosion in 1969, and P2ET Jim O' Sullivan who was electrocuted in *Margaree* shortly after.

But there is a brighter side when I think of the notables as well as lost friends I sailed with in *Micmac*. Naval Storesman Jack Carter, Atlantic Command's Fleet boxer, a minister of parliament and former Rear-Admiral Fred Mifflin, who was a sub-lieutenant and then became the gunnery officer. Sub-Lieutenant Charles Westropp, who had just transferred from the British Merchant Navy after six years' service and went on to retire in the rank of Commodore as Chief of Staff, Personnel. Presumably, because of his merchant navy experience, "Sir Charles," as he was to become popularly known throughout the fleet in years to come, had the distinction of being a bridge watchkeeping officer and navigation officer aboard the *Cape Scott* scientific expedition to Easter Island in the Pacific over the Christmas season of 1964.

The captain of *Micmac* was Cdr A.B. "Tony" German, a well-known officer who, after retiring author-ed "The Sea Is at Our Gates." Beyond German relieved by Cdr G.B. Smith, others included such popular former naval pilots as LCdrs Rod Bays (first Lieutenant) and Benny Oxholm, as well as a later C.O., Cdr W.J. Stuart, who on promotion to captain, was to take command of the newly commissioned HMCS *Provider*. Today, as I muse over a ship's company photo taken on the jetty at Key West

Fla. in 1960 and wonder about their destinies and where they all are today.

LCdr Bays the XO, was a very respected professional. His presence in *Micmac* was beyond the comprehension of anyone on the lower deck, but we never questioned that. It wasn't our business. He had a charisma about him with an air of confidence that was infectious. The entire ship's company thought of him as a man with a fine personality and a lot of common dog. Rod Bays never had to command respect. That was a given. We supposed that came as a result of his esteem and experience as a valued pilot in the Fleet Air Arm. To say the least, his position as Executive Officer, with little background in sailing destroyers must have come to him as second nature. We found out in later years, that he probably buffered a lot of flak between CO's and the ship's company. His constant grin and look of confidence fired us all up with an attitude and energy that meant we could handle any task in any conditions.



The Ship's Company-HMCS Micmac at Key West Fla. 1960...author to right of Ship's Kisbey

Sky Bags

A swinging sea-bed, the undisputed invention of Alcibiades who described:

"The modern name of "hammock" is derived from the Caribbs.

Consisting of a piece of canvas, 6 feet long and 4 feet wide, it is gathered together at the two ends by means of clews, formed by a grommet and kittles, whence the 'head-clue' and 'foot-clue'; the hammock is hung horizontally under the deck, and forms a receptacle for a bed on which the seamen sleep. There are usually allowed from 14 to 20 inches between hammock and hammock in a ship of war. In preparing for action, the hammocks, together with their contents, are all firmly corded, taken upon deck, and fixed in various nettings."

Thanks to Alcibiades' invention so meanwhile, back in the mess, life meant more adjusting. Making up your hammock for the first time didn't come easy. Ships were slowly converting to or building, with bunks, so the days had passed when they taught N.E.T.'s to do so in *Cornwallis*.



Now, making up a hammock for the first-time aboard ship meant getting lots of help from your messmates. Killicks and below were issued with two, c/w clews: one set, and lashing: 8 feet. In order that a 'mick' would

form a natural curl so that you could stay in it, you had to ‘sword-mat’ the clews, then extend the standing ends into double half hitches through the several grommets at each end of the canvas. A mick-stick was then fashioned from a shortened piece of broom handle that was vee’d at both ends and this was inserted between the “head clews” at shoulder-width distance to span the ‘mick and keep you from folding up in it and maybe even suffocate. When properly made up, the mattress and blanket together within the hammock would be tightly roll-tucked into a sausage configuration. It was then secured from for’d to aft with seven half hitches of the lashing drawn from the bight to make it secure . . .and fabled as offering a period of buoyancy to a sinking-ship survivor. The more realistic purpose in days of yore, that when stowed together in the ‘nettings’, they would form a barricade against musket-balls. Once lashed up, your tally and stock number had to be prominent, so out came the large, well-used *Cornwallis* stencil . . . **D. BROWN 46490-H**. This way, you could identify it in the mick- rack but more for the navy’s convenience, get it picked up for rounds. It also had to “go through the hoop.” Although no longer in use in this modern navy, there was a time when a hammock would be gauged for uniformity and appearance when stowed in the mick-rack. If it failed to pass through a hoop, the owner was punished. If it went through too easily and had a skimpy appearance, it was known as a “greyhound lash-up.”

In a tribal as an O.D. you earned your slinging spot. There wasn’t enough to go around so I found myself on top of #1 & 2 fuel tanks, tanktop covers using two cushions from the settee to spread my mick out on. Being just four inches off the deck certainly wasn’t as good as sleeping in the altitudes, but if the ship was rolling and pitching, at least I was crashed athwartships. This meant that I only slid out on a port roll, for my head was part of the bulkhead and that kept me on my mick and going the other way. Whether I was sleeping on the tanktops or turned-in in a hammock up in the air, the hardest thing to do was hang on to kit that belonged on a bedpost. It goes without saying that when you were asleep, your clobber was in “free gangway” status. The “**Matelot’s Prayer**” speaks not of a plea to God for family and friends but more of one that He might allow you to sleep in peace, with assurance that your clothing not be disturbed.

**Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
And grant no other sailor take,**

**my shoes and socks before I wake.
But if some poor soul should chance to stray
I'LL PUNCH HIS FUKKIN' HEAD IN!!!**

The Mess

In our mess of thirty-odd stokers, it was astonishing as to how soon a crowded mess was orderly once the hammocks were stowed for the day and the grot' got scrubbed out. Equally amazing was how everybody in that rigorous open space between three steel bulkheads and a ship's side cornered with a single "mick rack" would manage to declare of their little bit of private territory. The mess was two decks below the extended foc's'le upper deck. It had a laddered gangway forward and a side door that exited into a flat shared by the Quartermasters' and the ERA s' messes. A row of boot lockers covered with vinyl-leather cushions (settees) ran along the length of the port side of the mess. This resembled a downscaled single-storey motel, whose inhabitants we'll talk about a little later. The settees were backed with hinged backrests that when opened, served as extra stowage. Along the tops of the settees, black metal 'hatboxes' were stowed - they contained just about everything except hats. . .or as G.I.'s insists . . .caps. Running parallel to the settees were two long tables that served for eating, cards, doing your ironing, and what all good stokers do, pencil-ing system sketches upon in the absence of paper.

This was broadside messing at its intended best. I thought that today's navy must fight by standards of the 20th century but with living conditions as primitive as they were . . . why should it continue to live by standards of the 19th one? Proof to that was that adjacent to each of the messdeck tables was situated the mess fanny which contained the mess traps. In explaining how the 'fanny' came into existence that modernly describes of any domestic repository found on a pusser's mess deck, is quite a story. The term "Fanny Adams" came into use in the navy in the middle of that very 19th century when . . . mutton packed in tins was introduced as part of rations disbursed aboard ship. After the mutton had been consumed down in the messdecks, the new-fangled tins made perfect receptacles for brewing tea, eating out of, or warming up other forms of nourishment. The murder of 9-year old Fanny had taken place in the south of Victorian England and Frederick Baker the assailant, was found guilty and hanged. In efforts to earlier conceal his crime, Baker

had cut up the remains and packed them into tins. The buzz among the messdecks was that these re-packed tins had found their way into the dockyard storehouses from the plant at Deptford and the contents therein were not mutton, but morsels of Fanny Adams. Cannibals are we..... well now!

In the port wing mess, two scuttles that were about four feet above the waterline offered daylight and fresh air. This was our main means of ventilation. It was great when alongside but they were only opened when underway in a near flat sea, provided there was no heel from course alteration. After a while you soon realized that stokers were meant to stay below and out of the sunlight. All of the seamen lived in two bigger compartments one deck above us, with six scuttles, their openings being about twelve feet above the waterline. As such, not only were their scuttles also usually open in heavy weather, but wind scoops could be shipped into them, whenever the need arose. For the few times at sea when we shipped our pitiful two, we had to stick them out and train them astern so as not to wear a whole “green one” from diffusing into the mess. They didn’t scoop ‘in’ any fresh air in that position . . . They just became a poor attempt at draggin’ out the hum. We called a scuttle, the “Bendix,” (the first electric dish washing machine with a window) that also served well in a panic for a “yankee-dish up” when rounds were coming through. Others referred to it as the TV set and the question asked when peering through the Bendix with green seawater bubbling in circles . . . “What’s on TV?” A jacky reply would echo, “A-A-h . . . just another sea story!”

Below the scuttle was a ‘drip-kid’ that made a great ashtray for those flashed up in their sky-bags along the ship’s side. Rounds meant clean brightwork and to shine the fittings was easy for their many years of frequent attention. Dirty scuttles meant a scaley ship and if a person stood on the jetty and sighted the scuttle ring below the wriggle as grubby, “God knows . . . what’s it like inside?” perhaps would be the question.

Somebody got drafted off a month later and now my slinging spot had graduated to fore and aft, but still not up in a hammock’s normal environment, “the gods.” I was still on the deck but crammed in behind the mick-rack, guaranteed not to slide off or roll out with the pitching and rolling of the North Atlantic. Seniority was starting to accrue in only thirty days for as quick as I was off the tanktops, another brand-new ode was on them. I was anxious to see how the new occupant would react to his “welcome aboard,” so that I could compare how good or bad I did in being graced by my messmates . . . if that were really the case. This sleeping on the deck wasn’t too bad once you got used to it and the sliding

five-gallon milk cans, but there were severe disadvantages when you weren't slung where a hammock is supposed to be. Trying to lash a mick without restraint of a mick-bar is very difficult to do if it's to look seamanlike and stowed taut. Above all though, was the unpleasantness of a ranky mick. . .the ultimate of scale. The ugliness of an oil-stained and foot scuffed canvas that was lashed slack like an egg roll was just not acceptable. To avoid that, meant that your life had to be well organized. Keeping it clean was getting down on your hands and knees on the terrazzo tiled deck of the tiny stokers' washplace and bollockin' the shit out of it with a scrub-brush and 'pusser's-hard'. To get the time and the space in the washplace meant looking ahead at your watchbill and planning for your turn carefully. We might be on water rationing, then getting it dried out where it won't cause unsightliness during rounds twice a day while making up your other hammock with your only set of clews were the obstacles to overcome. Times would get interrupted though when they'd pipe: **"Ship's company . . . Ai-i-i-r bedding."** Just made up the day before and gleaming white, now you had to take it all adrift and hump it to the uppers to lash it to the guardrails for the forenoon. Enter the smudge marks. The hours you spent doing all that, turning to on day work, and standing watches in the boiler room one in three didn't give you any time to do anything else except eat . . .if you could. Sleep was out of the question for most because you couldn't sling in the daytime and seniority had its perks for power naps on the settees. As part of trades training, this is why all stokers learnt how to sleep standing up, by leaning against a twelve- foot boiler room ladder.

Flash-Up from cold

To go into a shutdown boiler room for the first time was nothing like I had ever envisioned. It was cold and dank, and the "cross-hatched" deck plates below were well worn and covered with films of rust. After the boiler was flashed, these impressions changed dramatically. My first flash-up was one I'll never forget.

The ERA of the boiler room was PIER Dennis Francis who later went on to take a commission as a "brackets E." Before we went down into No. 3, he went into great detail in showing me how and why we opened the watertight fan flaps on the 'uppers' that would allow air into the furnace once we got it flashed. Down on the platform, I was handed the "Buck Rogers gear," a brilliant piece of kit that was invented by a

namesake tribal chief stoker some years beforehand. This jury-rig apparatus was a six-foot-long U-tube comprised of a shut-off valve, an air connection, and at the end of a tortuous U-shaped oil path, a sprayer tip. Quickly I learned that in order to raise steam from cold, you had to get a supply of saturated steam to run a reciprocating fuel oil pump as well as heat the oil to flash point. Bunker C was thicker than coal when cold and the RCN had gotten modern by selling all its coal shovels to the local army-navy surplus store.

A fire register was temporarily removed from the boiler front in order to project the gear into the furnace. We enshrouded the U-tube with oil-soaked cotton waste through which the viscous gunk would flow from a motor-driven Wee-Mac pump. Then we would ignite it with a wooden match and insert the double length mass of smoking flame into the furnace. What would we have done without the ingenious Mr. Eddy's matchsticks to compliment the space-age technology of Chief Stoker, "Buck Rogers"?

Flashing a boiler required forced air. Bleeding air from the torpedo tube air supply was controversial for two reasons. Making it, meant that it came from a steam-driven compressor. Using it was at the pleasure of the TAS rates who usually said "Neggy!" So instead of putting ourselves at the whim of the seamen, we elected to use a bulky and heavy portable DB fan to supply forced air. After an hour of successfully keeping the fuel lit at the nozzle tip, tiny wisps of steam started to emit from a drain in the bilge. Soon it was time to light a fire from a fitted register, remove the gear, then box the boiler back up. Once a good fire got rolling in the furnace, steam pressure would begin to climb, sufficient to flash a turbo fan. It was at that time that the boiler room filled with thick, black smoke and unless you knew who was in the space, knowing where they were became impossible. PO Francis hollered through the invisibility, "Brown! Did you open the fan flaps up top like I told you?" "Yes PO!" I answered remembering to do as he told me. Then he began to ask another question, but never got it finished. "Did you take off the funn.....?" Then the question turned into an order. **"Get your arse up top and take that fukkin' funnel cover off!"**

That reminded me for the rest of my career that when you're busy showing somebody what to do, always remember to never get so engrossed that you're going to forget the basics. It had been his job to not only order the funnel cover "off," but to sight it "off" before we ever lit a fire under the boiler. What helped me to remember that so well was climbing up that funnel in the darkness of the early morning and

disconnecting the lashings of the canvas cover with black smoke and heat blasting into my face. I felt bad for PO Francis for he was a good man who was too smart to miss that one, but he had to live with the shit-chuckin' and embarrassment from the other ERA s as well as the stokers. And about the reliability of machinery? Thirty-six years later, the same Wee Mac pump from *Micmac* still served the Queen at sea in the submarine *Okanagan*, but about that anon.

Which one did it???

So before we leave the regulated art of flash up from cold, there was a little cheatin' goin' on. "Catman" Gillespie, an apprentice P1ER, was aboard *Cayuga* which more often than not was alongside us. The "Cat" would tell you that there was a quicker way to raise steam. "Hell! Pull out the fukkin' register . . . soak down a whole bale of cotton waste with diesel fuel, set a match to it and chuck 'er in the furnace . . . then put the register back in. That'll bring her up in a hurry . . . goddamright!" Well it did, but by the time a turbo-fan was cut in, there was sometimes, tell-tale evidence of such a misdemeanour. We were alongside *Cayuga* preparing to sail until the skipper, CdrStuart, arrived on *Micmac*'s open bridge to find himself standing within 3 inches of residual ash. "What in Heaven's name is all this?" he would pose as a question on the telephone to the E.O. down in the engine room. "Not sure who or what happened!" the E.O. would muse. Question now was . . . which ship sitting in a nest of four or five all flashin' up?

Down on the boiler front

"Punching fires" on a boiler front was to become a skilled vocation, especially when there were frequent turbine engine movements or high-speed runs. At the order of the boiler room ERA, each of the boiler registers was pressed into great demand. Great demand on the stoker that is. In almost one fluid motion you would rapidly open or isolate the fuel supply, pull out, or push in the air flaps of a boiler register in regulating the demand for steam flow for "up" or "down" speed and engine movements. Equally important was the trademark of a skilled fire-puncher. Only a mere puff of smoke through the change-over of registers, but never to create a continuous flow of belching black smoke from the

funnels up top unless through the telegraph order to “Make Smoke” in laying a smokescreen. At the direct pleasure or the disdain of the ERA, all eyes from the bridge and surrounding ships were upon you. Do it proficiently? You were some kind of a popular super-human. Make position-giving smoke? Shed the upper decks and the people or hammocks on it with soot? You were a complete disgrace, an indignity to branch pride and stood a strong chance of being re-mustered to a “scribe.” Oh yeah, the shame!

‘Micmac. . .one-third cruiser

Unless you were in *Micmac*, other Tribal stokers never had the misfortune of punching fires on a “cruiser front” boiler. Unlike the other two Admiralty three-drum types that had eight registers with stationary sprayers as fitted in *Micmac*, (and all Tribals) this nine-eyed monster had barrel oil sprayers projecting “into” the boiler registers. They were meant to reduce clinker build-up in the fire registers while being more efficient and increasing the steam flow rate. At the expense of far less clinker-knockin’, there was a price to pay. The banshee-like scream of the boiler turbo-fans audibly increased by another 10 db’s or so, the boiler front could pulsate, the ambient pressure in “No.3” required a 100 lb.test pressure on eardrums and punching fires at full power or going alongside required the need for two stokers. To stand four hours down there meant dead ears, frozen feet, and sore arms and elbows that went away when it was time to go down on watch again . . .or hours after you finally got ashore.

Pass the slide . . .and asbestos

There was always time to draw at least a little comfort and some fine cuisine when steaming No. 3. We used to keep a 100lb. sack of spuds up on the fan plenums near the top of the boiler. By carefully rearranging small sections of lagging and nesting a dozen spuds or so on a boiler mounting, adding some slide and salt and you’d have the best tasting ‘cooked in the jacket’ murphies that anybody had ever dined on . . .once you blew the asbestos dust off. Today in modern times after nearly five decades, it still puzzles me about the dangers inherent in asbestos lagging that’s been removed from ships and we are told to avoid. The fact that

we nestled in amongst the warmth and comfort of it to have an occasional zuzz now and again, was a comfort from the freezing drafts down on the boiler room deck plates. It all proved that as long as you breathed, ate, handled or even painted asbestos . . . the reality from lower deck clankies was that for the meantime, it made us all immune.

Watch keeping is relative to

When I went on to stand engine room watches, you soon learnt the different characteristics of the type of watch you had. It was directly related to the personalities of the ERA of the watch. CPO1 “Joe” Currie was a rarity as a Chief Stoker, he had an engine room ticket . . . that we thought he had won in a raffle. He was the sort that ran a tight space and spent the entire watch continuously checking oil levels on all the machinery. Although he was quiet, he was always suspicious and we could never gauge his thinking. He worried . . .that caused the chief tiff to worry . . .which made us worry . . . so we called him “Worry Currie.”

Chief “Carl” Rogers loved to eat, so we spent a lot of time running up top and around the ship getting chickens, pork, spuds, and onions for his nosh up. Between ‘trappin’ the revs’ at the top of the hour and monitoring the machinery, we were also masters at building jury-rigged appliances. We would run a turbo drain through a makeshift cauldron which, produced a “stew for one” . . .half way through a four-hour watch. Playing gopher, cook, steward, and even legitimising as a stoker for four hours sure knackered you. Standing watches with Carl kept us slim because of two reasons: We did all the runnin’ around and he ate all the food.

PIER “George” Crawley was a pacer. Back down in No.3, he would spend the entire watch of four hours walking back and forth across the boiler front, only pausing for a moment away from the draft of the turbo-fans to light yet another fag, which constantly hung from his lips. His pacing to and fro explained why the cross-hatch pattern on the deck plates was so well worn away, and because the deck plates were never well-secured, they’d rumble and clank to the repetition of his thundering gait. George, like all other ERA s in charge of the space, took great pride in his independence in that once you got down in the pit, there was no relief in sight for the next four hours. Even to summon for help when nature called, showed a weakness not only in professionalism, but not having yourself organized.

On the boiler front was a three-inch diameter sight tube that penetrated into the furnace providing an uninterrupted view of the 'flame-burning efficiency' therein. If there was any level of registers lit, a large vacuum persisted at the tube opening as a result of combined compartment pressure and demand for air for ignition. George, on this night, was rumbling heavily back and forth as usual, but at a much-quicken pace we noticed. The noise in the boiler room was deafening as always and there was never any verbal explanation as to why he paced now so quickly. He suddenly stopped in his tracks, lit another fag, then pulled down his trousers and nicks. In a sweeping motion he grasped for a handful of cotton waste and positioned it under his stern sheet. With a wince and a grimace or two, he then swung the laden cargo to the tube opening . . .and away she went like a bullet. Then a second piece of waste was brought into action to look after the clean-up necessities. Away then she went too . . .up nicks. . .up trollies. . .left, right, left, right, about turn, thump, bang, clatter as he glared unnecessarily in pusser's order . . .to the smoke mirror, the boiler pressure gauge, and then the steam drum water gauge-glasses high above. . .while lighting up yet another cigarette as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

Petty Officer 1st Class "Ernie" Dudley was an ex-RN ERA and former fleet-boxer. He was a humourous type, very cocky when he had the watch, and took great interest in training young stokers. He was a traditional artisan who liked shiny bright work and well-oiled machinery, and had a protectiveness about him that kept anybody who didn't belong to the engine room branch at bay. His retaliatory sharpness was exhibited many times and assured us that if you were going to cast criticism of the "workings below," as an OOW, you'd best be accurate in your accusations.

The forward funnel in Tribals was the means for No.'s 1 and 2 boilers to emit gasses and as concluded, the stokers' bane . . .position-giving smoke if you hadn't got your 'fires' right. The main galley stove up top, was oil-fired and because of the galley's proximity, exhaust piping was routed so that it spiralled externally around the forward funnel from the galley to exit at the same height as the boiler gasses. Normally at sea and in a cruising state, we would economically reduce to one boiler. In *Micmac*, it was customary to do so with No. 3, whose single furnace gasses emitted from the after, and much smaller funnel. Hence, no boilers were on-the-line that would cause smoke to come from the forward funnel. We were barrelling along at 146 revolutions when above the whirl of the turbines, the siren-like sound powered telephone from the bridge

came to life. ‘Duds’ picked up the handset and eased himself into the sound booth with a very loud and curt. . . **“Engine room! Chief ‘a-tha-watch!”** On the other end was a softer, yet authoritative tone from the officer of the watch who declared, **“Chief . . .You are making thick black smoke from the forward funnel! Stop making smoke at once . . .They can see us for miles!”** to which ‘Duds’ countered with . . . **“Well ya’ betta phone the bleedin’ galley then . . . not the fukkin’ engine room!”**

A mother’s old remedy???

1961 was at a time when tea bags in the RCN were considered a luxury and we were still wettin’ the engine room fanny with loose tea. One fistful right out of the aluminum tea-caddy straight into a boiling pot, made for a damned fine cup of “rosie-lee.” While on Duds’ watch in the engine-room, I was ‘dipping’ a turbo-generator oil sump and carelessly got a severe burn from a steam gauge-line. It was a good six inches long and on the inside of my forearm. It smarted and I anticipated a large blister to soon appear as it swelled and grew redder. Duds’ went to the hotplate, mucked on to the tea-fanny and dumped the contents into the bilge while funnelling the wet tea leaves into a wad of cotton waste. “Here y’are Buster!”, he said. “Slap that on your arm for ten minutes or so. That’ll sort it out.” By the end of the watch, there was no swelling, no blister, no pain. Just a mere pink mark where the gauge-line had made contact. On Duds’ watch, nobody was allowed to leave the engine-room to go to sick-bay unless you could skilfully convince him you were seconds away from croakin’ from a heart-attack. In his apothecary clerk’s opinion, something to do with tannic acid in tea was the cure-all for minor burns. It worked, and in years to follow when I was to be in charge of buff stokers, tea bags eventually arrived in machinery spaces making burn repairs that much easier. And it was Duds’ who had tattooed me with the name “Buster,” which has remained with me ever since.

Never to be forgotten was P2 Bill Boudreau. He was a typical gingery-blond maritimer from Stellarton N.S. and his wit and simple presence made it a pleasure to go on watch. Bill was a throttle watch keeper and his know-how and experience in the branch made you feel happy and proud to be a part of it. In a few short years in 1969, Bill was the propulsion chief aboard *Kootenay* and was killed as a result of her

historical and infamous gearbox explosion. Anybody who had anything to do with him felt a great sadness and a huge loss to our profession.

Inspiration was the key to success in the navy and a lot of it came from a certain individual whose opinion and personal example would guide me for many years to come too. Following up on the advice of the recruiting officer at *Chippawa*, I had made that request for the apprenticeship plan and took a correspondence course to complete my school qualifications. I did so and by the time I finished, I was disappointed in finding that all applicants were to be 16 to 18 years of age, even if you were already in the RCN. I was now 19 and . . .too old?? A stoker PO by the name of George Faithfull was in charge of a boiler watch and very popular among the killicks and below because of his youth and status. George was cheerful, intelligent, and very easy to get along with and when he learnt of my disappointment, he said something that drove me for a long time to come. "Don't worry about it Buster! Just keep workin' hard as a stoker and you'll get ahead just as well as a tiffy!" When looking at George, I could now believe it. He was living proof as a hard-working, one-badged P2 stoker who had only been in the RCN a short time and in a very few years, became a CPO1 and would be the commissioning Chief ERA of a new gas turbine destroyer.

An Upper Deck Stoker

There was variation in jobs aboard. After two years, the Chief Stoker thought that maybe I should have that job-change to Upper Deck Stoker. I accepted the switch very eagerly. As such, there were a lot of perks to it. It was a special duty job which meant that you didn't stand watches at sea and although you were "all-night-in" every night, the execution of your duties needed error-free judgement. You'd best be sure that all your assigned bilges were dry, that your domestic and feed water tanks had sufficient supplies available and most importantly, that fuel tank dips were not only done regularly . . .but that they were accurate and agreed with log book "engine turns" and boiler consumption. You were a busy-boy at sea and alongside where demands were similar including hooking up steam lines, air hoses, fresh water supplies and fire main availability. The mark of the Upper Deck Stoker in all ships was symbolic. "Keys and wrenches," inter-mixed with a flashlight and wheel spanner that must dangle from pockets and belts around your waist. So much so that as you

sped about the ship in a usual busy day, your symbols would emit tunes like Jimmy Crack Corn, Rock Around the Clock, or Jingle Bells.

Made in U.S.A.?

During a trip on an Eastlant exercise, we went alongside in Norfolk, Va outboard of *Algonquin*. We hooked up to fuel and unlike other fuelings, the pressure at which it was coming aboard was quite high. Without the details as to how the event occurred (except that it happened after tot time), the delivery hose developed a rupture in the vicinity of the ‘iron deck’ and the brow position of the ship. Duty uniformed personnel were closed up at the brow greeting visiting USN dignitaries. As the hose split, bunker C sprayed the whole area, covering *Algonquin*’s much higher ship’s side, and our own brow area, and ‘iron deck’. People fled in every direction as the three positioned fuelling valves at the tank top position in the lower flats were simultaneously shut in error. When it was realized what had happened from down below, the valves were swung open wide with the accompanying shaken demand of “Buster! Don’t you say a fukkin’ word about this to anybody . . .hic!” as each of the valve operators exchanged nervous looks. It was time for some diversion. As several people turned to with sujee, brushes, and fire hoses, the sem-I’s came aboard with these new-fangled absorbent pads that were released into the harbour between the two ships. Nobody looked too pleased about this mystery. As the ruptured hose was slowly dragged across *Algonquin*, I wrote some letters on it with a piece of chalk. “Made in U.S.A.” I’ll never know if that helped the two P.O.’s.

Pumpin’ bilges with the Venturi

The very popular and manipulative, P1ER Bill (Dan) Backewich used to like to talk a lot and we thought he was destined to be a politician. I can’t recall if machinery noise or Dan’s voluminous voice was the cause of H3 category in my starboard ear. He did go politician later in life in a local Dartmouthian capacity, then ended up as the machine shop superintendent in the Dockyard . . . talking to the lathes, the milling machines, and sometimes even the machinists that operated them. We were always in search of names that referred to personalities or in P.O. Backewich’s case, physical features. Because of his girth, we called him

“Danny Drydock” and he would spend his 4 hours on-watch in the engine room seated on a spare gear locker in front of the main engine console.

As upper-deck stoker, one of my daily tasks was to ensure machinery space bilges were “cleared” and “wet” only. The fitted high-line pumping and flooding system in *Micmac* was mysteriously inefficient, so the outside machinery chief devised a portable venturi suction system that could penetrate thoroughly into all bilges to clear them. This network consisted of a pressurized seawater hose connected to a 25 ft. long, 4 inch diameter suction hose via a venturi device that would discharge both sea and bilge water over the side. On the suction end, a weighty moulded-brass strum, or rosebox strainer was fitted to keep the welding rods, cancelled request forms, dockyard maties' sandwiches, and other bilge remnants from entering the venturi. It was very cumbersome and had to be unfurled from its stowage around the base of the forward funnel and dragged about the iron-deck to each of the spaces to be pumped out.

At the top of the two athwartships engine room hatches on the iron-deck, was a canopy claimed by the stokers and tallied, “the Engineer’s Bridge.” Although meant for the torpedo tubes’ crew to utilize during torpedo runs and the Engineer Officer to bear witness at Special Sea Dutymen, it was a nice warm sheltered spot for stokers to sit, tell dits, and talk about the run ashore last night. Just abaft and under the tubes at deck level were the engine room ‘skylights’, that when in warmer climes, the watertight covers were removed to let the soaring heat escape. They also provided for an excellent bombsight in lowering the venturi suction hose into the engine room below.

One hot day, I was dragging the monster forward, after just doing the gland space bilges when I hollered below to Danny Drydock sitting on his spare gear box as usual. **“I’m up top P.O.! D’ya wantcha bilges pumped out?”** Without looking up and expecting the hose to enter through one of the hatches and down the ladder, he replied, **“Yeah! okay Buster! Slide ‘er down!”** So I did . . .and as I let it enter the skylight directly above the sitting, cackling-away Danny Drydock, I lost grip of an accelerating oily suction hose. The only head protection he had was the thin oil-stained white cover of his steaming cap when **“Whomp!”**, the rosebox landed directly onto his bonce at the rate of about 20 m.p.h. As he was in the transmitting mode to his throttle watch keeper, he also nearly bit the end of his tongue off. Blood poured out of his mouth, he stood up in a daze and almost fell over from unconsciousness while hollering, **“Brown! You fukkin’ arsehole. You goddam son-of-bitch.**

You ... donkey. You.....” “Sorry P.O., . . . geez’, am I ever sorry!” was all I could say or do.

The Biggest Branch of The Navy

There were other members of the naval family that really enjoyed going to sea and especially thrived in *Micmac*: the settee dwellers earlier referred to, Cockroaches at large! Bombay runners, snarlers, three badgers, and yes, the little one badged “queens.” They were all there. Thousands of them! Some bore varying hues of paint from tot time cockie races. And as often as the ships would fumigate, R.C.N.H., (the hospital) N.R.E. (research establishment), and the department of health were constantly trying to determine what ingredient in the fumigating chemical was attracting the critters. Cockies didn’t seem to like aluminum stand up lockers too much except for around the bottoms. Maybe they didn’t like the heights but then we’re baffled as to why they were all over the messes and the galley fiddley up top, as well? But didn’t they go big bundles on those wooden settees . . .the motel. Especially the stokers’ real wingers, the Bombay runners. In the settees, every man’s boot locker was stowed with everything except boots, for fear of oiling your folded ‘whites’. Every time you went to your locker, you’d shake the guy sleeping on it, open the flip top lid and there, two dozen of ‘em would scurry looking for cover on the underside of the wooden locker coaming. Action? Out Zippo . . .strike a flame and run it round the undersides. Snap, crackle, ‘n pop! Carefully lift out your folded fives upon which lay the pyro-deceased. Convey hearse with dead cargo to nearest gash bucket. Remove the cover, shake flagrantly into gash bucket (do so in forenoons and just prior to evening rounds as gash has now been ditched) and return unloaded hearse to stowage. Shut lid. Do not return to settee locker for further execution for at least five minutes. Inform sleeping stoker of your intentions.

The cockies ran rampant because food was everywhere. Broadside messing dictated that as well as having a second galley aft for the wardroom as well as the skipper’s pantry, the bakery adjacent to the main galley was the most popular restaurant in the ship. Here is where I met a good friend named LSCK John Madison. John was an Officer’s Cook as opposed to a Ship’s Cook, and because of the quality and imagination of his gastronomic fare, he was relegated to Baker (Duff Cook), a heralded and esteemed appointment in the cook’s trade. I well remember that first

Christmas when John baked fruit cakes . . . at a price of course. They were so enhanced with brandy and pusser's rum that after three bites, you'd be burblin' for a week. John also insisted that had the Coxswain ever wanted to drag him up to the Jimmy's table for lacin' his cakes with the queen's property, he'd have to be very honest. When it came to placing his hand on the bible in swearing to the truth, he'd pretend it was a cookbook.

This isn't to say that John was a cockroach, but because of the fine fare and ingredients he worked with the big and three-badge senior cockies hung out at "John's." He said that war was on and twice a day, he would run masking tape around the bakery bulkheads at counter level and fold the top half, sticky side out. He would dot the tape with morsels of dried fruit and cake sprinkles and in five minutes, would tear off the tape, run it out onto the fo'c'sle break around the corner and fling it over the side. This took two hands, and there was such a howling gang on the run of tape one day that the lifebuoy sentry piped, "Man Overboard!"

"Hockey night" was day n' night alongside

Leading Stoker H.O. "Willy" Williams from St. Hubert Quebec, was our killick of the mess. What he said, went. He was a three-badger as well, and was seen as God himself. He had joined the RCN in the late forties, sailed in *Quebec*, served in *Iroquois* during the Korean war, and later commissioned the caddie', *Saguenay*. To us odes, he had done it all and we were always anxious to steam with him down in the 'pit'. He had paid his dues and was seen as one hell of a Quiggin 'vaps watchkeeper who could hammer out two tons of 'feed' per hour. He was also a boiler water tender and as a killick in those days, that ability was something that made him stand out amongst the other killicks for normally, such watches were stood by P2EM2's at the least. He was our link to the chief stoker, the chief tiff, and the gingerbeer, LCDR John McInnis. Any time there was something to be done, Willy was summoned by either of the two chiefs. What a divisional system! Willy was a single man and loved it. He always talked about his mother and of course, the Montreal Canadiens. His idols were Beliveau, Dickie Moore, and Bill Durnan and if Willy got to have a tot or two or got into some homemade gear room brew, it was hockey night in the after lower. Willy ordered it. Out corn brooms, and a mangled veggie tin became the puck. The 'mick-rack' became a backstop and Willy was the goalie complete with shin pads

made from Crowsnest magazines, with his 'wet' to the right. As he was part of the ship's hockey team that actually played on ice, there was no better hockey challenge than stopping shots in the mess . . . and boy we sure got 'em passed him. Whatever you were dressed in was acceptable within the rules. Boiler suits, paint-smeared No.5's, night clothing, skivvy shirt and dungs', or even just a towel as you came back down from the washplace after a blowdown and descale. Such excitement as hockey night in the after lower often pre-empted the function of getting dressed to play. After a few good checks, or somebody lunging at you as you sped down the starboard side with broom in hand headin' for all-star goalie Willy. Your towel was now gone and there you were, without even a jockstrap, but in glory over gettin' another one by Willy after three ricochets off inherent shins. Those cans hurt more than hatch coamings and gave you 'cruiser shins.'

Slack hammocks and big eats

A few months went by when finally, news came that we as a mess were going to merge with the electrician's mates and this new found trade called Hull Mechanics. We were to take up residence leaving the very confined port wing mess to the spacious and more luxurious, 'after lower'. Luxurious, for no longer would we live above the fuel and the fuel tanks, but of the forty slinging spots, everybody would sling in the air and we'd be living above the "4-inch magazine." I was actually going to have my sky bag slung somewhere in the middle of the starboard side forward quarter numbered 15 mess. Perks were starting. I now had a chance to use my 'mick-stick' and home-made pillow that 'my party' ashore made for me. Sleep became an enjoyable thing again, so much so that alertness in the short hours after a middle watch was never a factor when the lights went on in the morning. The seamen P.O.'s used to love to come down the stokers' mess lookin' for slack hammocks. One morning, 'Buffer' appeared. He demanded of Willy, "Leading Seaman Williams! Don't you get these men turned out when Wakey-Wakey is piped?" "Well buffer . . ." replied Willy, thoughtfully, "That depends on what's for breakfast." Another time, P.O. "Guns" Mariner from Oshawa, (wotta name!) had been down twice, thumpin' 'micks and hollerin' his head off to get us all turned out. I wasn't aware of anything until I felt this horrible rattle and was handed a piece of rope to hold onto. It was the standing end of my stern sheet where the half hitch had been undone

presented to me by “Guns” with compliments. Down I slid gently, along with the contents of my hammock all over the deck.

But the perks weren’t really perks yet and to emphasize, I was still a U.A., which meant that whenever alongside in a foreign port, leave for me was up at 0100. That wasn’t so bad in light of missing out on something good ashore, because when you got back on board, you could sling your ‘mick and climb in at the convenience of an uncluttered and near empty mess. The bulk of the hands were still ashore enjoying themselves, but when they’d all come back gigglin’ at varying times from two until five in the morning, the hunger pangs would start. About the ship they’d meander looking for a chicken or piece of meat from the galley. Then some spuds, maybe a carrot or an onion or two, and commence to practice their gourmet capabilities by making a “bubble and squeak” in a fanny on the hotplate that was inches below my ‘mick. Again, you’d never say a word, for if you did, they’d just turn the heat up or even offer you a boiled onion on the end of a fork with half a can of warm beer. The party would get noisier and the remarks would start. On went the S.R.E., or maybe a broom ball game would start. Then suddenly in protest to the din of the greasies’ mess came a pile of gash, food scraps, and beer cans down the ladder from the seamen’s mess up top. With a “Clunk! Clunk!” in order to shake out the last contents from a steel gash bucket, a very loud accompanying statement in a very irritable tone requested, “Will you fukkin’ stokers shitt’n’it?”

My first tot

Through the course of three centuries, many customs, traditions, and regulations transcended from the Royal Navy into the commonwealth ones as the British Empire expanded and gained in supremacy. As those navies developed in their Victorian and Edwardian youthfulness, assimilated also was the custom of the daily rum ration. Rum, beer, wine, and brandy in the British navy came from a need to combat scurvy during long voyages at sea and dates back to the 1700’s. However, the price to pay for its then medicinal purpose, meant that sailors of yore became rowdy and quarrelsome. Like many captains in HM Ships, Admiral Lord Nelson in *Victory* handed out much corporal punishment to his crew for drunkenness. Had he known that in a short time to come however, the navy’s demon bubbly would serve another purpose after all. Upon his gallant death at Trafalgar, his body was returned to

England aboard HMS *Pickle* in a casket of rum to preserve or ‘pickle’ his remains. We will pause here for a moment and relate something unique about my family tree. According to my mother, she had often reminded me of one of the reasons why I probably joined the navy is that Lord Nelson was a distant relation . . . and the sea was in my blood. There are oft times however, that I wish not to lay to such claim because although the Admiral loved both King and country, he is equally reputed as having been a lover of his men too . . . especially “Hardy” . . .and that worries me.

Meanwhile in 1831, rum finally became the sole choice of the Admiralty and its pussers. It beat out the rival options of ‘skunky’ beer, wine, and brandy as the Royal Navy’s daily spirit issue. Quarrelling and insubordination persisted and the grogram-attired Admiral Vernon, in attempts to calm down his drunken sailors, dallied with dilution. This watered-down concoction became known as “grog.” By 1881, officers as well as men below twenty years of age were excluded from the ration. Still, scurvy had the potential to loom large and for those no longer entitled, another but non-intoxicating means of immunity from becoming scorbutic had to be considered. Lime juice was introduced. By the twentieth century the need for rum gradually transformed into a custom. Healthful food and water preservation had improved in both quality and quantity at sea, and scurvy became extinct. When the Royal Canadian Navy came into being in 1910, it also adopted the custom of “the tot” that remained until its demise on the last day of the fiscal year in 1971.

When I was nineteen years old, we were at sea off Bermadoo and “Splice the Main Brace.” had been piped throughout the fleet. It was in 1960, and it had something to do with Prince Charles. Being UA, I couldn’t draw, but like RN nozzers, was entitled to “limers” instead. The concoction was made from cordial or powder and I assumed it would be present at the tot table. I wanted to be part of this very royal occasion whether it was rum I wouldn’t get, or “limers,” just to celebrate in custom and tradition. I stood in the tot line with all the guys with a mug feeling part of it all, and they thinking it must have been my twentieth birthday. When it came my turn in declaring my name and mess number, CPO1 Bungy the coxswain, the rum officer and ‘Jimmy Bungs’ the whittler, all looked up at me in disbelief. The coxswain quickly asked, “Brown! What are you doing here?” I replied, “Came to get my ‘limers’ ‘swain!” They each looked at one another and everybody in the line started to roll up. A tub of “limers” hadn’t been prepared with the belief that’s alright in the old days, but nobody in the “modern era” would ever come forward

looking for a sour and bitter tot of what used to be a youthful treat aboard ship nearly eighty years earlier. To save congestion, time, and trying to find some cordial, the three of them had a quick huddle and in seconds, made a decision. I was issued with my first tot. As I began to head aft with the lads to scupper my ‘splicers’, the ‘swain got the last word in when he said, “Brown! You’re up to no good!” He had a hard time in hiding his smirk, and I had yet to overcome my surprise, disbelief and delight!

Splice the Main Brace. . . a bit of history

As did all others, great sailing ships of the Royal Navy were propelled by the wind in their sails. They were secured to the “yards” and trimmed with “braces” that ran from the ends of the yards down to the upper deck. Aboard a first-rate man-o-war, it goes then that the main brace was the largest and heaviest of all the rigging. Having a 20-inch diameter and having to splice it, was one of the most difficult tasks on board. When from shot engaged in battle, damage to the braces made the ship difficult to proceed. For those gallant seamen who, under such arduous conditions, did “splice the main brace” were to receive a second issue of rum. It then became custom to do so prior to battle, after victory, and in recognition of a job well done.

Today in celebration by Royalty to the entire fleet including the Canadian Navy, or by rewarding a ship’s company in granting a “Splicers,” such a ship at sea would precede the event by hoisting the signal, “Splice the Main Brace!” eg: flags Alpha, then Delta, the 2 and then 8. And of great interest to the occupants of sea-going wardrooms, unlike the daily rum issue once assigned to the lower deck only, a “Splicers” includes issue to the ship’s officers. Now that’s scary! “Welcome to the mess Sir.”

“The Dhobey Business”

Well into the following year, some killicks had changed around. Willy had left to go up on a TG 3 course along with two other staunch killicks named Frank Coady and Bill Orgar. Reliefs arrived with three-badged Eric Harmon to replace our Willy as killick of the mess. A budding stoker

by the name of Bob Laurie, and the very well know individual known as “the Old Dog,” Charlie Ward also joined.

“The Dog,” in years later, would become the long-standing “professor in the foundry” at FMG after *Cape Scott* paid off to scrap. He was a typical matelot who took everything in stride and coasted along with a mettle that every matelot should have. His constant, kidding smile was emphasized with an off-angled tooth and every time you might think his ire was raised, it wasn’t, with a gravel-ly, monotone voice that simply said to everybody, “Just leave it to the Ole’ Dog. Everythin’s fine!” The “Ole’ Dog” wasn’t prepared to sit back either. Just like anybody else who had the inclination to enterprise, there was money to be made if you did it right by offering a good service without over-exerting yourself and saving some energy for the navy as well.

Like any good killick stoker with initiative, he needed a gopher, so he came to me with a well-thought-out plan. “Brownie! . . . ‘You any good at cleanin’ hammocks? Wanna make some money?’” I looked at Charlie and was delighted that he would put faith in me (as a gopher) and asked, “Sure! What do I have to do Charlie?” He went on to explain that we were to draw out a whoopee-sized, galvanized gash bucket from dockyard stores and hump it down to No.1 boiler room. There we would make a ‘sujee’ of soft soap, teepol, pusser’s hard, and ship’s laundry dhobey dust beefed up with a quart or two of “Gamlin-G” bilge cleaner and a handful of “Oakite.” After it was mixed with water, we’d run a copper drain line from the recip’ auxiliary feed pump and coil it around the inside of the bucket of sujee. Next, we’d crack open the supply from the saturated steam range, enough so that the drain coil would get the bucket of sujee up to temperature and, “Boil the shit out of them scaley hammocks!” for about ten minutes.

“Well, that sounds simple enough Charlie . . . and it sure beats scrubbin’ ‘em on your hands and knees.” I said, “. . .but how are we going to get the sujee out?” “Easy!” he replied. “Hang ‘em from the overhead fuel line to the boiler with coat hangers, hook up a garden hose from the fresh water main, rinse em off, and voila . . . clean hammocks . . .fifty cents each!” I asked, “Well what about the Chief ERA?” “What’s he gonna say?” Charlie looked at me with that gleam in his eye and a crafty grin and said, “Don’t worry about ole’ Lindsay. He never does rounds down there!” The stokers knew that because of all the diesel fuel leaks in No.1 boiler room, it posed a fire risk. We seldom used that boiler and there was no need for anybody to go down there . . . especially the Chief ERA doing his rounds.

So anytime we were at sea, the hammock business became a modest enterprise with a clientele of eager customers. The Ole' Dog had "arranged it," so that we were on the same watch and we could work together on the off-watch hours. My main duties were rinsing, pick-up and delivery, and turning over the money to the manager at the rate of two dozen sky-bags a day. The Ole' Dog stayed on station in No. 1 dhobey-house, canoe-paddling the micks about in this bubbling, festering, and revolting blob like a round shouldered, tee-heeing witch without any drawers on.

Then one night, we had just come off the last dog watch and the movie was flashed in the after upper, with everybody engrossed and the gangways clear. What a grand time to put in a good three hours and look forward to an "all-night in." The Ole' Dog was labouriously ramming more hummy micks into the red hot, bubbling sujeer, then passing them out to me for rinsing. Suddenly, rays of light started to shoot all over the space. We looked up at the catwalk above and there, was a blinding flashlight and a thundering voice that bellowed. **"Wot tha' fuck's goin' on down here?"** For the first time in naval engineering history, it was Chief Lindsay doing rounds of No.1. We wondered at his presence. The slow build-up of heat from the steam drain as well as the sujeer bucket and its aroma had worked its way through the boiler room hatch and out into the flat above. The Chief had felt this waft of warmth and smelled the hum as he passed by above and became curious and went below. When he came to realize that we were uneconomically tapping pressure from the saturated steam range and liberally flailing domestic water all over the space, that did it. **"Right!"** he said. **"Shut this bastard down . . . right fukkin' now . . .and I want you two bastards to get rid of this gunk in the gash bucket!"** The Ole' Dog looked at the chief with that continuing grin and gravelled, "Yeah, okay chief. We'll dump it in the bilge." The chief looked at me sternly and then gazed at Charlie and said, **"No ya' won't. Tomorrow mornin', I want that goddam thing humped outta here and dumped over the side! I'll be watchin', so best start thinkin' of what ya' got to do!"** Charlie started to look for some answers. "We both got the forenoon watch chief!" Chief said, **"That's fine. Then after ya' turn to in the afternoon, you can ditch it durin' the first dog at 1600!"**

Well the jig was up and we estimated that this bucket of gunk must have come in at around three hundred pounds and the distance to the escape hatch at the top of the boiler room had to be near thirty feet on vertical ladders. What were we to do? The next day at 1600, Chief

Lindsay was there to watch us so that not one drop would go into the bilge. We had to disconnect guardrails, brackets, and lazy-rods . . . rig a block and tackle, a come-along, and two handy billies, then eventually get this mass of weight out through the escape hatch. It took almost two hours, and as we inched the slopping vessel onto the 'iron deck' at the break of the fo'c'sle, everybody standing in the supper line at the galley were rolled up watchin' two foiled stokers trying to do seaman riggin' stuff. We had to then break the guardrail, with more unfamiliarity, in order to pour the gunk over the side. Finally, after a lot of sweat and cut fingers, this mass of mucous-like slime came barrelling out of the bucket in one big blob, and over the side in a resounding ker-ploosh. Applause and hoorays were heard from every direction as Chief Lindsay looked at us with that legendary smirk and said, **"Now you two can put the boiler room back together and return gear . . . I'm goin' fer supper!"** By 1930, we had done so, missed our supper, and looked at being back down on watch at 2000 for the First'. We both caned extra 'vap watches for a month and reverted to our hands and knees again, scrubbin' micks with the rest of the crew who otherwise agreed that it was fifty cents well spent.

Chief Lindsay on the other hand, was a very fair man in making us realize that don't ever take advantage of any situation at the expense of skirting his responsibilities. He had done all this with a bit of a smile in his eyes in knowing that as crafty as we had been, we didn't pull the wool over his eyes! He was a grand old soul who never interfered with the mainstream of the branch. He left that to the ERAs and Chief Stoker McGinn. He had only just come aboard and was a likeable sort. He had relieved the outgoing "Lofty" Fraser who had commissioned the ship as Chief ERA. There was a hairy story about this Lofty, that's worthy of some attention.

"When ya' snooze . . . ya' loose!"

Lofty had very little chin to speak of so he had a long-chosen decision to cover this abnormality with a very well-kept beard, one of which he was most proud of. He spent hours grooming its contours as well as waxing the curb-feelers of the accompanying pristine moustache. On an earlier trip, the ship was in Naples. He had had a skinful and then went ashore. He decided to go to a hairdresser's and be coddled and looked after by a traditional Italian barber with an assurance that his good-

looking facial hair would receive the attention to essentials that only European barbers provide.

With some difficulty because of a language barrier, the barber began his work, desperately adhering to Lofty's pre-task, beard-trimming instructions. After a few moments in the chair, Lofty became overwhelmed with a warm and fuzzy desire to have a kip. In a sleeping trance, his head slowly drooped to the right and remained that way for well over an hour. When he awoke, the barber was busy at another chair and in his bewilderment, Lofty with a horrible kink in his neck, half-hazedly peered into the huge mirror on the barber shop wall. He was clean-shaven on the left with a full half a beard on the right. "Ah-ha Mr. Canada!" said the barber. "You awaka finally. I finish you uppa . . .O.K?"

"Movie stars"

The Hollywood production, **The Great Impostor** was made in 1960. It featured Tony Curtis as Ferdinand Waldo Demara. He, among several other fraudulent acknowledgements, without any medical qualifications, posed as the ship's medical officer, Surgeon Lt. J.C. Cyr RCN, aboard HMCS *Cayuga* during the Korean War. When film crews arrived in Halifax to shoot the film, *Cayuga* was refitting at Halifax Shipyards therefore negating any opportunity for the "star" ship to represent herself on the silver screen. HMCS *Athabaskan* was assigned as her photogenic replacement. By completing the tail of the number "9" in her side number 219 to read 218, and then fishing out and displaying her talleyboards, crests, and kisbey rings from *Cayuga*'s refit layapart stores, the cosmetics were now complete. One can't be sure if the film was to be produced in winning an Oscar for authenticity however, because there were many flaws in the finished product that just weren't RCN. In several scenes, a rogue bridge kisbey clearly exhibited H.M.S.S. Cayuga. MGM was absolutely sure, that somehow, "Her Majesty" was involved in this Canadian sea-going possession, but whether the follow-on initials "S.S." became confused with the "S.S." in "U.S.S." or that the Hollywood moguls concluded that *Cayuga* was clearly a (S)team(S)hip, they were convinced enough that they avoided the embarrassment of having to ask stupid questions. All they had to do to hide that was use a ready-made one from *Cayuga*. Less noticeable, but equally ignored for asking for further technical assistance, was the mild misdemeanour of a backdrop

ship's officer of the time, who sported a very un-RCN moustache. "Disgraceful!"

HMCS *Micmac* became the "at sea" camera platform and was the setting for the internal shots for the full-length feature. We were very surprised in *Micmac*, as *Athabaskan*'s physical condition was clean and pristine both inside and out, but then *Cayuga* herself was probably as mankey as *Micmac* . . . especially in Korea where Demara's deceptions occurred. We guessed it took less "paint and bodies" to change a nine to an eight than it did to wipe out the four and paint a whole new eight. The other mystery was that nobody ever saw Tony Curtis aboard. Maybe it was Ferdinand posing as Tony. Oh, the magic of Hollywood!

Lost at sea

As earlier touched upon, OS "Yogi" Jelinek, the brother of Otto, was lost at sea. Although Yogi was an electrician's mate, he was doing his six-month trick as Chiefs' messman. At about 1230, on a cold but breezy-clear day, he was on his way aft to ditch the dinner time gash over the stern through the gash-shute. There was no restriction on ditching gash then, except under exercise or indeed, war-time constraints. We had just completed a local exercise with other ships in the squadron along with *Bonnie* and a few frigates. The revolution counter in the engine room began to ring hurriedly to increase to maximum revolutions indicating we were headed back to Halifax. Along with the rapid rise in revs' came a 'wheel hard-over' as indicated by the extraordinary heel we took on to pick up a reciprocal course. Spare gear lockers and toolboxes broke their lashings and along with tea cups, flashlights, and wheel spanners . . . everything slid violently to the starboard side and into the bilges with a clatter. A five-gallon container of silverene paint then lost its lid and spewed out across the engine room platform making it slippery under foot while adding an acrid, eye-watering stink. What a mess! A few seconds had passed, the ship righted herself, and a sudden decrease in revolutions were rung down. 'Duds' was going apeshit and cursed to no end. **"Wot 'a those silly bawstards upta now? 'Can't even drive right! 'Oughta be back in navy' school, that's wot! Bleedin' awsoles . . . mumble-mumble!"**

Then across the engine room he hollered, **"Buster! Get up top 'n see wot the bloody 'ell's goin' on!"** I clambered up the starboard ladder with paint dripping from my steamin' boots, leaving silvered steps for every

one I took. When I got to the top of the hatch, I soon realized that the ship's company had cleared lower decks to man the boat falls, for everybody was strung out along the length of the 'iron deck' at 'falls in hand'. I made eye contact with John "Greek" Elyk, a sonar rate and said, "What's goin' on Greek?" He glared at me with both fear and excitement in his eyes and replied: "Yogi just went over the side!" As irony would have it, Greek and Yogi were the very best of "wingers" who went everywhere and did everything together. Of all people to have to ask.

It seemed that Yogi was transiting the after canopy on the starboard side when the heavy turn prompted a 'green one' to smash him up against the spent shell-casing cage of the after canopy and then, wash him over the side. OS 'Mac' McCormick, a gunner, was the lifebuoy sentry and leapt down eight feet from his station on the 3"50 gun deck. He was within two feet of grasping Yogi's hand that clung to a stanchion directly above the revving' up, starboard propeller . . . before he lost grip and fell away.

Along with *Crescent*, *Lauzon*, *Lanark*, and *Bonnie*, we would maintain a search for Yogi until nightfall. Although it was a sunny day, the sea temperature ranged around 45 degrees F. and the prevailing 'northerlies' carried a very cold wind chill. As well as helos from *Bonnie*, all ships had lowered sea boats and motor cutters. With all of the anxiety, we had difficulty getting our whaler away and a couple of the lads went in. The coxswain of the boat had failed to pass the correct sequence of orders causing the disengaging gear to release 'bows first' and swamp the boat. Able Seaman Bart' Wainwright, a very close friend, went in after the coxswain without any buoyancy equipment and LS 'Percy' Williams followed Wainwright with a heaving line. Bart had lost his wallet that day and inside was a cherished \$20 bill that he'd been saving to take some leave with. After those brisk recoveries, conditions and emotions further increased, and Yogi's time in the water became a serious factor. "Curly" MacGregor the buffer, offered some timely humour to ease the tensions, and rightly so. "It's so cold out there that we oughta put mitts on the oar blades so we don't get oar frost!" There was a time soon after when "Man Overboard" was piped, that *Crescent* had drawn close to Yogi and threw a heaving line across to him, but numbed from the cold and in delirium, he never had the sense or ability to grasp it. He was never seen again. The messdecks that night were silent and the squadron sin-bos'n, Padre Faraday who was riding us, meandered about the messdecks to offer prayer and support. It was comforting of his presence. We had lost a shipmate.

The price of an empty washplace

One afternoon, day-running off Osborne Head, I had just come off watch and the ship was about to engage in a 4" gun shoot. Not involved in any way, I headed to the mess and got ready to have a shower. When I got back up to the stoker's washplace, I heard reports flying back and forth from the ops room to the T.S. [Transmitting Station] which was just across the passage from the washplace. In the T.S. were all the RC rates being directed by none other than P1GI "Jerry" Lavery, the well-known and devout product of Whale Island in Portsmouth and Royal Naval Barracks in Chatham.



The washplace was small but adequate. It had two sinks and a shower stall and because of its compactness, the single steam-driven radiator mounted on the ship's side below the single scuttle made the compartment warm and surprisingly cosy when you had the whole place to yourself . . . and no elbows in your ears. I was just filling the basin to have a scrape when I heard among the litany of gunnery orders,

something like, **“Surface target bears green nine-zero. Range . . . five thousand yards. A and B guns train on the target and fire when ready.”** Immediately, my curiosity took over and as the washplace was on the starboard side, I decided to pause from shaving and have a ‘boo at how far we would miss the target. It reminded me of the time when we fired a Mk. 9*, 21 in. warhead torpedo at an iceberg, and we missed it by 1,000 yards. The bridge blamed the engine room for having too many revs’ up on the turn. The engine room argued, “Ya’ can’t steer right!”

I peered through the opened scuttle in anticipation and as it was a clear day, visibility was that good that I could see the target in its long tow from a “Glen” tug. All of a sudden, a twin salvo let go from B mount which was directly above. shock and vibration rattled everything around me with bits of insulating cork and chips of paint cascading down and flying about. As the scuttle was open, so was the deadlight, loosely secured by its chain but two inches above my head.

As deadlights are constructed so as to “deaden the light” when in the shut position, they also served as an integral part of the ship’s structure. As such, they were fabricated robustly and were very, very heavy. The vibration shook the chain from the yoke that held the opened deadlight in a perpendicular position so that it swung down in all of its force right on top of my head. In the process, not only did I experience this horrible “crack on the bonce,” but because my tongue wasn’t where it should have been, I managed to bite it as well. I thought, “That’s the end of that skylark!”, and after rubbing my crown and sticking my sore tongue back in the back of my throat, I decided to keep my station as a stoker and not be attracted to guns, chordite, and severely-missed targets. “Serves you right, Brown!” I said in a muffled breath.

I returned to my shave at the sink and seconds later, another salvo was fired. More cork, more paint, and this time the shaving mirror light bulb shattered with a puff of smoke and all the splinters of glass fell into the shaving water just as I was bringing my brush out of the glass splintered water and up to my ‘moosh’. Then in an instant with more cackle and hollerin’ over the tannoys, another blast let go and now the washplace door came flying in with the aid of some startled hand who was innocently passing by. He stomped onto my flip-flopped feet with his steamin’ boots and at the same time, the latch on the door dug into my hip while the bottom corner of this 1/4” thick steel door gouged into my shin. That was the last time I ever went to shock and descale in an empty washplace during Gun Action.

Iron deck' ...awash as usual

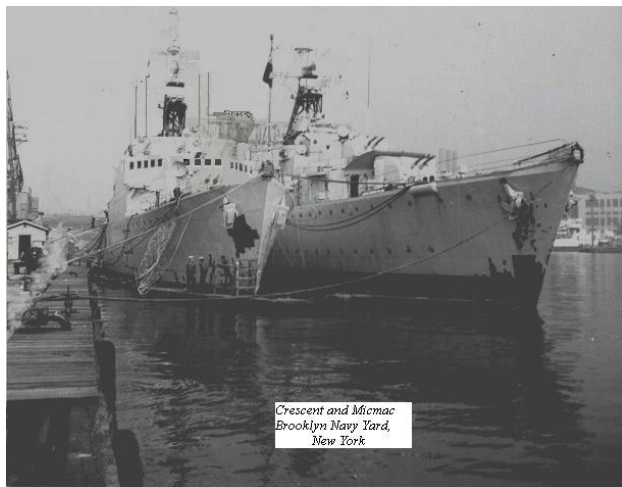
We had just returned from a trip down south for the Christmas run. The raging North Atlantic storm of 1959 that almost capsized *Bonnie*', and heavily damaged *Algonquin*, *Iroquois*, and *Atha-bee* had also taken its toll on us. The underway prang with *Cayuga* off Bermadoo in an attempt at a "mail" jackstay transfer, caused plate damage and a whole gaggle of rivets to pop, in the whittlers', and sparkers' forward lower messdeck. After shoring up and using hammocks to stop the oggin from coming in on the roll, we then headed north to Boston with *Crescent* and then Brooklyn Navy Yard for Xmas rabbits at the PX and a run ashore. In transit from Brooklyn to Halifax, we met up with that same raging storm that not only smashed a new-fangled, fibreglass whaler in two that was shipped in its davits, but more seriously caused plate buckling and further superficial damage to the already weakened freeboard of the starboard prow. The low freeboard 'iron deck' had been out of bounds for four days with a well-received Pipe Down each day. Going on watch to No.2 or No.3 boiler rooms were the lone watchkeeping compartments anywhere in the ship that were only accessible from the 'iron deck' as all other stations were accessed by the raised catwalk that bridged the forward super-structure to the upper deck of the after canopy. It took brave stokers to go out on the awash 'iron deck'. Hoping that while you were wobbling aft with a "monkey's fist" and then wrestling with the water tight door to get into the air-lock above the boiler room, five Hail Mary's and a pair of Our Fathers were mumbled in quick-time in hope that some great big green bastard didn't come over the 'uppers' and take you back over the side with it. Once you were safe and sound on the boiler room deck plates in front of the furnace, it was assuring to know that you were still aboard because the guy you were relieving happily acknowledged your presence. You'd pinch yourself to see if you were really there and not lying on the bottom of the Continental Shelf. Once that was done, now you would have to battle for the next four hours while streams of sea water came splaying forth out of the forced-draught turbo fan discharges, the boiler room crew all donned in oilskins and/or weather-jackets. So, with all that external damage, we went alongside the N.A.D. gun wharf as plates and T-frames that formed the ship's side were to be replaced. This now exposed the upper and forward lower messes to the weather outside and life like it was, we still had to live aboard regardless of the winter weather. It would be three days before the messes were 'boxed up'. You have to let your imagination do the rest as snow

and rain, discarded fibreglass insulation, arc-weld smoke and residue, and unpainted primer-ed steel became unwanted additions to the necessities of slinging a hammock and eating your meals in the same compartment. I spent most of my off-duty time in No.1 boiler room where it was a little quieter as well as some warmth being provided from the shore-fed saturated steam range supplying the galley and laundry.

Hank's humiliation

During that period, the ship's company was to bear witness to the results of enforcement of naval discipline still at its archaic best. A/B "Hank" Snow, a two-badged RP, got weighed off and escorted to the ranch up in 'Gagetown. He was sentenced to 90 days in chokey for doing the same thing as our gibberin' oppo in the basket . . . sleeping on watch. Being an RP and directly involved with navigation, I suppose the reasons why Hank was asleep might have had something to do with why such a harsh degree of punishment was awarded . . . What an award! What was chilling, and a grim signal to the ship's company however, was how he got weighed off.

We cleared lower decks to the fo'c'sle and fell in on the cable deck facing aft. Up on B gun deck in front of the mount was the setting for this



occasion for which I, and everybody else there, will never forget. A yellow flag fluttered from a mainmast halyard in the cool grey wintery air, signifying that the ship's company was bearing witness to punishment. The dockies were over the side on stagings or down on the jetty

working on the plating. When the ship's company was brought to attention, they downed their tools and in awe, assumed their rubber-necked positions in the peanut gallery. There was only one thing missing. In days of yore, the thunder of a single gun, the "Rogue's Salute"

signalled the fleet in harbour that punishment was about to be administered. It did not take place at “Colours” that morning.

Hank was at the “Ho,” staring directly ahead and shamefully avoiding eye contact with any of his shipmates. Also present were the Captain, First Lieutenant, and Divisional Officer. In arm-stretched distance and facing inboard toward Hank, was the Coxswain. The ‘Swain then read out the charges that he had been found “guilty as charged,” followed by the sentence of ninety days detention . . . then, here it came. Able Seaman Snow’s cap was handed over and the ship’s tally was removed. The bare cap was replaced upon his head. Next, a sharp device was produced when ‘Swain then went on to remove his two good conduct badges and Canada flashes. Then Hank was ordered to disconnect his collar and silk from their moorings. The coxswain then stripped them from his uniform.

Humiliation! Hank stood there trembling, feeling naked, with the most dishevelled look on a man’s face for all to see. He was deemed “a disgrace,” as interpreted by “Queen’s Regulations . . . Royal Canadian Navy,” and exhibited to be as such in the eyes of the ship’s company. He had been raped of insignia, his ship, and . . . his dignity. It was live testimony to the grim reality of the extremes of the then existing naval justice system at work. It had but one other thing missing with the “Rogue’s Salute”: A muffled drum.

“Gimme yer cards!”

Time went on and now it was my turn to get introduced to ‘Birds’. You just weren’t a hairy bag unless you got run in the shit at least once . . . with a lot more to follow. Since I had joined the navy, I was doing a pretty good job of stayin’ out of the rattle. Every time I saw guys turning out at oh five dubs, to go out and muster on the ‘iron deck’ in the freezing cold to scrub out somewhere, or sweep down the uppers unless they were out of bounds and the wind would assist you, it was enough to gag a maggot and guide you in keepin’ a clean slate.

Joe Snooks was a good oppo and a fine run ashore. It was a very cold Saturday night and Joe and I had spent all of the day around the Seagull and the Morris Lunch café. By 2300, we found ourselves without transport back to the ship. With a buck between us, the #11 trolley to Dartmouth done for the night and no ferries running in the harbour, we started to walk. We had to battle a north wind and deep snow all the way up Barrington, across the bridge and down to N.A.D. We got back

onboard just after midnight and headed below to find that in the dimly-lit port side aft corner of the mess were a bunch of the guys sitting around the table murmuring to each other and partaking in a gear room brew. The brew was a modest amount of home-made beer that was normally put together by the single watchkeepers who steamed the space at sea. As they were only visited once per day by Chief Lindsay doing his space rounds, the gear room offered its facilities as a discreet doubling for a smalley brewery house. Joe and I, starboard forward, began to sling our micks and agreed to help get thawed out to wettin' a cup of tea with some toast and Pickaninny before turning in. What we didn't know is that just before we had arrived in the mess, the Duty PO, PO2 Wynnyk (Torpedo Armourer) had been down there and told the boys in the corner to get turned in. He had also announced we found out later that when he returned in ten minutes, "Anybody not turned in, 'll be in the shit!"

Down came Wynnyk and said assuredly, **"Right you lot. You're all in the shit. Gimme yer cards!"** He collected a bunch to the dismay of the disdainers. He then turned toward Joe and I who were sitting on the settee with a blanket wrapped 'round, eating our toast and tea and said, "and you two as well . . . Gimme yer cards!"

To give up that card meant that you didn't know when you'd ever see it again. It was your means of breathing and without it, you'd never get ashore along with "stoppage of grog" as well . . .if you were "G." Difficult to comprehend but without a station card, there existed feelings of emptiness, inadequacy, and even loneliness. The time it would take before the First-Lieutenant decided to have defaulters and the numbers of days of punishment awarded would all add up to an unknown period that you became deprived of the world and everything upon it. Aggression was a temptation. The ship would now evolve into a hateful prison and daily life became an unsolicited burden of manual labour. We tried in vain to explain that we just came off shore and were about to get turned in . . .but that didn't help. Because the lights were so dim, we imagined that he thought we were part of the brew-party and he wasn't about to listen to any excuses. We turned in our cards knowing that leave was stopped tomorrow, Sunday, and that we'd be "up on the mat" sometime at the convenience and pleasure of the First-Lieutenant. In his eyes, however, this incident would require immediate attention. How could I allege of the injustice?

So on Monday we got into No.2's (negative lanyards), and everybody mustered for defaulters in the after canopy. My God, wasn't it crowded back there? There must have been about fifteen bods, and everybody was

called out individually in alphabetical order. It was the “Jimmy’s Table” . . . and he was joined by divisional officers and the new coxswain, CPO1 “Dusty” Miller, a misplaced G.I.

“**Able Seaman Brown!**”, came this air-shattering demand for my front and centre presence. “**Sir!**” I replied, and taking one pace forward and turning aft, marched to the foot of the table and halted at the ‘Ho. I stood there trembling, feeling odd that I’m not to salute, while First Lieutenant, LCdr Rod Bays, eyed me up and down.

“**Defaulter . . .Off. . .Cap!**” the coxswain ordered at the top of his lungs, just in case I was up in the forepeak. Nervously, I removed my cap and before I even got it down to my side, he began to ramble off the charges, not one . . .but three. It took you to the tone of “**Able Seaman . . . Kidd! One pace forward . . .skid! Off . . .lid! In that he did . . .**” The Jimmy looked up at me again and said very quietly, “Brown . . . I’m very surprised at you. I never thought you were the type to be involved in something like this. The duty PO clearly required that when he returned to the mess on Saturday night that you were to be “slung and turned in.” You disobeyed that order. What do you have to say for yourself?” Standing rigidly, my eyes looked for an answer and caught a glimpse of the ‘Swain who took a breath and glared at me. “Well sir! . . .Able Seaman Snooks and I just came back aboard that night and . . .we were slinging our micks and . . .and . . .when the Duty P.O. came down the ladder and . . . and said, Gimme your cards! You’re not turned in.” The First Lieutenant then conferred with my D.O. and the coxswain for a quick moment, resumed his position behind the table and sternly pronounced, “I find the accused guilty under section 119 of Q.R.C.N. Seven days “number fives” . . .fourteen days “number sixes” and a fifteen dollar fine!” “You bastard!” I said to myself. The coxswain then barked, “**Defaulter . . .On . . .Cap! Right . . .turn! . . .Dis . . . missed! Defaulter . . .Report to the Coxswain’s office flat!**”

I did so with reluctance, to get myself recorded and detailed on muster times. Seven days’ No. 5’s meant extra work and fourteen days No. 6’s was stoppage of leave which the pusser, just to be nice, allowed both to be run concurrently. What really hurt was the fifteen dollars and that would whittle me down to drawing only \$35.00 when it was time to “toe the line.” There were eight musters per day whether at sea or alongside. The routine was, that you were supplementing the daily duty watches with musters for verification and just to make it all a pain in the ass. First muster of the day was at 0530 to scrub out the main flats and washplaces before everybody turned out at “Wakey! Wakey!” at 0630. Then you’d

muster again at 0730, 1150, 1230 (for extra work), 1630 (for fire drill), 1900 (clean up for rounds), 2000 (stand by for rounds), and finally at 2130 before turning in. At the end of the seven days 5's, you would just make the musters as stoppage of leave, #6's. Now all of a sudden you became "a target" for doing stand-ins for other people's duty watches. Against the rules however but as time ashore was precious to everyone, and being duty every fourth night in harbour, you weren't being much of a messmate by saying no. It was often lucrative though . . . usually in the dollar or tot department. Standing in for a duty watch might net a couple for services rendered.

Well faith began to dwindle. The order was clear. As the P.O. said . . . "Anybody still on their pins when I get back is in the shit!" Other guys that were involved got hit much harder and I suppose that justice was done in that "the Jimmy" really knew what was going on. I had been introduced to the "Captain's Cloak," the catch-all form of pun' that finds no escape. Three charges huh? Not guilty of two, but how do you escape the ole' "**. . .act, disorder, or neglect to the prejudice and good order of naval discipline.**" The 39th Article of War . . . the "Captain's Cloak."

It seemed hard to get away with anything, once the powers-that-be had gone to all the trouble in getting out "QRCN" and determining how many charges they could lay on you. There might be four or five but if there was any luck at all to ease the sentence, it was reduced to one and they still "got their man." If the navy ever wanted to set an example of the consequences for committing a serious offence, Nelsonian draconianism was still alive and well. Why . . . back in his day . . . the penalty for being asleep on watch would find the offender put into a basket with a loaf of bread and a knife, and slung from the bowsprit while the ship was underway. The knife wasn't issued to cut the bread. The condemned culprit had three choices and they all spelt fate . . . drowning, suicide . . . or starving to death.

I respected the navy and all it stood for but I couldn't ignore what sometimes seemed clouded with blind faith. It seemed confusing to me that every time I picked up our navy's "Crowsnest" magazine for instance, I saw the wholesome and prestigious side of the navy. Ships were commissioning, the navy was at play. There were regattas, Cocks of the Walk, and the Fleet . . . and pictures and stories about people you knew . . . all sent the message that the navy was a good place to be. Sometimes, those things just didn't jibe with what I was experiencing. While as an ode and an abe, one thing was clear . . . You had to pay your dues and I knew there was a hump to get across. What I didn't know was

what that hump consisted of or when it would appear. I loved my work, I loved going to sea, and I cared for my shipmates while I was sensing that blind faith. Some things in the navy just didn't figure. As a positive deterrent though, I kept reminding myself about working at the CPR back in Winnipeg. That helped a lot.

Officers ran the navy as one would expect, but it seemed there were many instances that confused the flow of leadership and the so-called divisional system. There was a mystique here somehow that I was young and too inexperienced to understand. From my encounters, some officers were a bit like the gods on Mount Parnassus . . . they were different and left us alone. Others, and especially the younger ones, I could relate to however. There seemed to be an encouraging air about them but they weren't destined to get too familiar with you. Such was the same of the Chiefs and POs, being veterans of WW2 and Korea and waiting for their time and pension in short years to come. They were much more human than the ones we encountered ashore. Some were firm while others gave us confidence, who when there were no officers around usually, patted a shoulder and called us "son." I was beginning to see that many of the 'old school' were still around and they unfortunately had the greater influence upon the navy. They were the captains and senior officers who were a product of the old Royal Navy, a product that provoked mutiny in the past, who habitually dealt with things the way they used to be. In the RCN in 1960, and only a decade after the outcome of the "Mainguy Report," there still existed, pockets of draconian-ism both in terms of punishment and class consciousness. Had the days of the Royal Navy training our leaders still resulted in some of the non-conformists remaining as Martinets? One only needs to reflect on 'the Report' to remind us of how our modern navy transformed from one of suffering from incidents in the RCN that resulted from onerous and petty practices brought back from the RN after WW2. Officers at that time had taken their training in Britain and the routines and class distinctions which may have served England's "wooden walls" for centuries, didn't sit well with the more democratically inclined Canadian sailors.

When HMCS *Ottawa* paid off in 'the nineties', a Canflagrant 'zinger' directed at Atlantic Command in 'the fifties', was found behind a filing cabinet . . .and that incidentally, raises the question of the quality of numerous refits and even "scrub-outs," through four decades. The text illustrates how general paranoia could develop throughout the fleet. This "rocket" was aimed at the whole navy instead of pin-pointing when, where and who were the culprits who displayed themselves in such a

disgraceful manner. How would a good captain or first-lieutenant react to it? How could an admiral who puts etiquette over expectation, do a chief's job of pickin' people up? How could the admiral be presumptuous of his successor's style . . . or was it that those styles re-emerged from the fraternal schooling of the "wooden walls" lesson plan? If they did . . . stand by for even more heavy rollin'! It read:

1. I HAVE NOTICED NOT WITHOUT DISPLEASURE AN INCREASING TENDENCY ON THE PART OF NAVAL PERSONNEL SERVING IN THE HALIFAX AREA TO IGNORE MARKS OF RESPECT NORMALLY AFFORDED AN ADMIRAL'S FLAG. COMMANDING OFFICERS OF SHIPS AND ESTABLISHMENTS ARE DIRECTED TO BRING THIS OMISSION TO THE ATTENTION OF SHIPS COMPANIES.

2. DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS I HAVE BROUGHT THIS LAXITY TO THE ATTENTION OF SEVERAL OFFENDERS AND I AM SURE MY SUCCESSOR WILL BE AS VIGOROUS AS I AGAINST THIS BREACH OF ETIQUETTE.

The (Fleet) Royal Guard

The new Queen's Colour for the Royal Canadian Navy in its' 50th Anniversary was presented to the RCN in 1959. On the 23rd of May in the following year, it was to be consecrated and officially escorted to its place of honour in HMCS *Stadacona*'s wardroom, the ceremony taking place earlier on the parade square. In order to do so, a 100-man Royal Guard from the fleet was to be assembled and would consist of one or two men from over forty ships on the east coast. *Bonaventure*, having the lion's share of bodies, was to furnish several.

In the late spring, I felt that a change would do me good and help to re-assure myself about the navy. Along with AB Bart' Wainwright, he and I volunteered to join the guard as representatives from *Micmac*. The Chief G.I. assigned to train us was a veteran of WW2 and none other than C1GI "Dick" Aldhem-White, more popularly known as "A-Stroke." A-Stroke had spent over 20 years in the navy by 1961. He was on the Murmansk runs and fought at sea in the Bay of Biscay aboard the frigates *Etric* and *Chebogue* and was on convoy escorts in the North Atlantic in the corvette *Arnprior*. He was also in Korea, and as a grizzled veteran and a Whale Island parade square villain, could ungraciously earn your attention at any given moment.

The two-month training period was rigid, but at the same time challenging. The objective was that the guard would respond to 'crack', precision-drill through a demonstration of marching and rifle movements that would commence from a single order, and continue for nearly 15

minutes through signals from the musical passages from the Band of HMCS *Stadacona*.

There were a few perks to be had in this voluntary role. Going to the head of the line for meals was one of the best. A “Make and Mend” would be awarded once a week, provided that cubicles and the block as a whole had met “Friday Routine” standards of cleanliness. As B block was situated at the furthest distance from the main gate overlooking Barrington St., we were isolated from the grip of the Regulators and the Barrack Control Office. That gave us an air of independence and we became untouchable as far as our mentor and disciplinarian “A-Stroke” was concerned.

The block was our temporary home and today, if I should pause on the parking lot at the Fleet Club where it once stood, I think of many of the guys in the guard and how special they were. Jim Alleyne, Johnny Mellor, John Trainor, Russ Priske, Jim Paris, Bart’, an then a Quebec’er named Bob Deane from the *Outremont* who played a little trumpet, to name but a few. My bongo drums were once more re-activated. At the pleasure of “A-Stroke,” we were turned out at 0530 to double up and down the hill to the Gunnery School and back, every morning before breakfast. After block clean-up, we were then bound for the drill shed, training continually until 1130.

“This position . . .Ready!”

So then we turned into gazelles at the P&RT school for mandatory PT in the afternoons. It became confusing. In the mornings it was drilled into our heads that fingers were to be “clenched at the first and second knuckles.” By afternoon, the club-swingers took over. In anticipation of two solid hours of in-unison calisthenics, the PTI’s insisted that arms hands and fingers were to be rigidly outstretched to the limit and in duplicating the stance of the instructor as he bellowed: **“This position . . .Ready!”** But seemingly, he had the same mentality as a parade G.I. but having spring in his steps just like the duty kangaroo. **“Now you men . . . Pay attention! For the next exercise, I want you to pair up in groups of three in one rank. THEN GET IN A STRAIGHT LINE AND FORM A CIRCLE.”**

The noise of the open air

Training continued and as the warmer weather arrived, it just so happened that we were also starting to look reasonably smart. We finally emerged from the drill shed and took to the open air of the parade square. The criticisms and judgements of the onlookers began. The slaps of rifle movements in unison and gaiter-ed boots crunching upon the chip-stone parade square caught all kinds of attention . . .and so did the hollerin', and cussin', and blindin' of the business at hand, that emitted from the vocal cords of our "A-Stroke." **"Awright you fukkin' donkies. Get it together. Ya' look like a shower a goddam schoolgirls. C'mon. Keep those fukkin' heads up and watch the goddam angle of your rifle butts. I've never seen a shower like this since my mother took to tamin' queer fukkin' elephants. Get it together you buncha turkies!"** . . .take a breath . . .two-six. Windows from the surrounding buildings went slamming shut in similar unison to our day by day increasing-with-sharpness, rifle movements. Telephones began to ring off the hook at the Commander's office and 'opened-office- windows' secretaries took to their typewriters in laying memos of complaint. The obscenities and constant cussing that evolved from the common G.I. to "encourage us" to get it just right, was just too much for innocent and tender ears. Coarse, and attention-getting, but never salacious to a sailor it was . . .utterly disgusting and repugnant to our hallowed civilian counterparts. Thus, we were stricken from the grandeur of the parade square at the Commander's supportive insistence and banished once more, to the concealment and internal echoes of the drill shed . . .doors shut and clipped.

After tedious training for two months, the big day arrived. The buildings overlooking the *Stad'* parade square had been face-lifted while multitudes of flags were unfurled. There would be no blindin' and cussin' from the GI. Hundreds of guests and dignitaries took their seats below the mainmast and behind the dais at the head of the parade square, in anticipation of a very naval display. Supporting our presence as the immediate escort to the Royal Colour Party were three armed battalions surrounding the outer edges of the parade square, drawn from HMCS *Stadacona*, *Shearwater*, and *Bonaventure*. The massed naval bands of *Stadacona*, *Shearwater*, and *Cornwallis* were led once again by drum-major, PO2 "Butch" Bouchard, the quintessential mace-thrower of all naval bands. How impressive they looked and would sound on this very significant occasion. They would play with pride and with rich airs that were as unique as the Royal Canadian Navy itself. And our Royal Guard

sharper than Grenadier Guardsmen, marched on parade. All decked in white belts and gaiters and “badges gold,” and sized in such a way that everybody looked six feet tall. I was brandishing my first “gold badge” for the first time standing dauntlessly among three and two-badgemen. We were all very proud on that warm spring day and not a man-jack would make a mistake. Precisely at the order from the Guard Officer . . . **.Roya-a-a-l Gu-u-a-a-rd! . . . HAH-H-H! . . . Shoulda-a-h . . . HAWMS!** . . . and then we went for the prescribed order-less fifteen minutes, progressing through a myriad of rifle movements, and the firing of volleys. Then followed the march past. Unlike the armed battalions who did so “in threes,” we marched “in line” that culminated with the “advance in review order.” Not a man lagged in his dressing, nor dared blink an eye, or get out of step . . . or else let down the men about you, and certainly not the G.I. By the end of the afternoon, we had escorted the “Colour” to the wardroom, accompanied by a gift from the Province of Nova Scotia. . . of silver drums that were ‘piled’ for display in the foyer. On completion, we were marched to the drill shed to return gear where “A-Stroke” and his staff broke open the free beer, accompanied by the inevitable, **“Right you fukkin’ lot . . . Ya’ did a good job. Well done! Now drink yer goddam beer and take a Makers’. Fall in on the roadway tomorrow morning at 0900. Don’t be adrift.”** The time was now 1445. Whoopee! But ever so proud we were of providing such a display. The next day at 09-dubs, we fell in with headaches . . . in uni’, and negative webbing. We did our out-routines and re-joined our ships, all in hope that we wouldn’t cane a duty watch on the first day back aboard.

“Charlie and the Micmacs”

Now back aboard *Micmac* and in the same year, the captain’s steward was drafted ashore and his relief was to become a life-long friend. His name was Able Seaman “Charlie” Husbands whose hometown was Halifax. Charlie often used to speak of his father who was a Pullman porter on the CN trains between Halifax and Montreal. I had the pleasure of meeting his family when they just moved in to the newly completed Mulgrave Park area in the north end. Charlie was a very impeccable and efficient steward, and for those very qualities I suppose, was destined to look after the captain's needs.

Charlie had another attribute, and one that I enjoyed very much. He played the alto saxophone and my modest attempt at playing the bongos as a substitute for drums was now relived. We got so good as we played back in the cooks' & stewards' mess. Word quickly got around the ship that there was some home-made music aboard. Hidden talent is a misnomer, for it also didn't take long for one observer to maintain that more richness of tone was required. Enter an AB quartermaster by the name of Colin Turvey. Colin was ex-British Merchant Navy and claimed to play bass and sing jazz lyrics. That he did, although he wasn't the proud owner of a Kaye 3/4 stand-up bass viol. Instead, his resourcefulness came from having played in skiffle groups whose means for providing that background rhythm came from the output of a catty tea-chest. We formed a little jazz and swing trio.

At the outset, we were limited to having jam sessions aboard ship and concerts alongside such as at Point Edward Naval Base in Sydney. We then started to play in a few places ashore in Halifax. Our overhead was nil and our band carried little baggage. Colin's stand-up bass became the means for transporting our instruments by inverting his tea chest. He looked incognito in his corduroy sports jacket and cool sunglasses while having his left foot propped up on the top edge to steady the chest from toppling. When immersed among the low lights of the stage and well behind Charlie on the sax, many in the dancing audience weren't even aware of the means by which these professionally sounding tones would emit. The bass rhythm came from the chest' made from thin, jungle veneer stamped "Product of Ceylon," key control from a broom handle compliments of Fuller Brush, and a suitable length of pusser's cod line donated by the RCN. We became so popular that a name was required. We identified with our business address and studios so that the Musicians' Union would divert their protective attention to the First Nations Reservations in Nova Scotia in tracking us down. We became known as the sweet sounding and versatile trio, "Charlie and the Micmacs."

A set of Ludwig's

When we went on to a refit in Saint John Shipyard, the scene changed dramatically. In the ship's idleness, much more time became available with one-night stands at the Lily Lake dance hall and playing for mess dances at the reserve base *Brunswick*. Then, and hoping somebody

would put money in the hat at the many workers' clubs around town and even in a 'stand up session' in the open air in the middle of the city's King's Square. "The Micmacs" were getting so popular and in constant demand that it was time to at least graduate from the bongos and play on a real set of drums. I purchased a set of Ludwig's, on time of course, from Benny Goldstein's Music Shop on Charlotte St. . . . about the best you could get in 1961. The tea-chest remained as a trademark and Colin enjoyed that. Who could fork out the cost of a stand-up bass? Besides . . . where could you stow it aboard ship?

After the refit and work ups and back in Halifax, we started to play at Sherriff Hall at Dalhousie, The YWCA on Barrington St., and even a



King's Square, Saint John N.B. 1961 (with the tea-chest)

couple of gigs at the Jubilee Boat Club dance on Saturday nights. We thought we were pretty good but had to remain elusive to the dreaded Union. We were relegated to getting what we could by accepting as little as a dance hall would spare and a good night might get us a sawbuck each. If we really sounded good, the generosity increased and a twenty-dollar bill wasn't to be sneezed at.

“Back to sea . . .finally”

By the fall, the ship was nearing refit completion however, late because of a shipyard strike that lasted throughout the summer. Tensions escalated because of the missile crisis in Cuba and we were hearing of possible pierhead jumps to ships of the 1st and 5th Squadrons that made up the assigned *Bonnie*'s “A/S Task Force.” *Iroquois* and *Haida* were preparing to sail to relieve ships on station. Although *Micmac* was in the 3rd Escort Squadron, the need for tribal sailors became a priority. The pleasantries of standing by in a refit drew to a miserable end to some of the seamen as they were drafted “on loan,” to the Task Force Tribals.

By Christmas, the Cuban threat had been challenged by President Kennedy and, the men who got “pier-headed” returned to *Micmac*. By now, we were preparing for work-ups at N.A.D. in Dartmouth while the 4-inch guns and bofors were being plunked back on board. By mid-January, we sailed in company for “Wintex 62” in the Caribbean with *Crescent*, *Sioux*, and *Cayuga*. Our first stop was at anchor in Grassy Bay, Bermuda, while the rest of the squadron carried on alongside to HMS *Malabar* at Ireland Island. Before the inception of a dedicated Sea Training Staff organization, we were boarded by Squadron personnel who in varying roles, now posed as a Work-Up Staff. Their main task, so it seemed, was to make life extremely uncomfortable. Frequently, they demanded things that just didn't make any sense and as a result, really got us worked up.

We were to lay at anchor for five days while these pompous gits hurled evolutions at us that certainly lacked in imagination. To start out, each morning at first light about 0530, the lights went on in the mess accompanied with thundering roars and clanging of the mick bars. **“Wakey-wakey-wakey! Double-double-double! Get turned out and jump over the side! Quickly! Port side outta' bounds! Move it you bastards!”** In coercion, we all came tumbling out of nice warm micks, blankets falling to the deck and everybody jumping into their hanging-from-clews swimsuits to do just what they insisted upon . . . “Jump over the side? Whatda fuk for?” we wondered as we doubled aft to the ‘iron deck’ in bare feet and wiping the sleep from our eyes. When we emerged from below and into the dim light of dawn, it sounded like happy hour at the Seaway Tavern with all this out-of-unison hollering by an array of officers and senior rates who were all barking, **“C'mon! Chop-chop! We haven't got all day. Get over the side. Move it!”** Over we'd go, just one minute from the time we had all been in a deep sleep. The briny oggin

was just over sixty-odd degrees, and as you plunged into this rude awakening and finally broke surface with somebody else falling on top of you, the reverse was now required. **“C’mon you lot! Get up this fukkin’ scramble net and get to your messes! Hurry! Chop-chop! Move it! We ain’t got all day!”**

The clambering began as the scramble net dug into every square inch of greasy, cold feet, the salt water stinging your eyes, and shivering all over from the cool, early-morning stiff breezes of windy Grassy Bay Bermuda. Back we’d go to the mess, slipping and sliding and stubbing toes, only to pour ourselves down into the steamy After Lower where every square inch of the deck was now soaking wet and we’re all covered in brine. The “good news” was that it started to feel a little warm again, and of course the other was that we were on water-rationing and the showers were out of bounds. Now get dressed, lash up and stow, and start scrubbin’ out while drawin’ your cold eggs and red lead and cap tallies. **“Clear the mess and fall in by 0615!”**, loudly declared Eric Harmon, the messdeck hookey . . . **“Or I’ll have ya’!”**

Work-ups continued for three more hectic weeks and where a full-power trial or casualty clearing seemed appropriate, the silly things just wouldn't go away. Who needs to get singled out for a kit muster as part of a ship’s work-up, or why were we ordered to blow soot in broad daylight, just after the dibby-dabs finished hosin’ down the ‘uppers’? All of this was to make me aware that at some time in the future if I were to become a sea-trainer, and if you were going to make life uncomfortable for the people you were to train and work-up, there were certainly more practical and more meaningful ways to get people to do things . . .and with a desire

Finally, it came to an end and we were deemed “Satisfactory” at the pleasure of Captain “D” and his minions. We were officially declared an operational ship in the squadron and soon found ourselves at the gunnery range at Culebra. A quick visit into Roosey Rds. and an R&R weekend into San Juan at the army jetty was in order for a “\$3 and \$2 short-time” at the good ole’ Riviera. The notorious Black Angus night club in the opposite direction near the main gate of the USN’s, San Juan Navy base was yet to come alive and compete with the more popular Riviera Club in the middle of the cobble stoned streets of Old San Juan.

“A job in the Tropics. . .Maybe?????”

Nearing the end of the three-month trip, we were to paint ship. To do so, we headed into this then little-known retreat called Freeport, in the Bahamas. That visit almost brought my growing naval career to a grinding halt. It was at a time when Freeport was being transformed into the tourist mecca that it is today. In its infancy, it was nothing more than a long pier within a cay which harboured water-tugs and had a capability of receiving coastal freighters one at a time. A few miles away was a private airport owned by a Texan entrepreneur whose name was naturally, “Tex” McCreary. He was the tour-site developer, and as owner of the Grand Bahama Development Co., took great initiative in making himself obvious by roaming around the jetty and talking individually to everyone who had ventured out onto the jetty during the “paint ship” period. As it turned out, he was on the lookout for anybody that wasn’t a Bahamian and was interested in employment. Good workers were hard to find on the islands and the enticement of living and working for a good wage in the tropical Bahamas made a lot of the guys have to decide on their loyalties to family, Queen and Country. Through some of the things I was experiencing I still had doubts, but regardless, to abandon the navy was not being fair as the navy was somehow mysteriously being fair to me, still a young but dedicated man. I came awfully close to requesting release, but for those reasons, Queen and Country remained in first place. The burden of scariness had stopped, but I often wonder to this day what may have been have my plight had I done so.

Meanwhile, in sweetening his offers, Tex had opened the lounge in his private one landing strip airport to the entire ship’s company for a private party. He had a beautiful daughter who owned and piloted her own single-engine airplane, attestation to the affluence of the McCreary family. As the party wore on into the evening, it was now time for a twist contest. Up I got on top of the bar to find that my partner was none other than the Texan cowgirl daughter, “Miss Mac.” We twisted away to the music of Chubby Checker to find that we had won hands down. My prize was an aged bottle of Chivas Regal whiskey. After the night was over, I trundled back aboard with my loot with the intention of giving it to Dad when I’d go on summer leave in Winnipeg. I surrendered the bottle to the Officer of the Day at the brow who seemed to acknowledge that this was a rare request. His instructions were to mark my name on the label, declare it with customs, and I could retrieve it when we were alongside in Halifax when proceeding on leave. As summer leave was still a few

months away and knowing that the bottle was forbidden on the messdecks, I placed faith in the fact that until that time, it would be safe and secure, locked up in the wardroom spirit locker. When the time came, I went to retrieve the bottle. It appeared at the brow with a south wind in it. Warm and dry! . . . My faith faltered. I became confused again. I am so naive?

So Unnecessary

During that trip, we were also to go into Philadelphia for a good will visit in company with *Cayuga*. It was a time I shall never forget for although the run ashore in the “city of brotherly love” was memorable, it also dealt with a grim and successful suicide attempt made by a young cook aboard *Cayuga*. I recall that he had come aboard on the day preceding his death, to visit in our mess with a new stoker who was his “townie.” He seemed very sad and bewildered about something, something about a Dear John letter or the like, but it seemed to me as no one else’s business. It should have been.

Very early the following morning I was returning aboard with John Coleman, a killick stoker, to find that there were shore patrol vehicles and much scurrying about upon the jetty as well as aboard both ships. We were to find out quickly that the young cook had been duty overnight and during the course of events while preparing groceries for the next day’s meals, had hanged himself in *Cayuga*’s main galley. We later learned that because the weather was extremely warm, someone had slung his hammock on the uppers, starboard side aft of the extended fo’c’sle, just outside of the ship’s laundry. The galley was immediately aft at the ‘break and down the ladder to the ‘iron deck’ where the cook was working during the night. Sometime very early on that morning, he had quietly scaled the ladder and removed the hammock lashing from its headrope. He then went back down to the galley, shutting both, the port and starboard dutch doors as he entered. It was some time later when someone came by the galley door thinking it odd that the dutch doors were shut at this time of day, especially when breakfast was about to be dished out to messes. Peeking through the crack of the two half- doors on the starboard side, the witness saw a shaking, wriggling body. Quickly he stormed into the galley, took the weight of the man and eased him back onto the galley counter that he had obviously slid from in his attempt. His efforts would have been successful had he arrived just a few

moments earlier. He was dead. By sitting on the counter, the young cook had made up the hammock lashing to some channel plate above, formed a noose around his neck and just pushed himself off from the sitting position.

“Brown! . . .Captain’s cabin!”

It was to be a bittersweet day, fuelling at Dartmouth Imperoil in June of that year. I was a badgeman, drew my tot, and felt as though the time I’d spent in *Micmac* was a complete indoctrination that had made a good sailor out of me, enough that I could handle a TG 2 course with ease. Make and mend had been piped and save for the duty watch and the fuelling party, there couldn’t have been more than twenty other guys in the ship. I had spent a longer time than usual back on the quarterdeck, where we had our sit-down tot time sessions on sunny days. This was one of them and in the process of my going ashore, you soon began to realize how much you were going to be missed. I was “one tot shithot” already, but for every time I took a wet, the level in the mug filled up again.

Finally, everybody dispersed and I was left alone, sitting on a squid mount bedplate wondering in a bit of a confused state of how much more gear I had to ram into my kit bags. I mused on what the course would be like, I thought of the days I had had in *Micmac*, and as I looked back, it hadn’t been bad at all. I was going to be re-immersed into the rest of the navy now and for all of the experiences I had encountered, I felt a growing sense of boldness and determination. My feelings and attitude toward the navy were restored. Some of the distasteful things I’d seen and endured no longer mattered and the accumulation of “time-in” and experience in any organization, became a rewarding reality. I was curious as to where I would go after course . . . the *Bonnie*? . . . another tribal? . . . a frigate? . . . maybe a ‘Bird’ boat, or even a ‘Sweeper. Cadillac? No thanks! I knew I’d be going back to sea again and that was a dead cert’. But there was something tugging at me in the worst way and I still couldn’t work out what it was.

After a lot of babbling and trying to get my kit packed and out of the mess, I fumbled my way up to the brow on the ‘iron deck’. The QM and Bos’n’s mate stood there with a grin on their faces as the QM said, “Brownie! You’re to report to the skipper’s cabin.” I froze where I stood, thinking that for the first time in my life, I was bouncin’ about with a

stupid furry grin on my face, trying to get ashore. I thought, "The skipper must have seen me and now I'm in the shite."

I left my bags at the brow, squared my lanyard and cap, and tripped over the breakwater of the after canopy door as I headed to the Captain's cabin in the main flat. I had never had reason in three years to approach the Captain's door and because of the tizzy I was in, I was a bit "at sea." I knocked at the side of the doorway and beyond the drawn curtain, I could hear some muted conversation. The curtain drew aside and here was Charlie Husbands, the Captain's Steward. He invited me in and ushered me to stand in front of the seated Cdr Stuart. I took off my cap and fumbled about trying to act as if I didn't have any problems.

"Sit down Able Seaman Brown . . . Now what would you care for?" asked the Captain who was sitting with what looked like a gin and tonic. Wondering if he was talking coffee, tea, limers, or a wet, I replied guessingly, "Oh! I'll have a Sh-h-kooner sher!" Charlie, in his immaculate starched steward's jacket and bells, brought over a silver tray upon which was presented a blue and white can of beer and a frosty glass on a doily. It was nice to be waited on by my close friend Charlie. I felt that through all of our time as friends, it was rather fitting that he'd be waiting on me with a huge grin and a sincere gesture that said, "Here Brownie. I'm gonna miss you!"

The Captain went on to remark on how pleased he was with my contribution to *Micmac* and wished me well on the course but "stay out of the rattle." Apart from the fact that my jitters had decreased considerably by then, I realized I wasn't in the shite after all. I enjoyed that beer immensely for many reasons. As a young man in the navy and being privileged to sit and have a natter with the skipper in his cabin, I again realized that I was regarded . . . as a badgeman and a stoker with experience. What also affected me because I was in Charlie's presence, was that our "brass rags were to be parted." They were and would remain that way, for I was to see Charlie only once more in the next thirty-four years. At his father's funeral.

CHAPTER FOUR

FLEET SCHOOL

(H.M.C.S. *Stadacona*)

On the day of joining *Stad*, it was like *Cornwallis* revisited, but with a rigidity that was inconsistent. My draft chit meant that I was to join Fleet School and commence course the following week after doing an “IN” routine. Duty watches wouldn’t commence until the first day of course on the Monday, so that gave me a little time to move into A Block, re-qualify in making beds, sleeping in them, and then sample the groceries and the routine in the galley. No doubt I would have a kit muster, one which I have never forgotten, and work manual party painting rocks or do “skirmish party” for the remainder of the week. To do so, I had to report to the reg’ office at the Barrack Control Centre. Inevitably, you got grilled by that crowd in there who seemed to eternally hold a grip onto their jobs in that empire of perks. Besides ships’ companies in refit and guys on course in Fleet School, there was this other group of land-locked dandies. . .the barrack stanchions. . .the dockyard cavalry. I swear that in the course of three years that I had occasion to go by those wickets in the Admin’ building, the same guard had never changed. They seemed to have owned the place. “Brown card jobs. . .idlers. . .the bastards!” They worked for the MAA who regulated the whole barracks and in the days of hand-written draft chits, opportunities for graft and corruption were manifold and suspicion was in mind, if not in reality. While most matelots were “pier-headed” back to sea perhaps after a week or two of coming ashore, certain other individuals seemed to remain in barracks year in and year out. It was the cherished dream of any sea-going matelot that these favoured few that one day, they be ousted from their snug berth. “They were in everybody’s mess, but nobody’s watch.” . . . as the expression goes. The song said it all (unless they weren’t seasoned enough to know the words) and led off with marching cadence by the MAA:

“The Dockyard Cavalry”
(to the tune of “Our Director”)

“Taking your time from the dockyard clock. . .

**Tick-tock. . .Tick-tock. January, February. . .
March you bastards, March!!!"**

**"Oh, we're a shower of bastards,
Bastards are we.
We are the navy, the dockyard cavalry.**

**Oh, we're a shower of bastards,
Bastards are we.
We'd rather fuck than fight,
We're the dockyard cavalry!"**

"OOD's never say No!"

To approach the OOD in the window at *Stad* main gate seemed frugal in having to 'chop one off' and ask. . . "Permission to come aboard, sir?" I mean, did you really want to? Behind the windows masked in reflection like a two-way mirror were other eyes scanning you and looking for extra hands for the manual or skirmishing parties. Stokers were the favourite targets. To your right as you stood rigidly at the 'Ho and making your request, you could feel the glares of the station card PO in his caboosh who was also dreamin' up some more pun'. All of those eyes belonged to the same clan, the regulators. . . the "crushers." They had a deceptive gentility about them. It wasn't really rank or a badge that you needed to keep them off your back . . . just nerve and elusiveness.



Consider the opposite when proceeding ashore. On a blustery cold day, the OOD having to stand at the window uttering countless responses at his pleasure, might decide to shut the window and keep the draft out. . .as well as the audibility of the requestman's voice. Now, a good stoker might march sharply to the window on his way ashore. . .halt . . .turn right. . . 'chop one off' and site his request as: "Permission to go out with your wife, sir?" The OOD, with a quick butcher's up and down of his uni' now seeming satisfied, would reply from the read on his lips. . . "Yes please. . . carry on!", while returning the salute.

As time went on, you became more and more accustomed to the procedures on cold days and the requests grew much bolder and with expletives regarding greater intimacy with the OOD's "other half" that

drew yet another “Yes please!” If on the other hand, a matelot “wasn’t into cuttin’ people’s grass,” he might opt for personal comfort. . . . “Permission to fart sir?” . . . or if he’s unhappy and aggressive. . . . “Permission to go inside and thumpya’ sir?” Through all of these requests, it was very evident that, unlike able seamen and killicks, OOD’s had no practical training in the art and response to the order. . . . “Read my lips!”

The gates are guarded

In the early sixties, it is hard to imagine that car parking in *Stadacona* was, “wherever you wanted to. . . except on the parade square.” (By the nineties, the G.I.s were no longer and the parade square came to serve as a central parking lot) The reality was that nobody could afford a vehicle and if you could, you had to be senior and drawin’ good pay. That’s where we never came in . . . except for one single killick Hull Mechanic who drove a Cadillac convertible. He was reputed to be heavy into the rackets and under the code of “no pack drill,” to elaborate of identity is dispensed with. The lack of automobiles rendered the gates as wide enough for a Pusser’s truck to roll through during working hours but other than that, they gave silent hour vehicle thoroughfare to the Commodore, the OOD, rare evening visitors to the P&RT School, and the shore patrol wagons only. The occasional taxi? No one in ‘square rig’ could afford it.

Daytime gate sentries were gangway staffs as detailed by none other. . . Barrack Control. . . and all that crowd still stood down from the duty watches. As a silent hours sentry, you were drawn from the duty watches and part of an eight man detail who would stand “watch about” at four positions at the main gate, RCNH, the wardroom, and the C&PO’s gate on Barrington St., so-called after “S Block” burnt down in 1959. This would mean that you would close up for the last dog and the middle. The opposite four hands would relieve and stand the first and morning watches. Nobody got off the hook . . . not even the guy who caned the main gate although we noticed it was always a gunner or a quartermaster. There just had to be perks here and we eventually found out that Barrack Control filled in the blanks on the duty rosters with our names.

You would be required to fall in 30 minutes in advance of the watch in single file to be inspected (#2’s with belt and gaiters, negative lanyards) and on completion, be marched from the main gate to the first position at the RCNH gate. The off-going day sentry would fall in at the

rear of the four-man party while the lead man would fall out and take position in the sentry box. Off the group would march to the wardroom and Barrington St. gates carrying out the same procedure, keeping in mind that the new main gate sentry is now at the lead position. This pitiful party would continue the circuit march up the steep hill to the main gate, taking care to salute any passing and mincing 'commissioneds as well as beefing up as a Chief or PO might stomp by.

On arrival at the main gate, the new sentry would take up position and the four now having been relieved and at the order of the Duty PO, "Dis . . . missed!" . . . doubled away to "A Block." The perks also came to the seamen on the duty watches. They were buddies with the crushers and always got "the main gate." They were surrounded with lights, some activity, but best of all, could warm up, stay dry and even get a cup of kye from the galley's night cook.

There was nothing so cold and enduring in the winter months with those long four-hour stints in the darkness of night, with no cars to wave your arm at or anybody to speak to except yourself. You could never slack off until after the OOD would appear for an impromptu visit at his pleasure, or at the biggest see-off, that he wouldn't even show up at all during a downpour or a blizzard.

OOD does say "No!"

There is one more account that needs digesting before leaving "the adventures at the main gate." The author had been celebrating his 21st birthday on a sunny Saturday afternoon at the Derby Tavern. He was with five other stokers including the lofty Halifax's "Harlem Globetrotter," Frank Rostek. By 1600, the dough was running low and it was time to return to *Stadacona*. In 1962, a new fast food had just hit the streets . . . "Col. Ernie's Kentucky Fried Chicken," and everybody was raving about it. As another birthday gift, Frank suggested a whip 'round from the boys and bought a huge bucket of chicken. We strolled aimlessly toward *Stad'* up Gottingen St. eating our chicken leaving a trail of bones behind us. We arrived near the gate and by now, the chicken had been devoured. I placed the empty bucket over my head. . . approached the opened window, stood to attention, then asked . . . "Permission to come aboard, sir?" to which this time, the OOD replied. . . "Whoever the fuk you are. . . Negative!" "Well," I thought . . . "He is human!"

Punchy's Pun'

Joining kit musters took place at the Anti-gas school which today, is where the Canex is situated in A Block. The so-called school space doubled as the wet canteen during off-working hours and from that tiny office, down at the end next door to the canteen heads, is where the administration was conducted. The little round tavern tables and accompanying wood/wire chairs, familiar to most as the wet canteen furniture, became the desks and chairs for instruction on the topic of gas-masks and the "dreaded lergy" during working hours.

I wrestled my kit bags into the A-G school and was promptly told by Petty Officer Quartermaster Nelson, "Punchy" Webb, to lay out my kit on a long table. Punchy had a ruddy complexion that looked like he was a goalie for a dart board and had sunk enough rum to float the east coast fleet. He could be persuaded with a modest 'mickey now and again, in order to make house calls to do kit musters in the interests of the married hands from Shannon Park. This would save them having to hump their kit all the way into *Stad'* for a 'muster'.

I thought I was doing really well because a lot of my kit had never been broken out from new entry training (too many towels and nobody wore pyjamas). What surprised me though was when he hollered, "Brown!" "You got somebody else's sandal, your spare cap's a stoker's shithouse, and you only have three handkerchiefs. (the tea strainer went into the Bendix) I oughta run you for theft because the official number on the toe of that starboard jesus-boot sure as hell ain't 46490-H!"

I stood there frozen in amazement. Then redder than the cross on the white ensign, "Punchy" glared at me and said, "Right! I want you to go to slops and purchase a new pair of sandals, one handkerchief, and another cap. Have Stad' cap tallies done up on both yer caps. . .and muster out on the parade square at 1300 today with your kit laid out at the bottom of the parade square!"

I showed up for 1300 and did as he said at the bottom of the upgrade parade square, and a "running" kit muster commenced. Back and forth I responded at the double, to the top of the parade square with one article at a time as Punchy went on and on: "**Silks. . .two in number. . .Double!**" "**Towels. . .bath. . .two. . .Double!**" "**Boots. . .pair. . .two. . .Double!**" "**Shitnicks. . .one pair in use, three pair in hand. . .Double!**" "**Waddya' sweatin' for 'stokes'?**" And so it went until he allowed me to do the last run with two empty kit bags and my Pusser's blankets around my neck in one shot. As I arrived in front of him for the last time, he said,

“Brown! You got lint all over yer collar. . .now buck up! Turn right. . .Dis. . . missed!”

However, there was always a chance of a static kit muster at Punchy’s, at the pleasure of the MAA. Because your tally bow was too far for’d or there was a stitch let go just below your starboard pocket seam were indications that you had a habit of putting your saluting hand in your pocket too often. But if you’ve got somebody else’s bits of kit like I did, even by mistake as was easy to do when coming ashore. . . stand by for heavy rolling!

Catholic is best

No one looked forward to *Stadacona* weekend duty watches. That’s exactly what it was. “Duty,” both days! There was a little bit of perks on Sunday mornings. You could lay in for an extra hour and later wind up as skirmishing party down at the Chiefs and P.O.’s Mess. Here you could get to work in a semi-social atmosphere where the ‘chuffs n’ puffs’ might still be engaged from the Saturday night party, and slide you a wet for cleanin’ up.

Those Sundays meant church as well. . .mandatory attendance. As we know it in most societies throughout Canada, composition of the Christian faith has the Protestants out-numbering the RC’s considerably. It didn’t take long to find out that the RC Sunday service ran a half an hour, down at the tiny Stella Maris Chapel behind the ‘wrenery’. The Commodore and all his minions would certainly attend the Protestant service at St.Nicholas’s in front of RCNH. This one ran for nearly ninety minutes, and of course was much further away from the parade square than the RC chapel. The Duty P.O., under the shadows of the barrack control centre on the parade square, would fall in some ninety guys comprising the watch and declare the ridiculous. . .“When you are dismissed. . .RC’s on the right. . . Protestants on the left. . .Senior hands take charge. . . Turn right, Dis . . . missed!” The Pope would have been proud. The Commodore, not.

Long nights. . .no fires!

As a fire sentry, meant mustering at the fire hall (between “A Block” galley and the Gunnery School) to get the same old boring lecture from

the ho-hum civvy firemen. You had two, four-hour watches to do in either "A Block," the Joint Maritime Warfare School, N.D. School, or any of the other schools. . .Gunnery, Electrical, and M.T.E. On the other hand, you could be gate sentry. . .the predecessor to the minimum wage commissionaire who eventually arrived as a result of unification.

Stoker turned cop

Very scarce, and if you could get it, would be to nail down shore patrol on a duty watch. You could be detailed to patrol the Seagull Club dance on Friday, Saturday or Sunday nights and that wasn't a bad number to end up with. It was difficult when a punch-up broke out though for you might have to deal with a winger or somebody that you might have sailed with. But at least you got to ride in the patrol wagon and ogle at the Seagull dolly-birds. Faye Talbot and her many, many girl friends were regulars along with "Rosie Guitar," well-mimed in vocally cleft disdain with "All you guys wanna do is smoke my cigarettes, drink my beer, play my guitar and (two words)!" that describe the ultimate objective of spending the night with one of the Seagull's clientele of hairy bags.

In contrast, "shore patrol beats" were not a popular detail especially in the winter months where you plodded through the freezing snow banks and icy winds with black leather boots and white belt and gaiters. There was nothing to cover your lug holes unless the greatcoat collar might help the descending two-thirds. Brown leather gloves that had flimsy lining might be appropriate in the fall with a burberry, but certainly not in winter with a greatcoat.

Patrol routes consisted of pairing up on a beat on Gottingen St. that started at Cogswell and went north to *Stad'* maingate and return. Another went from the CNR station, north to the dockyard South Gate on Water St. and reciprocal. A third, and most gruelling of all was "North to Alaska," the patrol route that began with a quick peek only in the Seaway tavern under the bridge at Barrington and North, to downtown Duke St. and return. Here you were caught up with all the transient matelots in varying states of sobriety heading to and fro through centre and south gates, to the Barrington St. Exchange lockers, the Atlas lockers, Carpenter's Hall, the Olympic Gardens, or the Derby, Oasis, or Seahorse taverns. At the extreme north end of the route was the Seaway and indeed, Mama Camille's for beery fish and chips, all destinations

junctioned at the popular stopping place at Hattie Brown's on Lower Water at the foot of Cornwallis.

It wasn't boot topping

Often you would see a matelot knocking on Hattie's door for entry by throwing a pebble at an upstairs window, then back out onto the street so that she could see who was trying to get in. She did have her regular customers and that was very important and sacred to the regulars who frequented when the liquor store on Buckingham St. was shut.

And how her regulars were grateful for the hospitality extended. She was a loveable person. To show their gratitude, a bunch of RN submariners decided to help out Hattie by offering to paint out the frequently used heads in her busy establishment. Popularly, it is assured that the donation known as boot topping was used, the black sticky preservative that is deployed about the waterlines of surface ships. Not so! The RN submariners instead, showed up on a Sunday morning and quickly transformed the surroundings of the entire convenience including the seat, with black, admar, submarine ballast tank paint carrying similar characteristics as the shipboard stuff. Hattie never had a chance to view the accomplishment immediately, as it was to be a surprise. The ardent workers insisted on some refreshments after their industrious efforts and that held her at bay. When they finally left, Hattie went to have a shuftee at the new décor. Humourous panic hit Lower Water' and she put out an appeal for an "un-paint party" from customers of a finer reputation. It took a month to get the heads back into its rustic appearance and usability.

The Mail Star

To stroll along Barrington on finer days, you would reach the corner at Duke where it seemed that every trolley in town would also intersect. On the hill at the trolley stop right outside of the Barrington Exchange (our favourite pawnshop and civvy lockers) stood the paper boy, or should I say. . .man. He was like a landmark whose shoe leather was angled to match the incline of the steep hill at Duke'. For years he would capture anybody getting on or off the trolley with. . . "Get yer paper thir. . .Mail-Thtar thir. Prithe...eight thents. Two thenth back on your dime

thir...Mail-thtar thir...thankya thir.” his last as acknowledgement to keeping the two-pennyworth of change. As an aside, he was to become rich, we’re told.

'A' Block

Up in the block, life was just as unpredictable. The “House of Slammin’ Doors” from the numerous cabins on three decks meant scrub outs every morning. Everything had to be in shipshape and Bristol fashion. Wax the cortisene decks, dust the ledges, make up bunks, clean linen, no personal items left sculling, no dustballs under the bunks, furniture inventory as per the loan card behind the cabin door, gash bucket scrubbed out, lockers locked, opened windows and curtains dressed off, damp mop the concrete gangways and on top of all that, stand one in four as dodger and onboard as duty watch every fourth day. Instead it was now a case of survival, spending your few dollars wisely, staying out of the pawn shop, and ‘the rattle’.

As everybody cleared the block for the forenoon whether at divisions or in class at the school, no one was allowed to return to the block. During this period, the Block Petty Officer and his idle dayworkers from Barrack Control would carry out rounds in every nook and cranny in the cabins. After you had your scran and then whipped down to the mail office to find out that there was no mail for you, free gangway then ensued. You’d cringe as you walked into the cabin to find a chit on your bunk. Everybody got them whether things were immaculate or not. There was always something that got picked up and if you were cabin dodger, chances are you had two chits to deal with. All this in order to press people into the manual party by virtue of extra work when found “Guilty as charged,” at Block Officer’s defaulters held daily at 1300 in his spacious office down at the block entrance. Now you quickly learned who the masses of bodies were that got to scrub out the huge heads and washplaces that were situated on every deck and wing in the block.

By the time “birds” were over some forty minutes later because of the large numbers to weigh off, you’d double down to your respective school and then get charged for being adrift for afternoon class that commenced at 1315.

The integrity of the block staff was minimal and that was frequently demonstrated by the officer in charge. No one wanted to criticise Lt. Manzer but he left himself wide open more times than enough in proving

that among the wardroom crowd, his duties were justified as Block Officer that fell under the category of “shitty little jobs.” And as that shite runs downhill, the calibre also reflected of his wayward staff.

Case. . .dismissed! ???

One day as cabin dodger, I was on the carpet for dust balls under two of the four bunks with a scuff mark in the waxed cortisene deck of the cabin, as well as not having my locker doorknob bollocked. After I was found guilty and caned three days stoppers with extra work, the next guy called forward was Able Seaman Gary Hopkins, a stoker from *Huron* and long-life submarine oppo of mine.

Hoppy lived in cabin #328, just next door to mine. He too was a duty dodger that day and was picked up for scaley windows. They were the type that to open, were eased out horizontally from a centre hinge thus presenting a 45-degree angle. . . and a place for odds and ends and fag ash to rest. The charges stated that “Dirt and debris were sighted on both of the cabin windows!” . . .with definite “neglect to the prejudice of good order and discipline.” When asked about why this shortcoming was totally disregarded in his cleaning responsibilities, Hoppy replied with an excuse that made him about the first hairy bag in Canadian naval history that ever got “case dismissed” at Block Officer’s Defaulters.

He went on to explain that when he had left his cabin and the last out on that morning, the windows were spotless. He then suggested that the people in the cabin directly above #328, were throwing things out again that landed on his opened windows below. “They were always doing that sir. I work hard to keep our cabin clean and I'm gettin' fed up with it sir!” was his assured reply. . .and for that, Hoppy was off the hook. 'Manzer never stopped to appreciate that three-digit cabin numbers that were preceded with a number “3,” signified the cabin as being on not only the third deck, but also the top one.

“G.I.’s!”

You would go to divisions twice a week and sometimes, not get picked up because either they didn’t inspect you or they weren’t bright enough to pick up the obvious. On the other hand, you could get some inspecting officer whose notion was to nail as many as he could. Then there was the

off chance of a shit-disturbin,' dodderin' ole chief that accompanied the inspecting officer to make him look like he knew what he was doing.

The other denizen to watch for was the the Gunnery Instructor, the parade G.I. Thoughts of A-Stroke and the Royal Fleet Guard quickly returned but this time, without the familiarity that we had come to respect. The common parade G.I. was ambivalent. He would be one of those guys with a peculiarity he inherited from Whale Island or the two or three drafts he spent in *Cornwallis* as a drill instructor. He was grumpy with grimace, and an evil bastard. It was once written in Naval regulations back when Christ was a killick on the 'Ark', concerning the properties, office, and duty of a gunner. One thing that always enlightened me and explained the doting ways of the G.I. was how his desire for 'vittles' amazingly affected his mentality. **"Every G.I. ought to know that it is wholesome for him to drink and eat a little meat before he doth discharge any piece of gunnery, but. . . The fumes of saltpetre and brimstone of chordite will otherwise be hurtful to his brains, so it is very unwholesome to him to shoot any piece of ordnance while his stomach is full!"**

This then to all stokers, reasoned as to why they were always so dumb-founded and skinny and looked like an advanced party for a famine. So in his grandeur, and purposeful and thundering gait, would strut about the parade square like a peacock as if he paid the rent for the place. Garbed in gaiters, chain and gunnery whistle, and with more hob nails and steel on his "Queen's boots" than a newfie teen-aged step dancer, would bear down on these back from the fleet and rusty-at-drill matelots. He pranced anywhere he wished looking for cackle, chuckle, fingers apart, or a haircut and appearance that was beyond the pleasure of the Queen, and the dreaded inspecting officer to even bear witness to. If that happened, you would give up your station card, be ordered to fall out and report to the main gate, and automatically cane three days stoppage of leave with a \$15.00 fine. Instead, try to remember how it went at *Cornwallis* and especially in the Royal Guard. Head up, chin out, shoulders square, eyes dead ahead, chest out, fingers clenched at the first and second knuckle, feet at 45 degrees. How the hell could a stoker remember all that and hence, we became easy prey. But. . .in miming the ways of the parade square, there was a way at getting back after divisions were over and we were held back for extra drill. An 'engine-room' killick would be selected by the G.I. to take charge. In portraying that G.I., a good upstart clanky with booming and timely voice that could overwhelm the din of a turbo-fan could be heard in ape with a deafening,

“RIGHT YOU LOT! GET FELL IN THREE THICK!” We’d all fall in and be brought to the ‘Ho’. In order to get sized, the next wrangy order filled the air: **“FALL IN ALPHABETICALLY. . . BY HEIGHT. . . NOW!”** Then in ensuring distance as per an arm’s length in the front rank. **“WITHIN OUTERVA-A-A-LS, BY THE RIG-G-H-HT . . . DRESS!”** Now in attempts in turning smartly before marching off, the order came, **“MOVE TO THE RIGHT IN THREES. . .RIGHT . . .NOW!”** or the other method when in company with other squads from the Fleet School. . . **“PA-R-R-ADE. . .MOVE TO THE RIGHT. . .IN A COLUMN OF SMOKE. . .POOF!”** G.I.’s never listened to the words. . .just the thunder and timing.

Divisions

There were times too, when a few wags weren’t ready for divisions for a lot of reasons, one chiefly that uniform or items thereon weren’t up to snuff or they couldn’t raise enough tin for a haircut. For certain, they’d be paying a fine and runnin’ #5’s if they got nailed. They’d take a chance at not being missed in the shuffle on the parade square, so now the problem arose as to where to hide until Ceremonial Divisions had secured. Anybody seen that hadn’t had a “day job,” immediately got queried as to why he wasn’t out there on the parade square, so it behooved the eluder to be as cunning as his mettle would provide.

A favourite spot was to hide in the underground maintenance tunnels that mysteriously exist somewhere in *Stadacona*. If you were more inclined to stay a little cleaner and warmer and away from the rats, get your cabin oppo to lock you up in your personal locker. The lockers weren’t large, but by sliding your hung-up clobber to one side, you could park yourself onto the fixed chest of drawers until the “dog and pony show” rounds party had come and gone. What AB Winston French mistakenly managed to do one Friday morning, as he sat contorted in the darkness waiting, was to flash up a smoke to pass the time away. When the rounds party entered the cabin, one of its’ doxies spotted a blue haze streaming through the sunlit cabin emitting from the one-inch vent holes at the top of a personal locker. Winsty’ got a bundle for that one but the mystery remained as to how he locked himself in there. “Birdy” Gayton, his good friend and ever-smiling key-keeper, was tsk-tsk-tsking for a week.

‘Toe-the-line’ day

Naval tradition records that in order to get your pay, was nothing like seeing it automatically show up in your bank account as it does today. In days of yore, the “Bursar” (the treasurer) had the freedom of the purse strings. He soon became known as the “Purser” and sailors would “muster by the open list” for their pay. It was the method whereby every man reported as to who he was, and what he was being paid for. On the lower deck, slang entered that described the rewarding event as “white line day” for which he “toed the line” and identified himself and recounted his duties to draw his pay. In *Stadacona*, some three hundred years later in 1962, we still had “white line day,” but with a little bit of modification.

On days before payday, anxieties, or depression as was often the case, would escalate through witness to the “Acquittance Roll” that was posted on the notice board in A Block for all to see. . . noting that everybody including people you didn’t know, your jenny-wren girlfriend, the D.O., the loan sharks, and the bill collectors, were all now “up to snuff” with your financial status. Your popularity would increase, or decrease as the case may be, the latter if after your name and number their appeared but “XX,” meaning no pay this time. . . just two kisses from the Queen.

After Friday Ceremonial’s, we broke off and headed for the drill shed, where of course a white line runs the length at the head of the parade deck. The pay-bobs would be distanced at portable tables in ten sections of A’s to D’s, E’s to H’s, etc. You would fall in in appropriate single files, the MAA and the G.I. still on red alert looking for birds, and progress to the front of the line. When your name came, you would smartly march up to the table, off cap, and place it on the table. Upon your cap you would display your ID card and on stuffy days, the station card as well, announcing, “Brown, D.H. 46490-H. Permission to get paid Sir?” Well times had changed. No longer did you have to tell them what you did or didn’t do, and as long as they were convinced, an ID card, a station card and your own attestation was finally, proof enough to induce the pay-bob. He would then lay down those hard-earned few bills upon your cap. You then signed for it. “Thank-yous” were not required. “Any drips. . . see your D.O.! Our sums are correct. Next man. . . Brown. . . initials E.L., Front and centre!”

‘A’ Galley

Down in the galley, things were somewhat better from the ones in *Cornwallis*. At least it wasn't built of wood. There must have been seating for three hundred matelots and the clatter of aluminum trays and the appetite-destroying stench of scullery steam and dish water mixed with pig-swill food scraps did little in upholding an appetite while standing in line to draw. However, it was food, and getting your swiss steak, spuds, and creamed corn mixed with the dishwater puddles left from the scullery and the still warm tray melting the ice cream in the duff partition made it all look like a techni-coloured yawn. On the whole, the line consisted of single victualled matelots who the card sentry knew were legitimate. What was illegitimate was the odd wayward married hand who got booted out by the ole' girl and happened to know the card sentry. By flashing his liquor permit as a meal card with a wink or two, he got victualled in too. . .but there was that element of sympathy that we all agreed to let him pass. Naturally, the killicks went to the front of the line and that we didn't mind for one day, we would also be killicks and could look forward to that big perk. What didn't go down well though is that the WRENS, regardless of their juniority, all went to the head of the line too. So with ladies first, several estranged married hands, and all the killicks, would you ever succeed in getting your meal. . .and having enough time to eat it before at "Out-Pipes" at 1310, and "Hands Fall In" at M.T.E.?

The Club

Behind the walls of the steam-line servery, you could hear the chatter, noise, and clatter of pots and pans while cooks squared-away from the noon-day rush. Anyone who wasn't a cook would ever ask questions about, or penetrate the rear depths of where the food came from. Well, there seemed to be a few influential people. . .who belonged to the clandestine "Millionaires' Club." Whether if it was cash in your pocket or just a naval influence, the buzz had it that behind those shrouded walls was a gentlemen's social club. It sported an atmosphere complete with table service, wine, and even a sherry before, and a liqueur or glass of port after, a four-course dinner. Who were the particular members we would never know and further, you wouldn't ask. It was a classic case of keeping your place. Many a cook and steward got TG 2 and later, their

OJT's signed off by working at 'A' Galley using live guests as their training aids. They never received a standard ten percent tip. . just a hearty well done and "You did a helluva good job there, me lad!" Burp!

Jenny's Jello Hair-do

RN submarine crews from SM6 were victualled in the galley too. Transport from the dockyard used to take the ratings from the boats at jetty five right up to the block for dinner. The wrens with their head-of-the-line privilege unsettled the troops and sometimes it was further aggravated. During one lunch period and finally served, a submarine stoker went to take up a seat further down into the cafeteria which meant passing the "wrens only" tables. He had been turned to down in the boat and carried that wonderful odour of pure "eau de diesel," added his laggin' and steamin' boots were well oiled too. The hum caught the attention of a dining wren who was very quick to complain aloud: "I wish you people would wash and change clothes before you come up here to eat!"

The stoker came to a grinding halt and peered down at his tray-load of scran that included a duff bowl full of lime jelly and whipped cream. He very carefully lifted the bowl from his tray and inverted it, "Wop!". . right on top of the brazen jenny wren's head. Quickly, one matelot cried, "Hey Medusa. . .take yer cap off in the cafeteria!" The stoker then continued on his way with a suttile grin as the entire galley of matelots were in hysterics. The stoker was never traced and by next day, a cordoned off area was erected consisting of brass stanchions and upholstered cordage that doubly-segregated the wrens entirely from the hands. A Duty P.O. was positioned to keep the peace but spent all his time looking for the stoker who caused him to cane this new-found duty.

"The Bin"

During the days when "The Bin" (*Stadacona* wet canteen) was fledgling, the lads would gather from both the surface fleet as well as the "We come unclean." The Bin (today's Canex) was situated under Pop's pool room and doubled for "Punchy's" kit-musters during working hours. As a wet canteen, there was impromptu evenings when it was announced at the shrill of the bos'n's call: "**D'ya hear there! There will**

be a nickle-nite in the wet canteen at 1800. . .until the barrel's dry!"

This was done well after the married hands had gone home from *Stad* for the day. And to emphasize the meager perks of the single hands, the bar staff would stick a paper bag on the entrance door upon which was written, "**NO BROWNBAGGERS ALLOWED**" indicative of their lunchtime conveyance for homemade sandwiches. But somehow the buzz got round and there would always be a dozen of these letchers charging through the door with their tongues hangin' out and a dollar in hand that would get you a tray-load of "nickle draft."

Submariners, in the meantime and usually on Sundays, would begin with a sod's opera led by Rodney Smith, the killick "scratcher's dicky" from *Alderney*, who I would sail with in years to follow. He would stand on a chair and direct the chorus. Rodney had an exceedingly long, black beard full of dandruff with extending greasy hair cared for with Brylcreem and shale oil smelling nothing like "forty-seven-eleven." He was slight, round shouldered, and very much a typical submariner. He was always garbed for The Bin in a long-tailed coat and carnation, a top hat, and a walking stick and would boldly declare that he was the other "Smith brother" . . . as depicted on the cough drop box. He portrayed to a tee, a "working man's-Fred Astaire" except for his fouled 'skers and gallopin' dandruff.

On those Sundays, The Bin was the only place in Halifax where a matelot could get a wet, apart from Hattie Brown's, a hotel restaurant, or Hum Mow's. At Hum's, if you spiced your request for "special" Chinese tea, it would arrive with your chinkey-nosh encased in a sweat laden teapot topped off with "rum and coke with the upper lid shut."

The Foreign Legionnaires

One early grey afternoon when The Bin closed, a uniformed bunch from *Alderney* decided to play Foreign Legionnaires. They went into the heads, tore off strips of toilet tissue and tucked them in dangling from the backs of their caps. *Stadacona* parade square to the G.I.'s, was hallowed ground and dare anyone to encroach the square unless in an organized party. . .even on a Sunday. These legionnaires felt they were very well organized so therefore fell in with a plan to smartly march down to 'C' block, (SM6 J.R.'s accommodation block) where the Fleet Club stands today.

Meanwhile, the OOD at the main gate heard orders being barked on this normally quiet Sunday afternoon and quickly left the offices to investigate this unscheduled activity. As he approached the squad with his duty crusher, he demanded that the killick foreign legionnaire in charge of this motley shower, march them to the main gate. The killick replied with a “Oui, monsieur!” . . .squad and chopped one off, which further aggravated the OOD. He then ordered the squad, “SQUAD. . .squad. . . Flee!” and everybody shot off in every direction with their makeshift legionnaire hats flappin’ in the breeze. Of the group of over a dozen, two got apprehended and were briskly escorted to the main gate.

About a half-hour later in his office, the OOD’s telephone rang. The posh speaking voice on the calling end identified himself as the “First Lieutenant, HMS/m *Alderney*,” and went on to explain that he had apprehended all of the people involved in the altercation. This delighted the OOD. The First Lieutenant then requested sending two of his own shore patrol personnel to the main gate to take custody of the two prisoner legionnaires. The OOD felt confident with this course of action and agreed with the submission. As a result, two of the most presentable legionnaires appeared at the gate ten minutes later now transformed into spotless #2’s, negative hatflaps, with scrounged-up belts, gaiters, and NP wrist bands. In a very serious and forthright manner, they accepted custody of the prisoners.

Alderney’s First Lieutenant never knew of the incident until the boat arrived back in the YewKay and everybody except the main gate staff can only guess to this day that the voice on the phone was the “killick foreign legionnaire.”

Buy scan...get beer too

Noting that both, the City of Halifax and especially the RCN in its lack of compassion, had little if any for the provision of social life facility for hairy bags. Apart from going to the gym for a swim, the library, or scrounging enough money to go out and eat in a café, there was little that one could do on those Sundays. As The Bin was shut down at 1400, the palates had been whetted for more ale, so what to do next? So much like special tea at Hum Mow’s, other options might include the restaurant at the Acadian Hotel on Hollis St. Beer was forty-five cents a quart but only if it was accompanied with the purchase of food. In 1953, Eddy D’Orsay was a one-badged AB gunner aboard the *Maggie*. He recalls that the

cheapest item on the menu was a cheese sandwich for 25 cents, and as long as there was an item of food on the table, two or three guys could sit at it and were allowed to buy a beer. Well after about three quarts each, the legalizing, peppered with fag ash, lone sandwich had already curled its edges while the cheese within it was showing beads of sweat now equalized to room temp'.

On this day too, a frigate had just come in and a bunch of guys from her came into the restaurant. Among them was this buff O.D. who Eddie knew as he sat down to join the trio. He was U.A. which meant that he couldn't buy a beer. So, while staring at the sandwich, he propped his elbows up onto the table and decided to yomp it. He was starvin'. Then the group quickly got upset as the waitress appeared, re-affirming, "If you want beer, you gotta buy food too!" The problem arose now that by ordering up a replacement cheese sandwich, they'd be two-bits short on buying another quart.

Meanwhile, back at the School...

The T.G.2 course was passing in such a way that I was holding my own. There were tough times when it came to the academic phases but valve packing, hand fitting, moulding, and diesel repair made it a lot more rewarding. In the off hours on weekends, trips way out to the radar station, RCAF Beaverbank, were certainly in order. Many of the WD's out there sure liked our presence and if one or two of the guys had a car, we were on our way. Al "Sunny" Sunstrum had an old 51 Chev' that didn't work right. Because there was a problem with first gear, reverse gear was on the same flywheel so he reasoned, which meant that anytime we had to go "astern," we all jumped out and push the car backwards.

One night, Sunny went out to the Bedford Legion on his own and something else broke down on his old Chev'. He was scheduled to go on leave the next day, so he left the car in the parking lot until he would return to Halifax in two weeks' time. A couple of nights later, a bunch of us got into a nicer, newer, '56 Ford owned by locker-smokin' Winston French who was also on leave and left the keys with me. We drove out to Beaverbank in it, just knowing that Winsty' wouldn't mind, but on the way, quickly realized we were getting low on gas. Dan Dailey, a Hull Mechanic who was related to Sunny, was with us and knew that the car was in the Legion's gravel parking lot. As it was on the way to Beaverbank, the Chev' just had to have gas in it, so we stopped to take

on fuel. We were all dressed up in suits and ties and eagerly, I crawled under the car with a wrench and jerry can to drain the gas tank. As it was getting dark, it wasn't going to be easy to disconnect the drain plug from the tank and aim the gas into the jerry can. By feeling my way about however, I managed to get the fuel flowing into the tank but some of it trickled into my sleeve. One of the guys offered, "Can you see alright under there Buster? Here, I'll give you some light!" Expecting the ray of a flashlight or something, I replied, "Yeah! Okay! That'll help!" Suddenly, the "or something" light appeared as a soft, flickering glow and then grew brighter as I turned my head to see somebody's hand holding a flaming Zippo lighter just starting to come under the rear bumper. "Get that goddam thing outta here!" I cried, as I started to squirm out from under the car. I got out and darted away to safety as flames shot up everywhere and the car was, "Hey presto!" In a state of incandescence.

The car was engulfed as the fire department shortly arrived. Dan, being the fast-talker he was, didn't take long in convincing the fire chief that everything was under control, he was the driver, the owner was his brother-in-law, everything was just fine, and the fire truck could go home now that the fire was out, and saying "Thank you for all the help!" Whew!

As Sunny returned from leave, he asked Dan if he'd been out to the Legion to see if the car was alright. He said, "Oh yeah. I was out there the other night, and she's right where you parked her! She hasn't moved an inch, and you won't have to worry about first and reverse gears anymore!" Sunny, thinking that Dan had turned to on the car was chuffed, and went out there on the thumb returning later. With a smile, he wanted to know why the steering wheel was made of wire, how come the tires, windows, and seats were gone, and who did the rusty, rustic paint job on his pride and joy.

It was times like this though that made me feel good about matelots, their sensitivity and their often-weird senses of humour that was rare in any other society. My mind began to wander onto other challenges feeling the security of being "locked up" in the navy, of good friendship, and the uniqueness of the life as a whole. I had met a few submariners who returned for trades coursing from the YewKay and was inspired about their uniqueness too, and isolation, however still belonging to the RCN. Equally, I admired the RN submariners for their camaraderie and humour, and their mystical independence. There was a calling within me to want to give it a try. There were combined allowances to the tune of \$120.00 a month for being in submarines that included foreign service

allowance. It was a chance to return to England, and then maybe even serve in Malta, Australia, or Singapore. . .but certainly not back in Halifax. That would be automatic if I didn't like it. It would only last for two and a half years and I could opt to return to general service. In 1962, I submitted a request form. It read:

“Permission to be considered for service in submarines?”

On the morning of the day the course had finished we were in the classroom to receive our final marks. There was a different and subdued feeling about everyone because the close ties and friendships we had made over the past six months were coming to an end. Added to the news of our accomplishments on the course, was the anxiety of wondering where we were all getting drafted to. To sea for sure as that was the stokers' bane, unlike writers, jack-dusties, some seamen and the like, who might end up with jobs ashore in offices and in barracks. That was not for us anyway. How does it go? Men belong on ships, and ships belong at sea. After all . . .we are clankies, greasies, stokie boys, or bilge rats, and quite frankly and unless you were married and even that was a variable in many cases. . .that's where some ought, and most wanted to be. Senior (E)'s and Chief ERA's would call it experience.

As the chief instructor was divvying out the numbers, there was a knock on the classroom door and in sauntered my former Chief ERA, Chief Lindsay, who was now the school chief. In his hands was a stack of legal-size forms held sideways, which was a close bet that the “draft chits” were in. He looked at the instructor with that familiar smirk on his face and said, “I've got some news here for everybody!” He then turned his gaze upon the class and claimed, “After I'm finished with you and the instructor lets you go for the day, report to the Reg' Office, get your draft chits and start doing your “OUT” routines. I want 'em done by tomorrow morning at 1100. Be here in the classroom! Any queries...? Good!” he asked and replied in one breath without even looking for a raised hand. Who would, because at this point no one knew his destiny or when to join his ship. There were all sorts of things on peoples' minds but surely wouldn't the queries start after you knew. That would make pure sense, but not the case in *Stadacona* in those times.

“Right!”, the chief barked with his continuing smirk. Pay attention, and as I call out your name, come up and get your chit. “Day! *Bonaventure*. . .Couvell! *La Hulloise* . . . Rostek! *Gatineau*. . . Gagnon!

Fort Erie. . .Brown! sputter, sputter, with a bigger smirk, . . .submarines. . .report to RCN Depot as soon as I'm done here and ask for Chief Pollock the quartermaster. . .Emery, *Sioux!*" . . . and so it went.

Excited chatter began as a result of the good or bad news for which every sea draft had varying affect. "Who's on there that I know...who's the skipper, or the jimmy, or at best, who's the Chief ERA?? The machinery, where's the ship headin' . . .when does she sail. . .is she going into refit or just comin' out to do work ups?"

In the navy, all of these factors are the turnstiles of satisfaction or discontent. There was no dickering about swappin' drafts, or saying no, or getting a ship that you wanted. It was done in complete surprise and you went where they sent you. One factor was common though in that you stayed on the east coast and I suppose, no matter where you were or what you did, everything hinged on running from Halifax.

Meanwhile, I was in a split mind. My classmates looked at me and tried to get a signal. Were they envious, were they chucklin', were they glad that I was and they weren't? How about me? I was not too sure of how to react. I was leaving the RCN so it felt, and in a way that was somehow comforting but one of wondering if I'd done the right thing. My next time at sea would be in a submarine . . .in another navy, and all of the things that people said in the preceding months began to haunt me. "You've gotta be out of your mind!" had said Chief Lindsay on the day I submitted the request . . .or from some guy in the galley . . ." What the hell do you wanna go boats for? Ya' don't wash for weeks, it's hot, it stinks, you're at sea forever, ya' never see daylight, and by the way. . . don't come near me anymore. . .You're gonna smell real choice!"

Off I went in two lanes of anxiety to RCN Depot on the third deck of the Gunnery School. When I arrived, I quickly noticed that the atmosphere of these offices was none like anything I had witnessed in M.T.E. There was an air of quietness and efficiency with only a few people who seemed contentedly busy. A killick in 2A's noticed me and came toward the reception desk. "Yeah . . .what's up sunshine?" he asked. "I'm here to see Chief Pollock. Am I at the right place?" The killick sized me up and saw my G.C. and red stoker's badge and said . . . "Oh yeah . . . you must be AB Brown goin' in boats?" I nodded and he said . . . "Follow me this way!"

He led me into a tiny office, where seated looking down at masses of draft sheets, was Chief Pollock. He laid down his pen and looked up at the killick. "This is Able Seaman Brown chief. Just finished T.G.2 at M.T.E. He's the one goin' boats." "Ah yes!" the chief said. "How do ya'

do Brown? Are you all ready for this?” “Gesso chief!” I replied. “Good! In that case you can get on with your processing routine. I want you to get a medical, do the “pot,” and then report to the P.S.O. for a mental test. You’ve got three days starting this afternoon so in the meantime, report to the manual party P.O. and work for him the rest of the morning.” I thought . . . “Mental test?”

Off I went and quickly I was turned to with bucket in hand. Above a classroom door on a ladder, cleaning the upper window was another volunteer, an AB stoker by the name of Rick Selka, someone who was to become a close friend for many years to come.

I did as the Chief said, and there was only a week to get ready to leave *Stad*. There was something else I had to consider and that was what to do with my drums. I didn’t want to give them up in thinking that there’d be plenty of opportunity to play them in the YewKay. I got them packed and shipped from NSD in the dockyard. They would go overseas aboard Furness-Withy’s M.V. *Manchester* as military drums to Liverpool and then to HMS *Dolphin* some six weeks later. The price for that meant scrounging enough for a mickey of rum and because there were several pieces, I held onto the side drum that when in its canvas, looked like a smalley kit bag.

Doing the pot test was the “yes/no” factor in determining if your listening appliances were capable of withstanding fluctuating ambient air pressures. It was at the French Cable Wharf in Dartmouth where HMCS *Granby* (the now engineless, go-nowhere Bangor ‘Sweeper converted to a diving platform) was secured. Being wintertime, I can remember entering the pot with a P1MA who didn’t waste any time in getting down to 100 ft. It was the first time I had ever experienced such a sensation and all I can remember is how he kept raising his thumb in the air assuring me in a high-pitched Mickey Mouse voice, that everything was alright and my eardrums hadn’t pierced. What puzzled me was how did he know, if my ears were on me and not on him. After a pressure of 50 psi had been attained, we equalized and in just seconds, the airtight exit door opened. All of a sudden, this huge cloud of fog filled the chamber and as I climbed out of the pot into the snowy wintry air, there was a trail of steam going up, back, besides, and in front of me. I began to walk up the hill, my greatcoat emitting enough steam to roll a Parson’s geared turbine as the P1 scablifter shouted from the distance . . . “Good luck Brown!”

A scablifter is the title bestowed upon a medical rating in his capacity as an assistant to a senior medical specialist or commissioned surgeon. The term “tiffy” is a complete misinterpretation that many sailors today,

wrongly associate with as singling out a person from the Med A branch. When the RCN had them, technical apprentices were “artificers” and were regarded as the navy’s lower deck highly-skilled technical capability. Hence, they were dubbed as “tiffies.” It didn’t take long to have a little fun, so Jack quickly labelled the sick berth attendants and medical assistants as tiffies too. As included technicians and now recognized as “sick-bay tiffies,” they assisted and oversaw on the maintenance of peoples’ anatomies, the proficient issue of french-safes, aspirins, and band-aids, adroitly running short-arms inspections whenever the Squadron M.O. said so, and were relegated to within a fifteen-thou’ tolerance only, when administering stitches to hung-over matelots after a punch up.

The next day, I did the P.S.O., so-called Mental Test and was mystified at some of the questions and demands. “Do door knobs attract you?” or “Do you prefer ground glass, or coarse sugar in your cereal?” Replies came back from the examining officer whose conclusions cited that “I didn’t mind shining brightwork” and that “I wasn’t a fussy eater.” Then I was instructed to “Draw an example of a human being.”, followed by “Now do one of the opposite sex.” In my amateur sketch qualities, I produced an image of a guy in a suit and tie, smoking a pipe. In capturing an impression of the fairer gender, I drew a very tantalizing young lady in a bathing suit. The rationale on this exercise concluded that: “A/B Brown is conservative, but shows a tendency in preferring males!” I suppose the assessor came to that conclusion because I chose to draw one first. Then written in red pencil at the bottom of the second sketch, was the observation: “Man displays tendency to be oversexed!”

So, before the journey to the YewKay begins and as the barracks, fleet school, parade square and roadways of HMCS *Stadacona* are now fresh in the mind of the reader . . . it is timely in recalling of another departure from *Stad’*. In just a few months after I left, an event was to take place that would witness the skills of pillage and plunder in generously contributing to naval history for many, many years to follow.

The Shovel

Within the Maritime Command Museum in 1998, there was a contemporary exhibit well regarded among submariners but through the course of four decades, had languished into a near non-entity within the skimmer fleet. During the night on the 27th of February 1959, the Chiefs’

and Petty Officers' Mess in *Stadacona*, informally referred to as "S" Block, was burned to the ground save the skeleton of its brick walls. All of the inhabitants escaped without injury due to the quick response of the fire sentry, Able Seaman Raymond "Topsy" Turner. Many records, memorabilia, and personal belongings went up in smoke but had it not been for the sharp awareness of good ole "Topsy," results would have been more catastrophic. So the homeless, barrack-stanchion inmates were now consigned to "F" Block, a decrepit old WW2 structure down the hill in *Stadacona* toward the dockyard. It was therefore quickly seen as a necessity, that the Chief and Petty Officers were in desperate need of modernized accommodation and perks that should remain parallel to their status.

Work began on the construction of a new mess that faced onto Barrington Street immediately adjacent to "F" Block, it too overlooking H.M.C. Dockyard. Conforming to tradition, a shovel was implemented in the "Turning of the first sod." and Commodore M.A. Medland, RCN Barracks HMCS *Stadacona* was bestowed with the honour of doing so on 26th September, 1961. A prominent tally plate was attached to the business end of the implement, whereupon etched were the details of the Commodore's garden work. And so that this little piece of history could be regarded and paid tribute to for the new building's lifetime, the shovel was exhibited as an on-display symbol of the Commodore's act at the foyer of the once-completed mess. As otherwise discernible mess members came and went by the trophy case, no one really paid much attention to a simple garden tool that bore a brass tally commemorating the event. After all, it was only a shovel and no matter which Commodore was in charge of RCN Barracks, the guard of the day had the undeniable authority to Decide and Declare, "Yes please. I certainly believe there's a need. Let them have a new mess!"

Part 1. .the cunning of Andy Maclean and his mates

In April of 1963 and by then, there were a few mess attendees who thought that the shovel did bear significance. And so it came to pass that because trophies are displayed as symbols of success and accomplishment, it also meant that such hallmarks had a certain amount of heraldic and historic value. If this were to be the case, then such a prize was worth absconding with. The coxswain of the Royal Navy's H.M. Submarine *Alderney* was CPO Andy Maclean, who by his flamboyant

but unwitting initiatives was to lead the introduction of a threaded larceny throughout the world that would extend for over thirty years. The story was to begin.

Alderney was based on the Halifax Station of the 6th Submarine Squadron and after a successful and lengthy exchange programme with the RCN's Atlantic Command, she was ultimately destined to return to the YewKay for major refit. As Coxswain Maclean and some of his messmates were waiting for motor transport to the dockyard to board the submarine, they elusively 'nicked' the shovel. Following good submarine tradition and oft-deviousness of the like, it was an appropriate thing to do. Later in the day as the boat backed out from Jetty 5 in the dockyard, mess staff watched with inquisitive interest from the windows on Barrington St. Then in bewildered surprise, someone on *Alderney*'s bridge began boldly waving what appeared to look like . . . a shovel. The mess staff quickly ran to the trophy cabinet to find that where the shovel was, now installed was a box of Tide dhobey dust and a pair of mankey shitnicks.

Several days after the crossing, the submarine drew alongside HMS *Dolphin* in Gosport England. The shovel was then transported to an analogous stowage for display . . . ashore in *Dolphin*'s Chiefs 'Mess. In complimenting the inscription for Commodore Medland's accomplishment, a surmounting brass tally bore the inscription:

**"Misappropriated by the sods of
HMS/m Alderney, 10 April 1963"**

The lark had started! Later in the year, HMCS *Athabaskan* would visit Portsmouth, England where vengeance would ensue. Aboard the east-bound tribal class destroyer was Chief G.I. "Bud" Flanagan who had a personal interest in the shovel as his recent job ashore was 1st exec on the Stad' mess committee during the *Alderney* pinch. Accompanied by the Buffer, Petty Officer Sid McNevin, they went on their mission. Bud Flanagan recalls: "I had no help from within, but I picked up that it was in the Chiefs' Mess in HMS *Dolphin*, the submarine base across the harbour from Portsmouth's H.M. Dockyard. I took the buffer with me and both in uniform, we headed for "King's Steps" in the dockyard where the Admiral's barge was berthed. I then convinced the coxswain that we had to get to *Dolphin* for an important conference. He then agreed to ferry us across to *Dolphin* pierhead. We arrived about 1400 and inquired where the mess was from the 'pierhead Quartermaster'. Off Sid and I went to

discover that when we got to the mess, lunchtime had come and gone, the bar shut and the mess completely empty.

There on the bulkhead was mounted the shovel so I used a sixpenny coin as a screw-driver to get it adrift. As we had brought our burberrys with us, it would be easy to hide the spade. And then, because the Main Gate was much closer to the mess than the pierhead and a chance of catching a boat back, it would be much easier to go out the gate and catch a bus over to the civvy ferry terminal instead. Once back over in Pompey, Sid, the shovel and I, started to hit the pubs to show off our prize but we almost lost it. In one of the pubs, a patron contacted the local press but instead we quickly repaired back to the ship and I locked it up in 'B' gun support. At 0900 the next morning, I heard this shattering pipe: "Chief G.I. and Chief Bos'n's Mate. . . Lay aft. . . Report to the Captain's Day Cabin." Our CO was Cdr Peter Hinton and by the time we got to his cabin door, found that the press was onboard in looking for the story. We did so while pictures were taken etc. but after the press left, the skipper said, "You two get back into my cabin now!" He then gave us the riot act and a 'supreme blast a' shit' for not knowing better. Then he shook our hands and invited us to sit down and join him for a wet. By the time we sailed, a couple of attempts had been made from the *Dolphin* Chiefs' Mess to re-acquire it but they failed. On the way out of harbour, the C.O. had the shovel hoisted at the 'yard, as we were to do when we entered Halifax Harbour at the end of the trip."

The shovel had been successfully retrieved and a third inscription was tacked on. It read:

"Re-appropriated by HMCS Athabaskan DDE 219."

"Re-appropriated by the sods of Atha-bee,

17 October, 1963."

On arrival in Halifax, *Athabaskan* secured at Jetty 5 also the berthing jetty for SM6 submarines. Some days later, a ceremony took place that would see a joint marching contingent being formed on the jetty by none other than Chief G.I. Flanagan who had also pre-arranged a shovel-reception with the *Stadacona* C&PO's Mess President at the mess. The recovered trophy was chained and padlocked to PO George Carrick's wrist, he, armed-escorted by two other petty officers with FN's, at the 'shoulder'. Following the escort party was the entire complement of *Athabaskan's* Chief and Petty Officers who had mustered a bunch of noisy, clanging mess traps to provide march-music. Behind them, were

two uniformed submarine chiefs who in an upright position, each supporting a boat hook mysteriously acquired from the R.C.N.'s Admiral's barge which lay at the inner camber to Jetty Five. Straddled between the boat hooks was a "jolly roger" flag, symbolic of the submarine service. Following the colour party were the senior rates of H.M.S/m *Auriga*, the boat that had since relieved *Alderney* on station.

The parade moved off and up the dockyard roadway exiting through North Gate onto Barrington St. Civilian police were closed up to hold traffic so that the contingent could march south on Barrington without interruption to the front entrance of the *Stadacona* mess. On arrival, the steps leading into the mess were seen to be lined with uniformed mess members sporting plastic shovels at the 'slope'. This line, of minds renewed with closer attention to safeguard, led well into the mess to where the shovel would be returned to a new and better-secured display cabinet now re-located deep into the mess instead of at the front entrance. In attendance were, the Commodore and Commander Johnston, both of RCN Barracks, the Commander SM6, C.O. H.M.S/m *Auriga*, Commander Hinton, C.O. HMCS *Athabaskan*, Danny Cram, mess president C&PO's mess HMCS *Stadacona*, and a large shower of mess members. Cdr Johnston stowed the shovel. All Canadians present applauded with cheer while the Brit' submariners booed and hissed. The bar was opened and stayed that way till very late and into the night and early morning. Bud recounted later: "Unfortunately, and although I assured Hinton earlier . . . he was under the impression that in order to march up to Stadacona on Barrington St., we had cleared permission with the Admiral (we had to march past his office windows) and the Halifax City Police, but I failed to on both accounts. So I got another blast . . . then followed by another wet."

The fourth inscription on the shovel was then tattooed with the acclamation:

"Returned to proper owners and stowage"

"Indians of Stad"

"Stowed by Cdr Johnston, 8 November 1963."

In anticipation of *Auriga*'s departure to YewKay nearly a year later, a replica shovel was then resurrected to divert attention. It didn't. They got away with the real one and as it arrived back in *Dolphin*, it was carted back up to the Chiefs' mess once more. This time, it was secured on display in such a way that security at Fort Knox was child's play

compared to what a would-be thief in the *Dolphin* “wets” was now confronted with. The fifth inscription on the shovel was to read:

**“Re-misappropriated by the Kippers of
HMS/M Auriga, 10 September, 1964.”**

The replica was now also up for grabs and the travelling stories of the shovel(s) continued now, by another navy who’s scheming ways were also successful. The next stop for the genuine shovel was one that extended temporary ownership to a third continent. It was to abscond but remain south of 0 lat. and around the *Meredies Pacificum* for over ten years.

Many “Aussies” infiltrated *Dolphin* in the mid-sixties concluding that Oz submariners removed it from *Dolphin* to HMAS *Penguin* in Sydney but failed to inscribe of their feat. As it arrived down under, the shovel was then displayed on the bulkhead of the Junior Rates’ wet canteen in *Penguin* barracks which indicated that the appropriators had somehow ‘done one over’ by gaining entry to the Chief’s Mess in HMS *Dolphin* to make the pinch.

There it remained for nearly a year as home to the R.N.’s 4th Submarine Squadron. Above it, was some kind of a foolish crayon drawing of two very pleased and happy ducks, with the caption, “FLY UNITED.” Was this an indication that the spade had been shipped south via air-mail? Soon after, and in the interests of commonwealth relations, it was wilfully transported to New Zealand on a good will visit by HMS/m *Taciturn*. On arrival, it was presented to the wet canteen at HMNZS *Philomel*, the Kiwi naval base in Auckland. The recipients were trustingly instructed to take care of it and display it in their bar for sailors from around the world to see . . .and fetch if you will. The times and dates of changes of hands and ownership are not recorded but what is surely known is where the shovel was. Within the next 2 to 3 years, it was to return to Sydney at HMAS *Platypus* but “they” too, never attached a message of the accomplishment. The next recorded theft was from H.M.A.S. *Platypus* to YewKay in 1969. It read:

09 Jan 1969

**“Nicked from the dinks of Platypus by the
pomms of spare crew and Trump. R.I.P.”**

And to this point having now projected well into time, the visit to Part 2 of the world-wide travels and adventures of the shovel shall continue later as much more evolves.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUBMARINES - A GODLY PURPOSE



"Like the destroyer, the submarine has created its own type of officer and man with languages and traditions apart from the rest of the service, and yet at the heart unchangingly of the Service."

Rudyard Kipling

(The Fringes of the Fleet, 1915)

I flew overseas from Trenton in an RCAF "Yukon" transport, but had I been married and accompanied, I would have sailed by steamer. Now that would have been a change! Jet travel was taking over and in the early sixties, the trans-Atlantic liners were dwindling to the big ones only, like the *Queens* ' and the *United States*. We arrived in Marville, France, the RCAF fighter base, to find out that the C-119 'boxcar' to RCAF Langar, Nottinghamshire, wouldn't depart until the next day. I went over to the "A/C's mess" where a big party was on and being in my sailor's warsuit, the drinks were buckshee. One of the ramp crew got to tell me that there was an RAF "Dakota" getting ready to leave for Lyneham, to the west of London, and if I was anxious to get to YewKay I should go out and ask if I could get a flip. The A/C took me out onto the ramp where the Dak' was and introduced me to the flight steward. "Flight steward?" I thought . . . suddenly realizing that this was a V.I.P. flight, I said, "Any chance of going over with you?" The steward said, "Can you sweep floors and make tea?" I didn't say no to that opportunity because it would put me in the south of England much earlier than planned.

We took off and I wished I had that “hanky to strain the tea” as I discovered that ‘pigeons’ used tea bags and my scissors were in my housewife. “Only in England you say. . . pity Canada and the RCN for still using loose orange pekoe!” After a very short while, we landed at Lynham. The broom was worn out and all the tea got scuppered. It was now time to get a train to London.

Remembering “how”

Waiting on the platform at nearby Swindon in Wiltshire, the excitement of being in England again was overwhelming. It seemed like ages ago that I had left 'ole blighty', and I was anxious to see if I could find my way back to 18 Belmont Grove in Chiswick. I got off the train in Paddington Station and took a tube. All you had to do was remember what colour the ‘Line was and what direction to go. Green for District Line and Ealing Broadway or Richmond on the front of the train told of its westbound destination. At Turnham Green, I got off and the familiarities of urban London flooded me in memories. The clickety-clack and the dynamo whir of the ‘District’ departing in the cool misty evening air. The smell of malt vinegar, fish and chips and guinness wafting about... the sound and diesel-y odour of the #55 double-decker heading to Acton as it zipped by on Chiswick High St. This all made it seem that I had never left England at all. Little had changed except that the bomb ruins were all but disappeared and a few new buildings now stood in place. Seeing nan and granddad for the first time in all of those years was to be my last time. Beyond *Dolphin* and the short years that followed, they were to pass away. Without any knowledge of my father’s past, I began to feel that I was the last family tie to England.

In the morning, I had found my way to 1 Grosvenor Square in the heart of London, and HMCS *Niobe*, the RCN’s Headquarters in the United Kingdom. I reported in early and none the worse for wear. I was introduced to the killick writer, LSAW George Stark who was to become a long-time acquaintance and the resident memorabilia chandler in Halifax when he retired many years later. It was a delight to be spoken to instead of hollered at for a change. As well, he crossed my palm with a “casual,” along with a chit that said I was entitled to draw a NAAFI issue of a carton of Exports, a forty’, and a bottle of wine. I quickly grew encouraged with an assuring an independent feeling. I suddenly realized

that there were perks to this new adventure and it was now time to head for Pompey. Now where did that name ever come from?

Not knowing “how”

Born of the teaching that if you didn’t know . . . ask, so I did, and was issued with two answers. In the name of Pompey the Great, a Roman General who opposed Caesar and fought the Mediterranean pirates didn’t seem to jive with things Anglo-Saxon. The more realistic explanation was a drunkard’s inarticulate attempt in trying to pronounce “Portsmouth Point,” the good run ashore of the sailor in olden days, now known as “Old Portsmouth.” This is the fortified area to starboard on entering the gut of Pompey Harbour . . . or outbound from where the Wright and Logan photographs of ships leaving harbour are taken, even the ones from the RCN.

My first mistake was getting off the train at the wrong station. Armed with two kit bags, a suitcase full of civvies, my ‘tachee’ bag and a side drum, I ended up standing at a bus stop at the Guild Hall, right in the middle of the city. I soon found out that had I got off the train at the next stop at Portsmouth Harbour, I would have been on the waterfront, somewhere near where ships and submarines would naturally be . . . I supposed. After two bus rides, the first one being the wrong one, I got to the ferry pontoon landing at Pompey Hard, where I could now clearly see about a dozen submarines across the harbour near a building with a large lit-up marquis board that read H.M.S. DOLPHIN. All I had to do now was cross the harbour on the Gosport Ferry, I thought . . . take a left, and walk what looked like no more than a thousand feet. Not knowing that the historic Haslar Creek penetrated inland from where the submarines were to a distance of over a mile with no bridges, I then found out that another bus ran just once an hour that got you to *Dolphin* main gate.



Two hours had now passed since I got off the train and finally I arrived at the gate. With little discussion and a flash of my I.D. card, the sentry let me pass with the direction, “Roight Canada. Jus’ trundool dan the seafront ‘ere and report yoreself to Alecto Colinade. It’s ony abat’ a ten minit wawk! Roight ‘den? Off I trundled with my kit like he said in his cockney, only to find that when I got to the Colinade, I was in the wrong place. The duty crusher similarly said, “Nah Canada! Yore s’posta report

ta Dawlfin Two. Na-a ‘ere’s wotyado! Go awl tha way back to the main gate, make a roight . . . don’t go left uvvawoise you’ll end up in the oggin, roight?? heh-hee! . . . Wawk fer anuvva foive minits, and there y’are guv’ . . . Dawlfin Two ‘ard on the stawb’d soide . . . Roight den? . . . Tra-daw den, Canada!”

By now, three hours had passed since getting off the train, and looking back at Pompey city on the other side, seemed only a stone’s throw away. I now got some help. The duty crusher said that I could take a cart to hump my bags in, with the complete understanding that I sign for it. . . which meant more walking to return it. Off I went to *Dolphin II*, after breaking the pencil point and meandering like a combined “barra” boy” and brewery horse, pushing this oxen cart with wooden spoked wheels. I



“The Tank”- HMS *Dolphin*

arrived at freezing cold Turbulent Block a half-hour later, dumped off my bags, and about-turned to return the cart. My shoe leather was quickly wearing out. Submarine training was to begin sharply the next morning and immediately, being spoken to instead of hollered at, was to be short lived, but that night, I met my classmates to be.

The Tank” . . . “Take a good. . . deep. . . breath!”

It always struck me funny that the first thing you did in learning about submarines, was how to escape from ‘em. On this first day, we were marched to the Submarine Escape

Tank Trainer, (S.E.T.T.) and if you were successful by overcoming this obstacle, you were committed and there was no turning back. Strangely too, if you passed the test in the challenge of submarine escape, you became aware of the quality of your physical and mental capabilities and felt indoctrinated into the underwater realm in making you very apart from your former brothers in general service. The tower-like construction consisted of ten decks, accessible by a lift that surrounded the tank itself. It was fitted with a complete replica of a submarine escape compartment

with a canvas twill trunk at the bottom, 100 feet below the surface. Inside, was a diving bell that could rise or descend to any controlled depth. At the thirty and sixty-foot levels, there were two compartments, or locks, through which trainees would emerge in preliminary training. Adjacent and isolated from the tank structure was another replica that typified the gun tower of a submarine, modified and doubling as a means for “two-man escape.” It was on the ninth deck and exited into a 3-foot deep reservoir at the 100 ft. tanktop level, above on the tenth’.

The tank staff had a complete regard for safety. In attestation, when one peered down to the bottom from the tanktop, there were as many as half a dozen instructors who swam about freely and popularly known as “swimboys.” Unlike fish in their agility as it appeared, they would calmly subsist with trapped air-supply from side blisters or from the bell. The sight of these calmly immersed super-humans would certainly help to remove any trepidation of doing a “free ascent” when your turn came.

We did the pot once more, and as much as I assured the instructor that I had already been that route . . . **“Get yore colonial arse in there ‘Canada’, ‘n shitinit!”** demanded this chief whose name was Mallows and would later become my coxswain in *Alliance*. The RN did have something in common with the RCN. They too, had a capability in demanding that you “discard the content of your bowels into your head gear,” so I shatinit and got into the pot, this time feeling like a veteran for doing it again. After passing that one successfully as I thought I would, it was much less alarming than it was at *Granby*. Was this an indication that it was acclimatizing you?

Later, we completed the ‘dry’ lectures and saw scratchy films. “Arturus Down”, starring Coxswain Banks, has had thousands of submariners before us who shall for eternity, remember the phrase, “Arturus calling . . . Arturus calling!” The double-feature included a more recent demonstration in escaping from a sunken submarine called, “Grampus On Patrol.” This was to be an updated version that starred some contemporary submariners including LSEM Brian Dagenais, an RCN stoker. The fact that “he was in it too,” gave us Canucks a greater sense of purpose.

In the afternoon, it was finally time to get wet. This was to be the most sensational encounter with the elements that anyone could ever imagine but it didn’t start out with assurance. Sidney Sidebottoms, more endeared as “Inspid Sid” because of his flat personality, was to be my mate in doing the gun-tower escape. This phase was done as a gentle introduction that when pressures equalize underwater, opening a hatch from an escape

tower is easier than doing it out of the water. We climbed up into the tower to find that many, oh so many, had been in here before. Pre-engineered and in red stencilled-lettering, clearly marked were instructions as to where to put your feet in order that the mass volume of two people could safely squeeze into the tower without losing a leg or a hand when the lower hatch was shut. "FIRST MAN, PLACE LEFT FOOT HERE . . . RIGHT FOOT HERE" "SECOND MAN . . .etc." We did, and as the lower hatch was shut, it was now time to flood up and equalize. I was the first man and in flooding up, the content of trapped air allowed us to breathe as well as equalize with the depth of water above the upper hatch. At the tap of a signal from outside, I became bewildered in thought, convinced that there were tons of water above me. I nervously opened the hatch and because of the air in my vest, went rushing out of the tower, goggles came off, cracked my head on the hatch handle, and swallowed a gallon of water. I found myself in a tub of water no deeper than the level of the hatch, and a series of tossing heads from three swimboys. "Neva' you moind 'Canada'! You'll be awlright!" I had learned to take charge of my emotions the hard way, by banging my head. . .instead of using it.

Training went on through the next day after doing ascents from the thirty and sixty-foot locks, and now it was time for the big one . . .two "free ascents" from the 100-foot lock. Escapes were done donned in Mk. 5 S.E.I.E. suit, one being a less-demanding tower exit and the second, as a God-fearing 'rush escape' from the compartment. The class was split into two, and we mustered in the escape compartment at the base of the twill trunk to do the 'rush escape'. Water filled the compartment at an alarming rate as the ambient air temperature and pressure quickly increased. In short time, the canvas twill trunk quivered, indicating that the compartment was equalized and the tower lid was open that provided the 20 second or so ascent to the top of the tank, albeit, a long and distant, hundred feet away.

Procedure was that as your turn neared to the base of the ladder going up into the tower, stationary breathing units (B.U.'s) were inserted into the mouth and handed from one man to the next as the numbers reduced through the tower. Further instruction, and to be hygienically polite, was to give the unit a quick rinse in the water before you handed it back. "Insipid" was the man ahead of me, and it was clearly obvious that he had difficulty with toothbrushes and making visits to dentists throughout his lack-lustre but youthful life span. He had teeth just like the piano keyboard back at the Seagull Club in Halifax. One white . . .one black . .

.one yellow. . .one missing, with gums enshrouded with the “gunge” from the foot pedals. He preferred not to be polite by choosing not to rinse the B.U. I was gasping for breath and so inserted this warm, spongy, rubber mouthpiece into my gob. Oh, the joy to the palate of what I had bore witness to, a smiling “Inspid”!

It was now my turn, and at the very loud exchange of communications with the ‘tanktop’ officer, Chief Mallows reported, “**Man ready in the hundred-foot lock!**” Then came the response from up top, “**Stan’by! Stan’by!**” . . . **Tap-tap . . . tap-tap**, came a metallic noise from someone banging on some metal, somewhere between here, and up there. “**Take a good . . . deep . . . breath!**” ordered the instructor, and I went under the water and into the tower with about a fifty-pound air pressure in my lungs. I shot out of the hatch and was quickly seized by two swim boys who looked me over and now jabbed me in the stomach with outstretched fingers . . . the signal to start blowing out. I instantly remembered what Chief Mallows had said in the classroom earlier. “Pucker your lips and just blow out like a brown hatter’s whistle!” I re-arranged my moosh just like a destitute goldfish and began to blow out, while bubbles surrounded everything from my neck up. Then I was released and went soaring away, all the while being watched closely by the swimming-at-will swimboys. The exhilaration of speeding through the water to the bright light and fresh air on the surface is something that no submariner can ever forget, and all the while remembering to “keep blowing out.” As the chief also put it . . . “Much better to have asphyxia than riga mortis!” When I broke surface like a champagne cork high into the air, I was still blowing out great volumes of air. “Where was it all coming from?” I’m reasoning, as I fell back onto the water, upped the gag relief on my life vest, and swam to the side of the tanktop with a strange mix of bewilderment, while chuffed with myself. I had done it, and the work of the instructors throughout those two days removed the one enemy of this adventure . . . Fear! Once that was eliminated, the rest was easy. I had, “done ‘the Tank.”

A short period of adjustment

Now that we had been indoctrinated and our worth tried, being in *Dolphin II* and training for submarines was quite a change from what any Canadian matelot was accustomed to. It required some personal adjustment. When it came time to go and eat,

the scran was typically English. Bet that the menu for every dinner and supper was exactly the same everyday but provided some variety except with three choices. Roast of beef with mushy peas, snake and sidney pie with mushy peas, or toad in the hole with of course, mushy peas. They could all be accompanied with chips, chips and more chips, so many that it made our arseholes turn square. And if you asked for more chips, the chef would ask, “D’ ya want chips with that?”

Macaroni, as any Canuck or Italian would attest, will usually arrive all smothered in cheese. Not in *Dolphin’s* Vulcan galley though. Discover that there’s macaroni alright but instead, accompanied with raisins and plenty of milk and nutmeg Voila! Macaroni duff. Not too bad and rather tasty and some might disagree. One day a wayward Canadian, who becomes better known on a later page, had already loaded up on a roast beef dinner but as he neared the end of the steam line where all the duff was, in bon-vivant delight he spotted the macaroni. Being ravenous of the unforeseen and copious supply of tubular pasta that stood waiting to be pounced upon, he ladled three heaping scoops of the sticky stuff right on top of his already piled up meat, ‘mushies and chips’. “M-m-m-m- delicious!” he mused, as he jackstayed his payload of vittles to a vacant seat at a table amidst the many other diners in the packed-out galley. Our Canuck sat down and commenced to yomp his mountain of groceries in suddenly realizing the cock-up. Meanwhile, all eyes were upon him in unbelievable amazement but in concealing his quandary, he vigorously yaffled it all like he was really, really enjoying it.

Meanwhile. . . back at the Block

Digs in the two-storey Turbulent Block offered the barest of necessities. Understandably, so built for the sole purpose of providing a minimum of shelter ashore for war-time “motor toppedo boat” crews in this formerly HMS *Hornet*, there was little to be had in comfort necessities. A series of messdecks on two decks enclosed by un-insulated brick walls, designed with eight men to each space. Being the winter, it was colder indoors than it was outside in urging me to get my other blanket out of my kit bag. Donkey’s breakfast bunks and well-worn cortisene decks was what one was to adjust to, but that wasn’t to be a major problem. Hot water supply was. The communal showers being in very limited supply, meant that if you lost the race to the first four guys who had their’s, you could look forward to a very, very cold one. The

only way to live with that predicament was by getting up in the middle of the night and beatin' 'em all to it. Not being a favoured choice for well-needed sleep, instead I could abstain for the purpose of getting accustomed to life in submarines by maybe havin' a birdbath on the weekends.

And then came the classrooms. The methods by which the Royal Navy operated were very traditional and often behind that of the RCN. Classrooms weren't rooms in a centrally-heated school building, but a series of one-room wooden huts with a door, two windows, a chalkboard and about ten desks. Each had a coal-fired, pot-bellied stove to keep you busy stoking it up well before class would start to be reasonably warm but with stinging, watering eyes throughout the winter weeks.

Submariners to be

The lads on the other hand were full of personality, some outlandish while most were witty characters. Smartly dressed . . .sarcastic, original, eccentric, patriotic, cleverly silly, confident, scheming, shrewd and aesthetically crude. Most were intelligent, very proud of their navy, and moreso now by going into submarines of their own will.

Stan Wyatt, a killick sparker, had a classy Norton motorbike and explained how he always took it indoors at his party's house and parked it up against the mantelpiece in her sitting room . . .so it wouldn't get pinched. Georgy "Goose" Largue's widowed mother was getting on at fifty-eight and had decided to marry again. The Goose maintained that on the big day, he would attend the wedding in Dipton, Northumberland, and give Mother Goose away to her new husband. Ron Elliot was possessed in making strange and funny noises. His pet game was to strap on his imaginary flame-throwing tanks over his civvy suit before he went ashore. He would walk along Southsea Front and prepare himself each time he was about to pass by an 'old dear'. He would turn on his tanks, aim his torch, and with derisory noises, blast away at the elder. When the deed was done and to his satisfaction, he would declare of her: "Another flamin'-granny in a state of incineration!"

Two-badged Able Seaman, "Mad Mick" D'Aish was a UC and a southern Irishman from Dublin who had no cause for the IRA. Mick was known to all submariners and the ladies ashore and called "The Man of a Thousand Faces." At his spontaneous will and with his rubbery facial features, he entertained us with everybody from Laurel and Hardy, to

Prince Phillip and Pinocchio, or maybe Pope Pius XII. Mick was hilarious. He was the epitome of a matelot who was tall, had blond curly hair, and in uniform, wore his cap at the familiar wind-proof square and tilted slightly aback. (the mark of sea going sailors) And too, with a seven seas crease in his bells that you could use as a tiffy's square. He started his naval career in the Irish Navy and had the distinction of sailing in that short-lived mob's single corvette. Mad Mick was certainly a lady's man where we learnt that he made serious efforts of having one, or two, or three, in every port from Rothesay, to Port Said, to Fremantle, and even Greenland. He was witty and was always chuckin' shite at the officers. One day as he had just saluted a passing Commodore, Mick had taken note that below all of the gold braid that adorned the peak of his cap, this officer had an extremely large mouthful of ivories. Mick observed of him, "Just like a Japanese Admiral . . . all cap tally and teeth!" A sea-goin' sailor he was, who played guitar, some mouth organ, sang shanties and knew every word from every Sods' Opera. He justifiably wore an earring, a black onyx stone on his left pinky, a gold ID bracelet, a Rolex submariner, and among many others, a tattoo of a shitehawk on the back of his right hand . . . and at sea, save for the 'tatts', he would stow 'em all away.

How it came to be

There are two things that need attention here before some old traditions and priorities are lost through time; the earring and shanties. I describe Mick as justified in wearing an earring and weighing his live-wire and aggressive personality. In my experience, there was a handful of RCN matelots who wore an earring and that was seen as an admired symbol for sailin' round the 'Horn under canvas. Today, the wear by males is against regulations in the navy that in the 1980's, came as an overwhelming result of civilian fashion, fad, and vanity. But in getting the record straight, who was really first?

It was the custom for seamen to wear a single gold earring pierced in the left ear for it was said to "improve the sight and health." Whether medical opinion would ever support the theory is not a concern, for they would never agree with anything you do to your body except take care of it anyway. It is a fact that in the days of prize-fighting, 'seconds', in seeing that their man was in an exhausted condition, would bite his left ear and draw blood. Accordingly, the bettors and other onlookers agreed

that this rough treatment had the desired effect of bringing the fighter quickly into action again. Did it really work?

Mick sang ditties at sods' operas and knew them all. His versions of "Maggie-Mae," "Make Fast the Dinghy," "The Good Ship Venus," and "The Chatham Ladies" as examples, were uttered with the true and original untamed versions along with symbolisms that would stir any civilian or Jenny-wren, both in ear and stomach.

Songs in the navy were formerly known as "fore-bitters," because as the audience gathered around the vocalist as he would stand on the fore-bitts . . . the socket of the mainmast . . . and perform. Fore-bitters were also known as "O Come Ye's," for the first lines usually ran: "O come, ye jolly sailormen, and listen to my song. It's only forty verses, and it won't detain you long." Shanties on the other hand, extend from mercantile navies and are based on African spirituals. They came about soon after the abolition of slavery when many blacks were out of work and took jobs on merchant ships sailing from New Orleans and other ports. When at sea, they found themselves longing for their homes on the plantations and sang old spirituals that recalled their shanties to them: hence the word, from the French, "chanter" . . . to sing.

Fire Brigade are we??

When you were duty in Blockhouse, it simply meant that security and fire-watch were the priorities. It's a shame that the methods and such facilities didn't match to combat modern day security threats and better technological means of extinguishing fires. Everybody was armed with no less than a billy club and if a fire should ensue, meant dragging out a spoked two-wheeled horse cart that was laden with hoses, spanners and a couple of portable extinguishers. Here we go again in cursing the opportunistic officer who transformed the matelots into horses at Victoria's funeral. Such was the case at Trot 2 during the night when a fire erupted in the harbour between two P-boats. No doubt, somebody had flicked a lit butt into some fuel polluted seawater. If water was needed on the jetty to provide area or surface cooling, a gas-turbine portable seawater pump fitted on another handcart was drayed to the proximity of the fire. The first requirement after flashing the turbine was to drop the suction hose into Haslar Creek off the jetty to muster a flow of seawater. It worked great at high tide but any level three feet below it simply affirmed the laws of physics and maximum suction lift. No pump

in the world was capable, so if the tide was out or on its way, gave little alternative than to call the local Gosport Fire Brigade. Then in anticipation of their anxiety and unfamiliarity among the several submarines, point to the one that's engulfed in flame and enshrouded with smoke and announce with some assurance, "That's the one! That's the one!"

Domestically, we were to remain immediately responsive and "ready aye ready." When duty, we existed in "Hotel Rapid" (Rapid Block), the grot also designated for transients, waywards and R.A.'s who couldn't make it home at night. On double cots with a donkey's breakfast to lie on but not in, we were to stretch out for our few short hours, fully dressed and ready to go. With watchcoat, boots, belt and gaiters donned, you'd ensure that your feet were propped up on the bedstead frame so as not to soil the mattress covering, using your yellowing white cap as a pillow. If your booted feet dropped onto the pit, you could bet that the duty P.O. would be on 'em with a stick in just moments. To keep them warm, we were allowed to keep our hands in the watchcoat pockets that we signed for on our tour of duty every four days. Those coats were choice . . . worn daily by different people, and only enough in slops that there wasn't time to send them to "Sunbeam, the cleaners." Many of the lads ended up with scabies or bedbugs after a night in there but I guess the 'dreaded lergy' didn't take much to Canadians.

. . .And other naval amusements

The Wrens

Friday nights was "Canada Night at 'the Ranch'," the well-known NAAFI Club in Pompey that was spaciouly spread out in several large rooms on a single floor, hence the jest in name. Word got out about this jovial and enticing weekly escapade. It became so popular that as many as fifteen Canucks would show up for the evening whether they were on a boat, in Blockhouse, at *Dolphin II*, or even spare crew. The jenny wrens in tow were generally doggo, and from the north of England or Scotland. Because a train journey up the line for the weekend was either too far or too expensive, they would opt to remain in Pompey for the weekend. The good-looking ones whose homes were in the south were duty on the weekend, so that provided a nice balance of dollies interspersed among the "dragons" and "tanks." During the dances, they were all open game,

but they often gave the impression that they were already taken. "Would you care for this dance luv?" I would ask. "You'd better ask my boyfriend!" she'd reply. Responding quickly to a statement like that, "Well, I don't wanna dance with him . . . I wanna dance with you!"

Across the street was HMS *Dutchess of Kent* barracks, (the Wren'ery), or to us at the Ranch, "Dutchess o' Bent Carrots." It was handy for them to nip over and change their lagging to whatever was best suited for the evening's plan or better yet. . . go get some more money.

Getting back aboard

Getting back to the Fort at nights, often presented a problem. At midnight, the last Gosport Ferry had sailed and the P.A.S. boat from *Vernon* pierhead had packed up by 2330. One option was the out-of-schedule, "Pink Boat" that was sculled by an enterprising Gosport doreyman when he felt like it. The fare was 2s. and 6d. aboard this like-painted wooden skiff. "'alf a cra-a-ne to you sir fer a one-way crossin'. Keep yer 'ands in the boat at awl toimes. . . no fawlin' asleep please and thank you very much!"

Other more reliable services were desperately required, and it wouldn't come as a result of the cunning of submariners. In order to get the maximum of kip, and grab the first P.A.S. boat in the morning without having to trek through Portsmouth or Southsea, meant being on the pierhead by 0615 sharp. Two- or three-Ton class minesweepers from the woodpecker fleet were usually secured at *Vernon* pierhead. With the availability of these "floating Bed & Breakfasts," there was a little instant cash to be made by people in today's awareness, whose surnames would have been "Fawlty." The duty watches would get a chalkboard situated prominently on the jetty that bore an advertisement. **"Tea and a Shake Sixpence! Clear off by 0605"** As we'd stagger up the gangway in the freezing cold and often wet, we'd be directed to the forward mess via the foc'sle. "What a zoo!" Submariners for the 0615 boat were kipped out on tables, the deck, benches or anywhere whose bods' you could slip between. In the dimness of the mess were resonating snores and grunts that were diffused with everybody fartin' like a bunch of brewery horses. It was worse than the Leopard's Den in the 'Home Club. Then through what seemed to be a very short and uncomfortable night, by 0600, there was this thundering voice that hollered down the hatch. **"Get up. . . piss. . . and pay for your pits!"** We then all surfaced and dove into this

steaming pot of tea to try to get the cold out. There was never enough tea, so we shared, we paid our tanners and at the invitation to that brusque ‘direct’, the heads were always out of bounds.

The .303 re-appears

And all the while, there was always a time that you had to get nailed. I did, for on a noonday exit to “The Dolphin,” a lunchtime pub outside the Gate and a short distance along the Spithead embankment. Endearred by submariners all, and appropriately dubbed “Dolphin III,” four of us went for a pint and a bite to eat and showed up in work dress. Much to our surprise and in the pub was the training officer from *Dolphin II*. His name was “Shonkey” Norris, whose identity was well-chosen through the large and dynamic dimensions of his proboscis feature. He eyed us while we bellied up but nothing was to be said until Hands Fall In at 1315. As far as Shonkey was concerned, we were run on divisional officer’s defaulters and charged twice for breaking Barracks Standing Orders. Not only were we outside the gate during working hours. We were ashore in work dress. That did it and we ended up with 14 days #9’s, the equivalent of the RCN’s #5’s. Running 9’s with ‘.303’s at the high port’ in *Dolphin* seemed a lot different than FN’s on *Cornwallis* parade square. Not because of the rifle, but because this was punishment aimed at the individual, not a whole platoon who couldn’t get their drill and timing right.

A little persuasion

Six weeks had passed and by the end of March, we had been instructed in Part I, basic submarine construction and systems, equipment and routines in general. The method at that time was to be issued with reams of system sketches, operational and technical instructions and notes that we were required to paste and catalogue into a huge binder. But now that the main basic course was over, us stokers would isolate and get stuck into the nitty-gritty in taking the one-week Part II, ME’s Acquaint course, specific to the branch we served in. Then after being aboard *Tally-Ho* and at sea in *Grampus* for some famil’, I was drafted to HMS/m *Andrew* in the Far East as the Block Draft was to assemble. When aboard, I would

have to bring it all together and commence Part III (at sea) training to finally qualify in submarines.

“Peanuts,” at FADO (Fort Additional Drafting Office) was the ‘drafty’, and when you’re in business, this three-badged killick was not to be omitted from opportunity. Word had it that the colonials might be somewhat approachable for a deed well done. Peanuts was aware of the entitlements of foreign allowance that included the monthly NAAFI issue and, in a pinch, his sharp pencil could easily slip for a preferred geographical destination, especially those with a “T” for temperance on their station cards. His pencil had an eraser on the other end of it that could also be brought to the action state if a particular submarine was included to sweeten the transaction. My card had a “G,” got grog. . I wasn’t approachable!

The Fuelling Jetty

I had six weeks to wait for the block draft to finalize so I was detailed off to work on the fuelling jetty, prepare for the foreign draft as well as take a little embarkation leave. Fuelling every class of submarine that the RN had to offer became an introduction to the several complexities of fuel systems in different boats, but surface craft weren’t to be excluded. HMS *Dolphin* was also home to two convertible gun/torpedo boats because of proximity to *Hornet*, the former MTB base, and diesel fuel availability. *Brave Borderer* and *Brave Swordsman* were powered by three Proteus gas-turbine engines in order to maintain their cruising speeds of 50 plus knots and a day at sea in them was just that, as they adventurously consumed their complete lading. The three-propellered “guzzlers” weren’t too popular as far as the fuelling party was concerned, returning around dusk from their daily round trip to France and shopping for duty-free wines or maybe a high speed run out to Land’s End and back.

Up in Arrogant block, we rushed and scrambled into our blazers and ties to get the duty boat over to *Vernon* before the *Braves* got alongside or else we could look forward to staying back and “toppin’ em off” for the next four hours. It didn’t stop there. The fuel filter elements constructed with countless columns of moisture-absorbing paper discs were of great necessity in meeting the modern, high-standard, technological requirements of fuel purity intended for use in Proteus gas turbines. Once fuelling completed, we would have to disconnect the

awkward and weighty elements and rotate them. We would wrestle them up the jetty in a horse-cart to store them in *Vulcan* block galley's antiquated furnace room to dry them out and return to install the "dry" ones. Very high-tech, it was.

We would start to get antsy while standing at the pierhead in blazer and tie to board the P.A.S. boat. In the distant, the high-pitched scream of the turbines could be heard from the Spithead just outside the harbour entrance as *Swordsman* and *Borderer* were on their way in. Once aboard the P.A.S. boat safely concealed in the after cabin and peering through a scuttle, we could see the ole' chief running up the jetty and waving his arms to stop the boat and retrieve his fuelling party. We liked the "masters" of P.A.S. boats because they were just like London busses. Once they left the bus stop . . . they never backed up or waited for stragglers. "Neva' you moind mate! Anuvva' one'll be by in an 'our. Strong union. . . the Port Auxiliary Service!"

A "Killick" am I . . .

Oh what a joy! This hit me like a ton of bricks. In March of 1963, out of nowhere, I was promoted to killick, and this would make for some confusion when I was to join HMS/m *Andrew* in Singapore. In the meantime, the flak started with candid recognition and rewarding comments such as, "Who shit on your arm?" or, "How'd you get your hook. . . in a raffle?" or, "They're makin' anybody these days. . . never mind, when's the wet-down?" And wet it was, for after getting' em in, the ritual began where everybody poured a wet on my gleaming new 'hook' that took a week to dry out the sleeve.

"Before you go on leave, get your passport!" warned the Jaunty. I called *Niobe* and spoke to the 'scribe', George Stark, who assured me that it was all organized. By the time I would get back from leave, it would be in the mail waiting for me. Rick Selka was going to *Anchorite* on the same block draft, so we decided to go on leave to Cambridge and Nottingham. Rick, like myself as a young boy, was in England during the war and his fate during the bombings was to evacuate to Cambridge. I was introduced to Rick's relations and one night, we went out and met two sorority frauleins from Germany who were attending university in Cambridge. These two attractive girls caught our attention for several days in several ways, but it was now time to move on to Nottingham. Before we left, we assured the girls that on one day soon, we would go

over to Germany to visit them when they were home for a holiday. They passed us their addresses and as we got out onto the M1 hitch-hiking for the north the next day, we gloated over the scribble on the paper to find that the girls lived in Brandenburg. . .in East Germany. That ended that opportunity!

As a young boy, Rick had met a girl who was now a nurse in Nottingham and he assured me that she had lots of friends, one of whom worked as a barmaid at the Peach Tree pub. Sounded good to me especially in that Rick supplied me with the nurse's address as my official "address on leave." We arrived and the novelty of two Canadian sailors walking the streets of Nottingham was to become a long-lasting, sweet then bitter memory. In jest as we passed a statue in front of a public building, Rick grasped my attention when he said, "Buster! Take a look at this. You'll never believe it. It's Robin Hood!" Immediately, I thought, "Oh yeah. Sherwood Forest, the Sheriff of Nottingham. Next we're going to see King Richard himself prancing down the street on his charger and if you kept your eyes peeled, who knows, Friar Tuck?" But there on a pedestal was a dumpy little five-foot, pot-bellied, bronze image of a medieval woodsman...and below read the inscription: "Robin Hood." What a let-down when we think of images of Errol Flynn and Richard Todd in emerald green! The only likeness that I could see, were the fletchings on his arrows. Then, . . . the sudden news.

An ill-starred lady goes down

On the 10th of April, 1963, USS *Thresher* (SSN 593) while on 'yard trials out of Portsmouth New Hampshire, went down with all hands off the continental shelf 220 miles east of Boston, Mass. The sinking of *Thresher* in all submariners' minds remains vivid, and falls into the category of where were you when Kennedy was assassinated, or when Canada beat Russia in the final game of the 1972 series. Of course, Rick and I were in Notts' on a "rig run." After having just graduated from submarine training, we were splashed with "Canada" flashes, a hook, a G.C., a stoker's badge and a gold wire cap tally that read and said, **H.M. SUBMARINES**. We had yet to put up our 'dolphins' that were soon to come after getting to sea. We looked forward and were anxious for the days ahead.

It was around noon of the day and as news of this disaster filtered throughout the world, the locals of Nottingham weren't excluded in the

resulting shock and grief. The fact that “that word” on our caps for these by-the-sea starved civilians meant to them at least, some menial association with the poor devils that had gone down and I suppose we were the only human tie with the catastrophe that they could relate to. It spoke well of the British faith and their enthusiastic support to those in the armed services, and I shall never forget it. People would gaze at Rick and I with combined admiration and a look of emptiness in their eyes, showing clearly about their genuine grief from such terrible news.

Meanwhile, in Halifax

In addition to the US submarine fleet, any submarines local to the areas were called upon to assist in the mass search or better defined. . .as a time for “submariners to unite.” In Halifax, HMS/m *Auriga*, whose fore ends compartment had recompression capabilities, was in the midst of a maintenance period. Apart from many other systems in disarray, her 187 asdic dome had been removed from the bows and from a hydrodynamic stand point, her structural seaworthiness was compromised. Regardless, she sailed while down below, everyone concentrated on preparing the fore ends with PO2 Art Bodden in charge. If for some reason a miracle would occur and there would be survivors to care for, was enough to instil the crew with urgency and untiring energy.

As the boat sped to her destination on the surface, some two hours later she was ordered to return to harbour as official news came that *Thresher* had gone to the bottom and was “lost. . .with all hands.” As *Auriga* slowed and came about, the crew sadly abated from their determination to assist. Lt. Coward, the navigator, who passed news that once the exact area in which *Thresher* had gone down was confirmed, the seas were just too deep to expect the possibility of any survivors. An overwhelming feeling of sorrow had spread through the boat as it did in every submariner’s heart throughout the world.

And with every submariner throughout the world, just a few hundred miles from Halifax, there was personal grief of the men who had lost their former shipmates. It is further described by a then, young American submariner who had acquaintances and personal dealings with some of the crew in USS *Thresher*.

The honor of an officer of the United States Navy

On the 10th of April, 1963, I had just gotten home (near the Armdale Rotary) from the day's efforts at the Joint Maritime Warfare School in HMCS *Stadacona*. The phone rang. It was from CDR Bill Kinsman, the Operations Officer on the staff of Flag Officer, Atlantic Coast. He asked how soon I could be ready to go to sea and would I report to the HQ when ready. I answered that I was on my way. I told my wife that one of our submarines was down and I would be gone for a bit. I surmised that was the case for there was no other reason I would be asked to go to sea at immediate notice with no explanation over the phone. Only secrecy would dictate that and as a submariner, I knew all too well what hurried and secret sailings meant. I rushed upstairs, tossed some khakis, underwear, socks, and toilet goods in a kit and left for FOAC's HQ.

I went into the Ops Room where there was a good deal of activity going on but with little noise above a hushed voice level. Bill Kinsman was at a chart table with CDR Ken Vause, the RN S/M 6 Squadron Commander, and the Chief of Staff, Group Captain Creeper, I recall. CDR Kinsman beckoned for me and pointed out the last known position of USS *Thresher*. It was over two thousand fathoms at that spot.

He then went on to tell me that Ops' had been intercepting messages from the U.S. Submarine Forces for the last hour or so and had issued "Recalls" in preparation for getting all available ships underway. A short-notice, duty destroyer was already singled-up and ready to go. Additionally, they had called up F.D.U. clearance divers who were now gathering divers' hoses and associated equipment. The Air-ops people had alerted the "Argus" squadrons at Greenwood, N.S. and I believe at least one airplane was already airborne and heading for *Thresher's* last-known position.

A reporter then called from one of the local TV stations to inquire about the general recall he had gotten wind of from a sailor friend. The Chief of Staff told him he had nothing to report on at the moment. A short time later there was another call inquiring about a missing submarine and the Chief of Staff told him that the submarine in question was safely tied up at the pier. The reporter then asked if an American submarine was in trouble. He was told that if they thought there was something going on with the U.S. Navy, then they should check with those authorities. The Royal Canadian Navy of course, keeping the problem quiet until the U.S. Navy went public.

The Admiral then came into the Ops Room and asked the Chief of Staff if everything was set and got an immediate answer that they were ready. He then got on the hot line phone and asked to speak to the U.S. Submarine Force Commander. When the U.S. Admiral came to the phone, the Canadian Admiral said, "Sir. The entire Canadian Navy and Air Force is at your disposal and ready to go." He then went to confirm which forces were ready to get underway, get airborne, and what other forces were being readied including support. I can only imagine the reaction in the United States. The Canadians were never included in any of the message traffic but within hours of the first reports of trouble, had stepped forward to assist their ally. Frankly, as I recall these events, not only do I have goose bumps on my arms but also, moisture in my eyes. I had a number of former shipmates in *Thresher*. The main propulsion assistant was in my section at Submarine School. In a former position, I had even gone to extraordinary lengths to get a chief electrician's mate transferred to the doomed boat so that he could be with his brother. The previous winter, I had been in Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for several months and got to know many of her crew, both officers and men. All were gone. While some of the emotion I feel is generated by those thoughts, there is a tremendous feeling of pride that wells up whenever I think of the event. Here I was, standing in the headquarters of a foreign navy, whose commander and his entire force had just committed themselves to an unsolicited task of unknown magnitude for "my navy," and I had been chosen to serve with that navy under that commander. How very fortunate for me. I was honored.

LCdr Richard Gallipeau, USN ret'd

Author's note: Richard passed away at his home in Grant Fla. USA, 19 June 2002. He left behind his wife Marion, three sons, and a daughter.

The physical reality

With all the excitement of the disaster's aftermath, approximately a month later, a USN rescue vessel had entered Halifax harbour carrying debris from *Thresher* that had been recovered by DSRV *Trieste*. The vessel had requested the RCN in providing radiation detection equipment on her arrival, which as it turned out was not readily available. RN submarines however, when deployed on foreign stations such as Halifax,

did carry on inventory, a Geiger counter which was quickly released to the rescue vessel to conduct tests. At least *Auriga* could do a mere



USS Thresher - SSN 593

“something” as a contribution to their American brothers. The debris to be examined was a torn section of fan trunk upon which bore the stencilled inscription, “SSN 593 THRESHER.”

Meanwhile . . .back in Yewkay

I felt within me, an introduction to a feeling of pride and a sense of belonging to “the Trade.” For within this brotherhood that I had wilfully joined, I was fortified by the sinking of *Thresher*. I now felt for the first time, and was to for the rest of my life, the uniqueness and prestige of becoming and being “a submariner.”

Brothers of the ‘phin

*No matter where you travel,
when you meet a guy who’s been.
There’s an instant kind of friendship,
‘cause we’re brothers of the ‘phin.*

What am I?

An emotional time indeed had Rick and I experienced but by the time we got back off leave in *Dolphin*, I was to be quickly aroused with a “welcome home” chit inside my station card. It read: **“Report to the MAA’s Office immediately!”** “Now what?” I wondered. I bimbled over to Alecto Colinade and was instantly blasted by a red-faced jaunty with, “Brown! HMCS *Niobe* telephoned us. We ‘ad recalled you from leave. Where the bloody ‘ell were ya’? Bleedin’ ‘ell, we’ve ‘ad the bobbies and the post office goin’ round to this address in Nottin’am lookin’ fer you fer an ‘ole fortnight and you were neva’ there. So where the bloody ‘ell were ya’ . . .ay? You are leavin’ for Singapore in three days and you don’t ‘ave a passport. You are not . . . repeat . . .not a Canadian! So what are you?”

Well out of that litany, I worked out that my address on leave should have been the Peach Tree pub where she worked, but it suddenly sunk in that I was not a so-thought, naturalized Canadian and still an expatriate British citizen not having ever applied for Canadian citizenship. I had little time to get a passport that was in the era before polaroid cameras. At a local photography shop however, British photo-technology did have a means by which a picture could be developed in chop-chop time . . .but at a price. Never before in international history had a passport been produced for a lowly matelot in such a record time as within two days . . . at own expense.

CHAPTER SIX

SM VII - HMS/m *Andrew*

Nemo Me Impune Lacessit

(No one touches me with impunity)

We flew out to Singapore from London's nearby Stanstead airport aboard a BOAC "Bristol-Britannia" on a thirty-hour flight. In addition to a dozen of us, the block draft included a lot of wives and children. It was a Thursday night and we would travel through seven time zones with brief stops at Istanbul and Bombay. We wouldn't arrive at Paya Lebar Airport in Singapore until the Saturday morning. Right away we knew that there was going to be an awful lot of cranky kids. Apart from running around helping an 'Irish colleen' stewardess warm up the babies' formulae and trying to amuse the slightly older little snotters, it became well worth it. I had managed to get a date with her on the first night in Singapore, but as luck turns out that if it were raining beer, I'd get drenched in bilge water. After getting down on the ground, I began to run a fever. An embarkation party in Pompey, the time change, little kip, rum and blacks, and the 14-mile trudge into Singapore city slowed me right down. After a couple of "excuse me" phone calls to announce my delay, I finally arrived at the Ambassador Hotel at eleven that night to misunderstand as to why she went out with the pilot instead.

Singapore, in 1963, was in transition as a British crown colony and nothing near the pristineness it is today, although there were moves afoot to at least get it going that way. In 1965, she separated from Malaysia as a state, and became an independent republic. All the roads and monsoon ditches 'chucked up' with domestic outfall and drowned jungle rodents that prompted us to dub these waterways, "the sweet water canals." Being only 70 miles north of the equator and the island virtually covered in jungle, forests, and mangroves, the hot and humid weather never varied at all. Singa pur, (Sanskrit: "city of the lion") was a grand old city and its founding as an entrepot and strategic position on the trade routes made it an excellent duty-free port. "Change Alley" was the best place to go to do your bartering. Laws of the day were not well enforced but independence was soon to come and things would rapidly change.

Other popular spots for jack, began just outside the dockyard gates in Sembawang at the food stalls and bars. The road then wound onward to the Kampong of Nee Soon, home to the Ghurkha Regiment and the nearest

tattoo parlours, Serangoon, Seletar, and Orchard Rd. in downtown Singers' itself. Across the causeway from the other end of the five-mile long base at Woodlands, was Johor Bahru on mainland Malaysia. Most of the "RA's" (married with ration allowance) lived there where when we got a grippo and "up homers," the run was on by getting out of the way of the Amahs cleaning up the houses.

Inboard digs



At Royal Naval Barracks, HMS *Terror*, we were assigned to Keppel block, the mess for the "VM's" (virtualled members) unaccompanied and single submariners only. Here, the hands of the crews of four submarines turn-stiled back and forth to sea. In RN standards, they were a vast improvement to what we had become accustomed to in the pre-war brick and freezing digs in *Dolphin*. Eight hands to a well-spaced, twenty by twenty terrazzo deck cabin with overhead fans and wicker furniture. It opened out onto balconies on two sides, and this would be transient home for most of us,



Behind Terror Barracks, HMS Medway in "the Creek" with S63 Andrew, Amphion and Ambush alongside. Note pontoons and "African Queen" inboard

for the next two years. Down the gangway were the communal ablutions that had plenty of showers with a bottomless supply of water. Singapore

had no shortage of fresh oggin because of the monsoon season's heavy rains that cascaded daily. You could set your watch by them. At precisely 1303 for instance, huge, thick and black clouds would open up and offer the "Reign of St. Swithin" for exactly sixteen minutes. After overflowing the reservoirs and filling the sweet-water canals, the sun would blast out again and now the afternoons became as steaming and sultry as ever. That was the case as we ran getting soaked, down the hill behind barracks where *Terror* edged onto the 'straits. There was HMS *Medway* . . . a river-boat LCT mother tender to the 7th Submarine Squadron upon which, three of the squadron's four boats were secured on her outboard side. *Medway* was moored offshore by about a hundred yards and the means by which to get to her was on foot, on a system of chained-together and bobbing-as-you-went pontoons.

The boat. . .

We stepped aboard *Andrew* for the first time to find that 'tropical routine' tot time was well underway and many friendships among the "qualified" were to be renewed with our arrival. Going down that forehatch was a time I shall never forget. Because this was the boat I was drafted to, everything about it became part of a personal ownership. The reality of everything surrounding me was the environment I would live in. The fittings were the same as any naval vessel except that now and especially in submarines, they were miniaturized, compact, more robust, impregnable . . . the tightness of it all. But the heat, the humidity and the charming aroma that came with it was nothing at all like any surface vessel.

Immediately, I knew that there was to be a lot of adjustment in qualifying as a submariner, and now that I was aboard, the task became two-fold. When my draft was cut in *Dolphin*, I was recorded as being an M(E)1, the RN equivalent to an ABEM1. In the RCN, I was ABEM Trade Group 2 and if "drafty" was aware that I was qualified for promotion to killick, I probably wouldn't have been drafted to *Andrew*. The qualified RN LM(E) intended to join the boat had had his draft stopped and sent elsewhere. Too much money and administrative time had been spent as a result of this mistake I supposed, so the draft remained effective.

Now that I was here as a not yet qualified "makee-learner" in submarines and being one of four LM(E)'s, I was detailed off into the somewhat lesser perks and subordinancy of the "donk-shop killick." This

compounded a dilemma if there was to be one as I didn't meet the pre-req' that submarine killicks in the stokers' branch must have before promotion.



It told you of the importance and the navy's dependency of the rank of "LEADING" Seaman and served reason to why in just a few years later, the Royal Canadian Navy didn't need to muddle itself with the inclusion of the Master Seaman's rank and with it, the acceleration of the first line of supervision. It drastically reduced the responsibility, prestige and purposefulness of its' Leading

Seamen and through that inclusion, were once again relegated to "just joined the navy" scrub-outs, duty watches and lesser responsibilities among the Able Seamen.

Meanwhile aboard *Andrew*, to fully understand the operation and workings of a submarine was one obstacle. But equally if not more important was having to take charge of competent qualified submariners in an unfamiliar and very complex engine room in a demanding environment that in my wavering determination, was to be a supreme challenge.

"All compartments . . . Make your reports."

It was to be a week later and as we closed up at harbour stations, you could immediately feel an accelerating anxiety to get underway. The pipes reporting back to the control room spelled out the necessities. "Engine room closed up at Harbour Stations! . . . Engine room hatch shut, clipped, and lashed!" From further aft, "Motor room closed up at Harbour Stations . . . Both main motors ready, "grouped up"!" or from up forward, "Fore-ends closed up at Harbour Stations . . . Fore-hatch shut, clipped, and lashed. . . strong-backs shipped!" and then the lighter and humorous reports began that I was soon to learn, were so very important to morale. UC2 "Happy" Day our one-time gunner, dressed in his ambushade battle tunic and machete reports in his Brummy accent, "Gunnery Department closed oop at 'awba stations, sah! . . . Tampion out, an' oop me awse sah!" followed by our only chef, Leading Cook "Tanzy" Lee. . . "Galley closed up at 'arbour stations . . . Oven door shut and clipped . . . chicken's awsehole ventin' inboard, Sah!" A very dry, re-assuring and official "Rogah-h!" comes back from the bridge from where now, the Captain has left his cabin above the control room for the bridge and calmly orders, "Obey telegraphs!"

He was a very lofty and slender 6ft. 7 in. Lieutenant Commander whose “drawed-out” name was William (Bill) Caspar, Carnegie, Swinley. Although he took on the appearance of being an advance party for a famine, the riddle in the boat was, “What’s long and thin, and lives in the fin?” (refers to the captain’s cabin location in the tower leading to the bridge) . . . to which he would always mildly smile.

The first dive was a bit of a hairy experience. As *Andrew* was destined for a refit by year’s end, the “safe to dive” period had been extended. Safe depth, before supertankers started taking to sea in the droves that they are today, was just ninety feet and that’s where we remained. After we got down to such a wimpy and dwindling depth, the fore hatch leaked as well as fittings in the engine room and after ends. This wasn’t very encouraging but because everybody seemed to shrug it off, it didn’t take long to start throwing my shoulders into the air in unison. What was now realistic was how quickly the air changed. Without efficient air conditioning and near 90-degree sea temperatures, the events from reading WW2 submarine stories in the Far East of which A-boats were of that vintage, designed for the Pacific but not participants, now became a living reality. The heat and humidity became bearably unbearable and it didn’t take long to realize why everybody wore little more than football shorts or a wrap-around sarong and sandals, and slept on a rush mat. Machinery was shut down and apart from the odd domestic railway fan, the only other method in reducing the flow of sweat was to wipe yourself down with the messdeck door, duty curtain . . . that everybody else used when they went in and out of the mess too. It was reckoned that the absolute temperature in the engine room was 3 deg below scalding and conditions on board did not support life. I was to learn later that there might be a cure. Take the submarine deep with the main vents open until we went through a layer at about 140 ft as the temperature dropped some 30 degrees in 30 ft. This manoeuvre flushed out sea water that had been taken in when diving which was around 85 degrees and we would sit below the layer while we changed the water in the internal tanks as well. This gave us a cocoon of cooler water which made life a little easier, if but for a few hours.

Being unsure up in ‘Keppel’ while packing my steaming gear before we sailed, I had equipped myself with wearing ‘nicks’ as always, along with a pusser’s T-shirt, lofty blue shorts, and pusser’s steamin’ boots. Too much and wrong choice for in no time at all, not only did I suffer from prickly heat and chinkey-toe-rot, I came down with dhobey’s itch and inflammation to the private parts as well. The pain became intolerable and I finally gave in with a visit to the coxswain for medical aid.

Submarine coxswains had multi-roles. Not only were they the regulator, the padre, the grocer, and the helmsman at harbour stations, but the apothecary as well. Such pleas for help as, “Swain. I got diesel oil in my eyes!” or “Coxswain. I've got a bullet hole in my head!” resulted in professional, remedial therapy like “Sorry, I didn’t bring any white canes to sea with us!” or “Well, go stick a codeine in it!” Now it was simple to determine the degree of their medical qualification and accorded sympathy. . . simple and none. On this very sore occasion, there was no provision for substitutes in submarines, especially as a dependent killick stoker. Besides, never think for a moment that the single, day-working, senior killick of the mess was going to stand in for the rookie, bonehead, colonial killick. I was to remain in the watch bill, under prescription to liberally apply calamine lotion to my naughty parts and live with it. After the first application, it began to cake and encrust from the heat and sweat just like craters on the moon. For physical support and not morale, I was also ordered into wearing a diaper. I was to extract it from the precision sealed packaging of a MK. 5 S.E.I.E. escape suit with the added responsibility that if we were to make an escape donned in MK.5’s, I was to use the suit I had broken the seal to get into. The huge, puffy diaper, that’s designed to absorb the no-needs while floating on the surface in waiting to be rescued, did contribute to some support but navigating was another problem. I could barely walk, and to leave the mess and go through the boat to the engine room took about ten minutes looking like an overgrown “New Year’s” baby with the agility of the old year’s, old man, making exit at the stroke of midnight. For three days, I was limited to leaning on the donk shop desk and getting the register filled in. I was the hot-talk, colonial object of the boat. . .but took it with ginger. Deep down, not only did I feel humiliation and uselessness but such a poor entrance to life in submarines meant that after I got better, I had a lot of catching up to do with my Part III sea-qualification. To this day, when it gets hot and sticky, remnant reminders return. Not only in my shorts, but also in my mind about doing snort watches, chasing pipe runs, sketching systems, blowin’ shit tanks, and rhymin’ off all the valves on the main line system.

Two kinds of different dedication

With such an introduction, I was soon to learn that life in submarines required a whole different outlook in the business of going to sea. The term “all hands in” is ritualistic, and it depended heavily on cohesion and

positive spirit in this new life that I would encounter. How teamwork plays such an important role. Simple things like if you're heading inboard . . . take a bag of gash with you, or if you pour a cuppa', make sure you don't forget yourself. Help with the dish up if your idle, or share the two small fans by waiting till someone's asleep before you train one upon yourself. Living conditions in submarines in tropical climates, or for that matter, under the ice, demands not only self-discipline, but commitment, cooperation, patience, and above all, humour. For every man aboard, he must forget about himself and dedication to his submarine and messmates become the two sole priorities.

A typical day at sea was to be a domestic routine so precise, in order to satisfy the needs of a full crew who were closed up in maximized watches. The simple need of peeling spuds is an example that extends from the single steward's responsibilities of looking after the wardroom. As anyone can imagine, the navy has spuds as a main staple for all meals, even the ones left over that were fried up and chucked in with breakfast. Spuds had to be peeled that would supply enough for two meals in the day ahead and where the steward was strapped for time and resource, the wardroom portions of spuds were included in the requirement for two spud peeling stations in the boat, one forward and one aft. The output was known as the "stokers" and "sailors" spuds. If we were dived, the requirement was less of a pain as far as the stokers, the electricians, and a few after-endees were concerned . . . who formed the after station. The engines were shut down and the requirement had few distractions. During the five to eight morning watch and after the lube oil separator was cleaned and the 'dies-oil' scrub out was done, out came personally-owned paring knives. If you never owned one, peeling spuds with a dinner knife was near to impossibility, wasteful, and above all, time-consuming. We would group up on the donk shop platform, while listening for ballast pump orders, with fannies half filled with precious water and spuds that would look after half of the crew for a day. No one seemed to mind of the oil slick and engine carbon that was mixed in with the spud water and tattooed on the spuds themselves. At three spuds per thirty-three men per two meals per day, quickly calculated to a hundred "murphys." The same quota would be done from the sailors' mess during the same watch, their spud peelin' headquarters in the dimly lit and sultry air of the fore ends.

On that same 5 to 8 morning watch, the time soon came to go forward and shake the reliefs for the 8-10. Never go anywhere unless you could transport something with you and as the on-watch stoker worked his way forward to the mess through the darkened control room, he would be taking

the tea fanny with him full of a freshly brewed rosie-lee. Once in the pitch-black mess where all that could be heard was the whir of the two little railway fans, a fart, and a snore or two, he would shake the reliefs quietly and wedge the fanny on the deck in case of a sudden tilt of the boat. He then would take three plates with him as he riddled aft to deposit them at the galley. To speed that up and so that chef could spend minimum time in the stifling heat of the miniature galley, tins of aregonos would go into a stewpot and muffin trays were filled with coconut oil making mini pools for eggs to be added. The trays were then wedged into the oven and left to 'roast' for about fifteen minutes. Meanwhile, he would prepare tinned veggies like beans and carrots in the washplace across the passage that never got used at sea except by chef who had already begun getting his dinner ready, long before doing breakfast.

Later, the stoker doing the shakes would return with three plate-loads of "Shit on A Raft," and a 'dishin'up' fanny full of lukers' and teepol. By having to do the dish-up, the opportunity was that you got to wash your hands. After the watch coming on had yomped, they would now come aft to relieve, one of them carrying three more filmy plates for the watch to draw breakfast. Up in the mess, time would have gone by when on went another bunk light or two. The rest would finally turn out, grabbing that very last precious moment of kip. After these ugly sights had a quick cuppa from the cooling tea fanny, the chief stoker would now come in the mess and get them all turned to. As the off-coming watch, we would remain and do the dish-up, square off the mess by turning up the pits, dropping the table leaves, and start a scrub out of the mess and passageway using what was once the dishing-up water. Then we'd finish off by arming ourselves with coarse emery cloth to "bollock the battery boards" . . .one in the mess . . .one in the adjacent passage.

Double-Deckin'

Here it is timely to consider how both the quantity and quality of food plays such a critical role in the business of going to sea in submarines. Often referred to as "stored for war for 90 days" defines that the fundamental requirement for food and its' equally rationed distribution to the entire boat's crew becomes the Number One criteria and perhaps fresh water, the second. The abundance of carefully monitored fuel consumption or the conservative and well-planned discharge of weapons be they torpedoes, mines or deck gun ammunition indeed align as a lesser priority.

On top of the fresh bread and vegetables that would quickly go to rot into day 3 of a patrol meant that for those 3 days, “fresh” food would abruptly end and be glaringly substituted with canned varieties of bacon, sausages, babies heads, tinned duff, baked beans and you name it, that were to be the main staple for the rest of the patrol. Extra food meant countless cardboard cartons that in “storing for war,” were strategically double-tiered directly upon the main passageway that served as a temporary “floor” until weeks later when the content of the Cox’n’s Store had finally been consumed. Once void and empty through grocery consumption, appropriately the passageway of oil and grease stained worn out cartons from days, perhaps weeks from trampling hooves, would shift to the store that revealed once more, deck tile in dire need of a scrub out. As water may or may not be available, then badly needed once-a-day scrub-outs would commence. If it weren’t as was more the case, white spirits and steel wool served as the alternative.

First Port Visit in another foreign port

Some time later, we got into Bombay, the Gateway of India, and tied up in the Naval Dockyard. No one seemed to know too much about their mob but all of their ships were RN hand-me-downs. “That was kind of familiar!” The carrier I.N.S. *Vikrant*, the once intended HMS *Hercules* was alongside while I.N.S. *Delhi*, the former HMS *Achilles* of the Battle of the River Plate fame, lay anchored in the approaches. In 1963, Bombay was still subject to prohibition so that was going to cool the run ashore significantly. Ivory-buying, camel rides, dhow-sailing, and yompin’ coconuts on the black sand beaches were in order. The best the inboard crowd could do as hosts in honouring the prohibited demands, was issue two tickets to all the hands on board. Then if you wanted to get in the line with a thousand Indian Navy killicks and below at their canteen, you’d get two free beers that were weaker than sem-I Budweiser. “Gloom!”

Meanwhile ashore, a ‘grip’ was in order at the invitation of our own LM(E) “Darky” Janes, whose successful uncle owned an electrical cable company and had nothing to do with the affluent “Tatas family” of Bombay fame. We sat down with his own large family, or better said, squatted on the floor surrounding the hottest food that I can ever recollect. There was no beef to be found, for it was roaming around the downtown streets with right of way to the traffic. I can recall that the best I could handle was a chapatti filled with curried goat because the rest was

vegetable, herbs, and animal tongue liberally bathed in very-hot madras. That night and at the pleasure of 'Unca' Janes, we ventured into the streets and visited many night clubs and bars. They were beautifully décoré in anticipation of the prohibition that was soon to lift, and carried an uptown New York and Leicester Square atmosphere. Of course, the big deficiency was that they were fitted for. . .but not with.

The streets of Bombay were poverty-ridden. In attestation as I recall, was an elderly woman on the curb on her haunches, her threadbare saree and white bedraggled hair covered in cow-dung as she pummelled patties that sold for two paises each that served as fuel for cooking. The sight melted your heart. The never-ending chore of scrambling for pieces of cardboard or corrugated tin for shelter in the long, steamy nights for the people that literally lived on the sidewalks among the rats was by far, no mean task. How fortunate we were in civilization. So life down the boat wasn't that primitive after all. Although living aboard in a boat alongside with all the watches stood down made it seem as crowded as Bombay's population of ten million. But it was civilized.

I went across to the inboard 'greyhound' for a shower at the open invitation of the host frigate *Trishul*. This wasn't going to be that simple for we were also told not to expose ourselves in respect of the crew's religious customs. We were to wear a bathing suit for showers, which meant that my trunks would get a wash that didn't need it. It was around midnight and after tripping across all these bodies kipped out in the open, stagnant air on the frigate's quarterdeck, I finally made my way down the port main flat where the washplace was located. As I sallied forth all chuffed about a dhobey, I heard this scuffling and scraping above me. I looked up and there mingled in the channel plating that supports the ship's cabling, was also supporting a free gangway for two curry-yafflin' rats the size of porcupines. I was outta there! Negative shower. . .negative *Trishul*. . .negative Brown, as I tripped over and stepped on the heads and the bods', sleeping on the quarterdeck, quickly twigged that they had exchanged berths with the rats for the night. All the time I thought they were turned in up there to get away from the heat. The next morning, I told the Jimmy about it who was little fizzed. He said he ordered the rat guards fitted from *Andrew* to keep them from going ashore . . .not the four-legged kind from coming aboard. He further consoled by affirming, "Well I hadn't noticed any in their wardroom flat when I went for my showa!" I replied, "Our rats must be stoker's sir, and yours are on leave . . .as usual!"

The President and a Chandler

After Bombay, we headed out and northerly on another patrol and worked with HMS *Hermes* and her plane-guard and escorts. The day we went into Karachi in Pakistan came as another bombshell. We had been on radio silence for nearly two weeks and totally absolved from any news, let alone what had happened on the other side of the world. It was November 22, 1963. As we drew alongside the naval base, we were berthed outboard of two Semi-I "Guppy's." It was a half-hour or so before we had finally "doubled up" and hatches were opened. I went up onto the casing for a 'breath of freshers' and a fag, when immediately I saw that both boats were "flying at half-mast" . . . once again. It was so typical, but yet a consequence of the frequency of reasons and the large population that American patriotism thrives. I shouted across the casing to a hand standing on the inboard boat. "So who the hell croaked this time?" The hand looked at me with a very distraught tone on his face and replied sombrely. . . "President Kennedy!" As quick as the buzz went through *Andrew*, we were equally shocked and couldn't come to grips with this unbelievable news.

Karachi was a milder interpretation of Bombay because of a significant difference in population . . . only six million. We quickly learnt that the black market ashore was hot and heavy for U.S. dollars and the scurrying began to swap Malay dollars, English pounds, and Indian rupees with the two boats inboard. My kit locker was a drawer at foot level in the passage outside of the mess. I can remember 'a local' dressed in a civvy suit with a carnation, sitting on a bunk behind me. Inside my drawer among kit, was cash and my chronograph Birk's watch, a birthday gift from mom some five years earlier. After I got back from my 'hand-cleaner and bird-bath' ablutions to get dressed to go ashore, the drawer had been lessened of content. The civvy who was thought to have been a ship's chandler wasn't. Nobody knew who he was, and we found out that I wasn't the only one that got nailed. That eased the pain a little bit, for a whole bunch of us were now 'quids-out' and it was the first time anybody could recollect getting 'rolled' onboard.

We had been gone from Singers' for more than eight weeks and it was now time to head for the barn. We surfaced, stuffed in the cotters, shut off from diving, and went into a more comfortable 'passage routine', heading southeast.

Beware of the S. 126 form

Andrew had a unique method of ditching gash on the surface from the fin via a homemade gash chute. It dropped down as a one-foot wide panel from the starboard side of the fin immediately adjacent to the upper conning tower lid. This avoided having to transit the gash forward to the fin door. Routine had it that anytime on the roof, was a great opportunity to ditch gash. During the transit, M(E)1 “Stormy” Bullard was steamin’ donk-shop and after he came off watch and had breakfast, the pipe came, **“All gash to the control room! . . . Watch off . . . ditch gash!”** Oily and carbon packed gash bags joined the pile at the bottom of the tower that came from the for’d messes. The gash ditching party included the scratcher’s dickey, the tanky, a fore endee, and “our Stormy,” the donk-shop, oily gash bag representative. The party straddled the tower and chain-ganged the bags uptop and into the fin. Before shoving them down the chute, they were punctured with a pusser’s spike for free-flooding. The trick then was to give the bags a shove, but only on a starboard roll as the structural dimensions of an A- boat’s saddle tanks were perpendicular to the boat, presenting a flat surface. The roll would allow the seas to wash across the tanks thereby flushing the bags over the side. Over twenty bags were delivered to the fin for discarding but three or four of the heavier bags lie stubbornly on the ballast tank and easily recognized as coming from the donk-shop. The casing officer, who had the watch on the bridge observing the evolution, noticed the petroleum prism breakdown embracing the black paintwork. He immediately passed to the control room, **“Control room. . . Officer of the watch! There are some oily rags and lumps of carbon on top of ‘three-starboard’ ballast tank. Let’s have one stoker to the casing to clean it up!”**

As Stormy was the representative while we all sat musing in the mess, he mustered a bucket and a heaving line from the scratcher’s store and obtained permission from the bridge to scale down onto the tanks to flush it all away. As Stormy had to ‘sign for it’, he wasn’t prepared to lose this bucket. He made up a heaving line onto the bucket’s handle while securing the other end comfortably around his waist. With the boat doing up to twenty knots, he flung the bucket into the oggin. The slack in the line quickly paid out and with a sudden jerk, “our Stormy” was in a heap of arms and legs in emergency, and headed for the deep-six.

Fortunately, conditions were good and the boat quickly executed a “Williamson turn.” In short time, a very embarrassed Stormy was recovered but it wasn’t easy. The bucket and line was still secured to him

making for a difficult recovery. The scratcher hollered, **“Undo the rope ya’ flamin’ twit!”** to which Stormy burbled back between waterlogged gulps, **“Not on yore(choke-choke) fukkin’ life! . . . I’m not gonna (choke) get 126’d fer a fukkin’ ole (choke) bucket n’ ‘eavin’ rope! (choke)”** There was just no way that Stormy and his bucket would “have gone for a full due” as was the near case of irrecoverability from going over the side. With a certain amount of difficulty and under-the-breath cursing from the recovery team, he was finally dragged aboard. An illustration in his determination was signified by a very black and blue waistline, finger nail marks in the paint job on top of number 3 main ballast, and a now harmless bucket and heaving line getting returned to the scratcher’s store. The captain was then in the predicament of having to send a signal reporting “Man Overboard and successfully recovered in calm seas.” which then begged the one word message response from F.O.F.E. . . . “How?”

The Movies

Only new in submarines, the first thing they taught you was how to escape from one but after getting to sea, you soon learnt what the second one was . . . learn to (yuk! yuk!) run the movie projector. The big highlight of any day in any submarine, and indeed any ship as earlier recounted, was the nightly movie. In submarines, movie screens were anything from a flattened gash bag to the back of a navigation chart, a white bulkhead, and even going alongside a skimmer in a tropical port, using her ship’s side while the viewers were spread out along the casing. Sem-I ships were not a good choice because of their dark tone grey which was only slightly better than a submarine’s black fin. Now commonwealth ships from Australia, New Zealand, or even the Canadians because of their bright and lighter gray paint were about the best unless you got beside the very best . . . a white-hulled pusser’s hydrographic vessel. Back down below however, the two cinema projectors had their allocations. The supper event belonged to the ERA’s and S.R.’s mess, the late show started in the wardroom right after evening rounds, and by the time the chuffs and puffs had finished theirs, we would swish it forward and ‘the yobs’ would start after the bunhouse saw the first reel. The cinema in most submarines was the fore ends where there seemed to be the greatest of room. We’d all pile in with our two cans of beer and somehow get all horny to watch what somebody ashore decided upon . . . released films that had wrapped their premieres on

Broadway and made their money about ten years ago. When J. Arthur Rank announced his presence with the guy hittin' the gong or the MGM lion came on, everybody would holler: "**Shit! . . . 'Seen it!**" When a Tom and Jerry cartoon appeared at the front of a full length movie, everybody jumped with glee. Then when the credit announcing director Fred Quimby as responsible for the gaiety to follow, everyone would acclaim in loud and in-unison assurance, "**God ole' Fred!**" When it came time to choose the movie, a lot of arguing ensued. From a flimsy selection of four or five films for a three week patrol that often skirted the times you were on watch, a fellow had to be very resourceful and manipulative in order to get to "see them all" before you ever got back alongside. When discussions got heated and a mini-war was about to begin, somebody had to lighten things up before the row got out of hand. A good killick of the mess might intervene with, "Have you seen Moby Dick?" To which one might reply, "No! I don't like sex films." "This isn't about sex . . . this is about whales!" the killick would assure. "I don't like Welshmen either!" as a contrary matelot might mutter back.

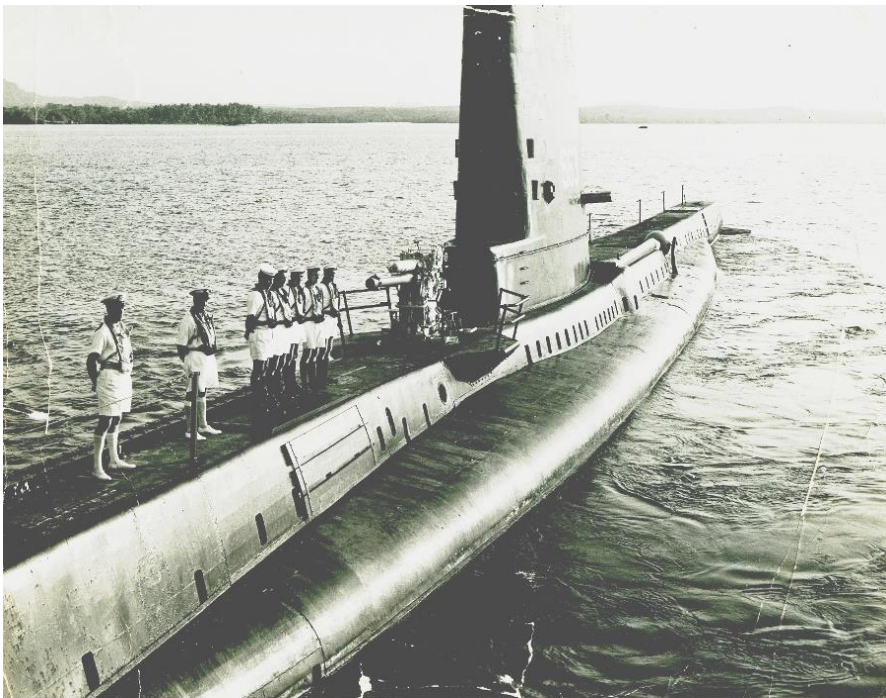
Have gun . . . Will travel

It was now near Christmas in 1963 and the Indonesian Confrontation upon Malaysia had heightened. President Sukarno tried to destroy this newly created nation in declaring his opposition and hostility toward it. He was a militaristic nationalist who was trying to balance the Communist Party of Indonesia and the Army, and hoped that his opposition would keep both of them together with the people of Indonesia in support of him. Britain's interests in Malaysia as a colony were at stake. In the following two years, and along with a very large surface fleet, required that submarines would be tasked in covert operations in and around the Java and Sulawesi Seas and the relatively shallow waters of the Macassar, Bauka and Carimata Straits. As such, SM VII boats would share in intelligence gathering, surveillance, reconnaissance, commando landings and inshore patrols.

Because of the shallow surrounding waters of Indonesia, its maritime fleet both commercial and naval was shallow drafted and often more of a target for a gun rather than a torpedo. It was therefore decided to put deck guns back on the squadron's A-boats, with minor adaptations because of their previously designed integrity. Before streamlined conversion of the class had taken place throughout the fifties, A-boats included a 4in.QF

deck gun as part of their superstructures. The conversion included removal of the gun which by now was obsolescent in SSK warfare requirements however, the mounting platform that was integral to the pressure hull became redundant but was to remain below the fore-casing.

Andrew would be the first, and a preserved and reclaimed mounting was shipped from the *YewKay* that was located on a concrete base outside the Attack Teacher at Rothesay, Scotland and was fitted accordingly. This too would bring a restored personnel dimension to submarines for once again, the submarine Quarter's Rate/gunlayer had a renewed purpose. 3-badged Able Seaman "Happy" Day, one of the few left in the submarine service, became exonerated and was reverted back to his old trade as "the Gun Layer." He quickly turned to in training others in the art of submarine naval



*Andrew w. yet to be painted deck gun just fitted, backs away from Medway, 1963.
Second from left from for'd to aft, Canadian "Scratcher" P.O. George Bechtel*

gunnery. Two torpedo men, a sonar rate, and because the gun was directly above his 'turf', the wardroom steward was also included as part of the crew. Non-combatants such as stokers who hadn't the experience, were also trained not only in handlin' and humpin' ammunition to the casing from the R.U. magazine and the trench in the fore ends, but gun-action surfacing as well. The good news was that we could legally soak the

bunhouse carpet that was below the gun tower. The aftermath bittersweet requirement was that the stokers had to run the 15 gph electric distiller fitted in the A.M.S. directly below, to dry the carpet out. “Bitter,” meaning another watchkeeping chore away from the donk shop and “sweet” because it made the wardroom nice and even steamier. The gun was also useful for other things on the surface. Hanging movie screens while trained athwartships, a backdrop for ‘Rogue’s Gallery’ photography, and even hangin’ out your dhobeyin’ if time, pusser’s hard, and precious fresh water was ever available.

Procedure

Preparations for carrying out a “surface gun action” were done while dived, in gaining the advantage through the element of surprise to the enemy. As memory serves, once on the surface, it was handed over to the bridge to execute. Prior to, the five-man gun’s crew would muster below the tower in the wardroom while an increased ambient pressure was built up within the boat through blowing HP air into a venting inboard, Q tank. This would assist the first man out of the tower in opening the upper hatch. It also increased the humidity-laden 110 degree ambient temperature by yet another ten to fifteen degrees. At the same time, the bridge OOW and the lookout would stand by in the conning tower ready to open the upper lid. There was another form of, but very low pressure blowing. It was through the ‘gunnery whistle’ chained around the captain’s neck while seated at the after search periscope. It was this whistle’s unmistakable audibility that conveyed the orders from the skipper in the control room to the adjacent wardroom for the gun’s crew to react. A parade square G.I. would never comprehend it.

The captain would commence the operation by blowing his whistle in one long blast. Verbally, he would then order in succession, “**Gun action . . . Surface! . . . Blow main ballast!**” The boat would now struggle to want-to-rise, and seconds later would order, “**Fore and after planes to full rise!**” This would take the ‘brakes’ off, allowing the boat to rush to the surface with a very acute stern-down angle. When the captain felt that the boat was shallow enough to open the hatches as it sped to the roof, he would blow his whistle once more and follow with the distinct order, “**Open up!**” The conning tower upper lid, being slightly higher, didn’t present a problem during the ascent. Although the gun-tower hatch would ‘pop’ open without assistance, once the pressure equalized, tons, or gallons

of water as the case may be, would enter the tower and deposit into the wardroom below. When the 'shoot' was completed, it was time to dive as quickly as we surfaced and then pump out, mop up, flash the distiller and return any unspent projectiles to the R.U. mags' in the fore ends.

"The mail got through . . . Finally!"

We got back alongside *Medway* to find that *Alliance* had just arrived to join the squadron, fresh from refit in the Yewkay. The mail came on board too, of which there were two letters addressed to me. The first was a big brown envelope from Canada House in London along with another one that appeared to have travelled everywhere in the world. I opened the brown one and became joyous, for on the 15th of October, 1963, the Canadian Government certified notice to the fact. Confusing as it read, it sited that citizen, Donald H. Brown, who resided in Singapore, not Canada, whose place of birth was London England, was now by paying his \$5.00, worthy of being a Canadian. Attached to the certificate was a passport and a typewritten note from the paybob in *Niobe* disclosing that his pay record was docked five bucks, and warning that next time he goes on leave, ensure that the pusser could find him when he wanted to. The Brits' weren't impressed for now he was a real 'colonial git' and accused of having sold his birthright. Oh well . . . no jubilation after all. Everybody shot inboard, he was in bad need of a ten-tonner, and typically duty on the first day in.

So later that night after scrub-out and rounds, I got to open the other letter finding that if anybody in Canada, and notably the RCN, wanted you in a hurry, it wouldn't be easy. It had gone through F.M.O. three times, sent to *Stadacona*, *Micmac*, out to the west coast to *Naden*, then got a little closer by going to *Niobe*, and *Dolphin* in the YewKay, now the Far East to *Terror*, to *Medway* and finally *Andrew*. It was a wedding invitation from an old chum from Winnipeg who according to the date of the wedding, had already been married two months ago. With a chuckle, I got thinking about the distance from Singapore to Winnipeg, so I replied to the invitation with the following: "Dear Keith and Veda, Wishing you great happiness in your future. Thanks for the invitation but I can't make it to the wedding. I'm duty that day! Your old friend, Don."

Time and sea-time were trotting on and soon I was to be "qualified in submarines." I began to feel that I had found my niche. I was no longer doubtful about staying in the navy, albeit in someone else's. I belonged to the RCN and I felt good about what I was doing as well as helping to

represent it. There was challenge, and not only the sort that makes you a sailor but of one that drew the best from you within a unique society of men who sail beneath the seas. The saying goes that, "soldiers adjust the environment to suit themselves" . . . while "sailors adjust themselves to suit the environment." Now there's an analogy of a submariner. By playing



All-branch messmates on the landing in Keppel Block

hard and working very hard, you realize that life in the navy . . . and especially in submarines, was one that went from one extreme to the other. The bonding that comes from a blend of rare personalities is at advantage because there is a natural conduciveness for those that traditionally volunteer in "the Trade," a self-chosen profession with a different reward. There was a charisma attached because you felt good about being and belonging with such people. Even the non-volunteers that were pressed into submarines became this way. Outsiders are mystified by it and to succeed in the life, meant constant sacrifice too. Our satisfaction came from nurtured self-discipline as you increasingly adjusted yourself to suit the environment. The scarce few that failed in the endeavour were cranky, irritated and wished they weren't here. There was nothing more uncomfortable than someone to be shook and turn out . . . "cracked down the middle." As we witnessed such displeasure because of the inconvenience, never any comfort, the long hard hours, and never being able to get a shower after being absolutely filthy, simply served as a guide to your own improvement. After all, there was an element of pride to be

hard and working very hard, you realize that life in the navy . . . and especially in submarines, was one that went from one extreme to the other. The bonding that comes from a blend of rare personalities is at advantage because there is a natural conduciveness for those that traditionally volunteer in "the Trade," a self-chosen profession with a different reward. There was a charisma attached because you felt good about being and belonging with such people. Even the non-volunteers that were pressed into submarines became this way. Outsiders are mystified by it and to succeed in the

gained through enduring and withstanding and nobody wanted to be labelled as “not havin' it.” To bear the challenges, strong motivation was foremost.

It was clear to me now how submariners were possessed of a certain quality. It dealt with respect for each other for everybody in a submarine regardless of rank, is either a technician or an expert in his own right and dependant of each other. They too, were so much better in sustaining, believe it or not, politeness and strong in habit in caring for the needs of their messmates. Nowhere on earth except here and beneath the seas, were the words “please,” “thank you” and “excuse me” ever used more. Those words and their appeal might otherwise be macho-ly substituted with: “Swing the slide down please!” at the dinner table, or “Cheers!” in gratitude for the slightest of gestures, but it harboured sincerity and made life cheerful. Keep your guard up for wit and ridicule too. Brand new Part III's like us would declare, “Excuse me!” and in building character and peer-acceptance, that was sure to be wittingly reciprocated with the jarring inquiry, “What didja do?”

And nowhere else could you find such natural initiative. To lend a hand at any time on any job; to carry your weight as well as the next man's when he needed it; to immediately clear up the mess deck table while doing so for the man beside, in front or behind you too. Inevitable that he would equally reciprocate the next time or whenever the need should arise when you least expected it. To pour a mug of tea or coffee meant that you'd do yourself last because you were “gettin' them in” for all about you. With close familiarity of each other, it was done with no need to appeal as to who took NATO standard, armoured cow, or just plain black. When the cups were empty, equal initiative by another would promptly clear them away in case the boat would roll or take on an unexpected angle. Manners? Sitting down to eat meant doing so briskly in order to allow the next man some space and enjoy his well-earned meal too. Never, ever, ever. . . remain seated to eat duff. Duff was little consumed among submariners as it was time consuming and unlike the main meal, was not an essential. So now of the built-in character. . .

There have been books and tales about these creatures of the sea but perhaps more often than not, penned from hearsay rather than having endured. Two pieces of contrasting literature define submariners that one needs to analyze in order to form an opinion of them. It is evident however, that their unqualified analogies might be reasonable, but how can one be sure? Rudyard Kipling in 1916, opined submariners as novel, elusive, bawdy, and unpretentious:

The Trade

*They bear, in place of classic names,
Letters and numbers on their skin.
They play their grisly blindfold games
In little boxes made of tin.
Sometimes they stalk the Zeppelin,
Sometimes they learn where mines are laid
Or where the Baltic ice is thin.
That is the custom of 'The Trade'.*

*Their feats, their fortunes and their fames
Are hidden from their nearest kin;
No eager public backs or blames,
No journal prints the yarns they spin
(The Censor will not let them in!)
When they return from run or raid.
Unseen they work, unseen they win.
That is the custom of 'The Trade'.*

On the other hand, prophets philosophised of the God-fearing and more practical aspects of those same men of “The Trade” in favour of their brothers above:

“Submariners. . .A Godly Purpose”

God created lower creatures of the seas and called them “Skimmers.” And with a twinkle in His holy eyes and a smile that only He could have, He gave great grey ships to them, the skimmers, to go to sea upon as Noah, and soon one day to be known as “targets.” He gave them many splendid uniforms to wear, and at night . . . pyjamas. He gave also to the skimmers many wonderful and exotic places to visit. He gave them much water to bathe from toil, and pen and paper to write home every week . . . and He gave them make and mends at sea . . . and a laundry to keep their splendid uniforms clean.

And on the seventh day as you know, God rested. On the eighth day at 0800 local, He looked down unto the earth and the seas thereunder. He was not a happy man, so He thought about His labours and His infinite wisdom. God then created a divine creature and this He called a “Submariner.” And these creatures, whom God created in His own

image were to be of the deep with Neptune His warden; and to them He gave them black steel messengers of death to roam the dark seas waging war against the forces of Satan, and all things evil ashore and afloat and at 20,000 leagues. He too gave them comforts . . . submarine comforts. Double-decking, submarine jerseys, tinned bangers, babies' heads, one-in-one tots, two beers a day (unopened), hot bunking, and all of this . . . without water to cleanse with. When they were to be weary from doing God's will, He gave them too, hotels inboard on the shore, and willed an allowance of subsistence so that they may entertain the ladies on Saturday nights and so impress the hell out of creatures above . . . Yea the "Skimmers."

And to assure in perspective how submariners, and even skimmers, compare themselves with soldiers and . . . animals, certain passages describe in digressing intervals of the nobility of a messmate.

**"Messmate before shipmate,
shipmate before soldier,
soldier before dog."**

Medway, Terror and just outside the 'gate'

After being alongside *Medway* for a maintenance period, we did a short patrol and now it was Christmas time. As usual, all the V.M.'s caned the duties over the holiday and as we were heading inboard on Christmas morning after tot time, we quickly learnt that a turkey was in the galley oven and a bunch of the R.A.'s were coming down the boat with their wives for spiffy-dins. On the way off the boat, we would exit through the donk shop hatch, which meant we had to go by the galley. As we passed, the aroma of roast turkey took charge and there was no way we'd be seen off. Enter the galley! Click, thunk, on the oven door and shloomp . . . the turkey was in our grasp. Then here we were, trying to throw this red-hot, slippery carcass up the hatch. We succeeded, and off we went inboard munching away as we strode joyously toward Keppel block with bones flying about much like they did with another form of "finger-lickin' good" fowl on Gottingen St.

Sembawang Village (Kampong) was the place that the run ashore began before heading into Singapore. The Melbourne Bar, the Golden Hind and

a few others with typically chosen names, so that jack would meander in the door thinking that the place was occidental. However, in behind all the bars were chicken sheds that served for two purposes. Eventual food that quickly transformed into Banjo Eggs or soon-to-be slivered chickens that were galloping away five minutes ago and in the blink of an eye, ended up in your Madras curried noodles. After your nosh, the very same chicken shed now served as a cinema to watch blue movies, but those of the home-made 8mm variety which featured local actors only. The projector was that ropey that it reminded you of the start of the TV show Bonanza as the stalled celluloid started melting right before your eyes.

By 1600, it was time to get out on the road and whistle for a Pirate Taxi to head on into Singapore. So called were these older model Mercedes-Benz that seemed to be everywhere. Flag one down and prepare to jump in with seven other passengers with their goats and chickens all heading for different and out of the way destinations on the 14 mile trip. The price was right though at fifty Malaysian cents.

At night, Sembawang was the last watering hole before going back aboard. Of all the little kiosks, one that comes to mind was Wah-Poon-Lee's. He only had three tables and about eight chairs and along with his good chinky nosh came Tiger and Anchor Beer. After ambling through a maintenance card, plastic envelope that was offered as the menu displaying Chili Crab, Nasi Goreng, Bee Hoon, and Mah-Mee as his main concoctions, the usual rice dishes and Indian chapattis and nan were also listed. What was obvious though was that Wah-Poon couldn't translate into English as he had gotten one of his regular customers to go aboard one of the ships, muster a typewriter, and outline the items of fare so that jack could understand it. The proof came just after the duff section at the bottom of the page. "ANY DRIPS . . . SEE YOUR D.O.!"

If it was any time after 0300, Wah-Poon's would be shut and lashed with four clips for the night but there were other means. One was through a resourceful wallah named Rani who used to sleep on top of his Coca-Cola icebox, the type with the tabletop hinged lids. Thereunder lied frosty, "slightly up-priced after midnight" Tiger beers. In order to get the night-cap, we had to shake Rani. Not only was he getting his kip in if business was slow but what better lock than his own weight to keep a thirsty matelot from heaven forbid, helping himself.

The African Queen . . .Dolly, and Nabob

Jock MacAlpine, Georgie Goose and me were in the dockyard canteen one night and got to meet the mariner, “Dolly” Grey. He was the Chief Bos’n’s Mate aboard the civvy-crewed, RFA *Retainer*. Her lawful occasion was to transport munitions to and from the Fezz and YewKay on a constant turn around because of the Indonesian Crisis and the demands of the growing surface fleet which now included the R.A.N. and the Kiwis.

Later, on a Saturday afternoon, he had invited us out to the ship for a pint. When I say out, I mean that the ship being of the ammunition type, was traditionally moored in the stream, the Johor Straits and to get to her, we used ‘*Medway*’s “African Queen.” She was the launch, so dubbed for her likeness in appearance, canopy and all. She had a diesel donk because the “stoker in the boat” declared, “Deezelhaftado, ‘til we get more coal!” We looked under the thwarts and up in the forward stowage compartment, but we couldn’t find Katharine’s bonnet or Bogie’s fags anywhere. . .and the stoker was right . . . no coal either.

The voyage in the afternoon sun took us from the pontoons near the ‘red hut’ at the back of *Terror*, on a one-mile trip to the bottom of *Retainer*’s accommodation ladder. The ‘red hut’ was a gazebo-like structure with a red-tiled roof and yellowed walls that was supported by pilings edging the waters of the straits. It was the WW2 scene for the decapitation and disposal of British nuns and POWs at the Japanese takeover of Singapore in 1942.

When we got aboard, we were given a ‘twelve-fifty, Cook’s special’ of the ship that included the ammunition hold, only to wind up in Dolly’s cabin for some well-deserved refreshment at the completion of the circuit. Dolly was a WW2 merchantman from the Southampton pool that had sailed in merchant freighters, oilers, and liners and by the 1960’s, was relegated to the more attractive consistency and security as he explained, of sailing in H.M. Royal Fleet Auxiliaries. He was quite the guy, for not only was he sincere and friendly . . .he had instant regard for submariners which we had supposed from why he was so excited to have us aboard. Dolly was a traditional sailor and was not only the guv’ner on the ‘uppers,’ but as glaringly noticed during the ‘twelve-fifty,’ the passing crewmembers showed courtesy in their reflections.

It was now time to have our pints in his cabin and Dolly soon began to rattle off his solos in the art of sods-opera-in’, or in his case . . .sea shanties. Out he came with every parody, lyric, and gesture to the tunes of The Spare Crew Song, Pompey Gals, and Yarmouth Town. He then did his rendition

of Nabob, the Pay Bob for what we, Jock, the Goose, and Buster thought was nothing we'd ever seen in the navy. Dolly, on his bunk stood in acclaim with his bounding Yorkshire voice and volume in great gusto. He heralded of Nabob, a fabled sailor who riddled a society with salacious characteristics and discrimination of 'gays' that were not to be accepted in a modern civilization soon to come. The lesson:

NABOB . . .SON OF THE PAY BOB

"And it came to pass that Nabob . . .son of the Pay Bob, whist leaving his craft afloat, came journeying through the dockyard to the wayside that leadeth from Chatham to Rochester . . .and he was beset by bandits.

The bandits were thieves . . . not ordinary thieves . . .but ass-thieves . . .who ragged, bagged, 'n shagged the bastard so he should stand in stiffness. They then, unto him . . . robbed, and gobbled him to a bloater, and sent him on his way rejoicingly.

Reaching the gates of the sovereign's dockyard, he was yet beset amore by a harlot who sayeth unto him; "What whilst thou grant me to tarry the night oh noble Nabob and what should payeth I, that I shoulde lie with thee?" And he replyeth unto thine harlot: "Oh haybag, oh haybag! I shalt give you mine dhobey bag . . .mine kit bag . . .one scan bag and mine shitbag . . .also shalt I, my ditty box . . .my hat box . . .one pair of socks . . .and a dose of pox!" So the price was agreed upon.

From this eve of bawdiness and boldness, awakening the next day, he sayeth unto her, "What is the hour?" And she replyeth unto him . . ."Sire . . .it is the eleventh hundred hour!" Then Nabob, who wipeth the sleep from his eye, cried out to the gods in howled anger: "Fukarat . . .I'm adrift!"

Returning to his craft in bewilde, he reported straightforth to the man. Not a big man, not a small man, nor a short man . . .but the bloody Jossman. And the Jossman in his ire sayeth: "Go ye forth to the apothecary, and say unto the apothecary, "Sque-e-e-eze!" And whenst in his nakedness to the doc' . . .he squoze . . .and a great green lump arose. The apothecary upon this spectacle declareth and commanded the son of the Pay Bob . . ."Thou art rotten . . .aye rotten to the very core. Caste thyself among the weak and dying!"

**And Nabob, the son of the Pay Bob, caste he himself to be now
vittled in the bunhouse.**

**And when he died as others that surroundeth he, thousands died
with him. He was fukkin' lousy with crabs!"**

And so endeth the lesson.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HMS/m *Anchorite*

The *Andrew* had entered refit and with that, off came the gun. The sign on the door in layapart stores in the dockyard had a gun silhouette on it with an inscription that now read “Had Gun . . . Did Travel!” I soon found out that refit was not for me, and Chief Stoker, Ron Rae knew it. He made a few inquiries and soon, I joined *Anchorite* to replace another Canadian, LSEM Ken Dutnall who was termed, “sick on shore.” I was real chuffed with this news which put a temporary end to hangin’ about at RG (S). Days were spent pipping spare gear, stuffin’ grease into stern glands, painting H.P. air spanners and any other grimy jobs ole’ Ron Rae could think of. “Painting out an oily engine room is like doin’ a scrub-out in a foxhole!” we thought.

One boiling-hot afternoon in an engine room where all the top gear was gone, oriental artisan engine fitters sat haunched over the big end bearings that cradled the mammoth engine shafts. There they’d have the shafts slowly turning while honing the surfaces by hand with oil-stones with precision from a naked eye. Chief Stoker Rae entered the space and clearly declared, “Buster! Head down to the D.O.T. (engine Drain Oil Tank) and start wiping it out. The dockyard chemist is coming down tomorrow morning to certify the tank gas-free and safe to enter.” Suddenly, it seemed I qualified as a coal mine canary and many of the RN’ers felt that that was gainful employment for a “Colonial.”

As I joined *Anchorite*, I had company. With me came the gun, and my experience as an ammo handler for which not only would I cane the donk shop killick’s job again, but lended a little peer group training in gun-action training as well. We were to sail in a few days after loading fish and mines at RNAD. . . up the creek. We’d be gone for about ten weeks working with the Far East fleet and the RIMPAC navies with runs into Hong Kong, Japan, and the Philippines. This was going to be a good trip and everybody was looking forward to it. Like any operational sea going draft in any navy, the mankey *Ankey*’ had yet another atmosphere about her. There was enthusiasm with the OPSCHED which was busy and certainly adventurous, and the energy of the crew seemed to have a brighter spark. In my relative newness to submarines, I came to realize that refit syndrome was creeping in aboard the ‘*Drew*. Where she had completed her last patrol and had gone into refit, the majority of crew



were R.A, and were anxious for time ashore. With that distraction came a tendency to defer minor repairs and pay lesser attention to the upkeep of the boat as anxieties and priorities began to shift toward their personal lives and a shore routine. Unknowingly, this had an effect on me at the time. I was single and rarin' to go, soon realizing that I was better suited aboard a running boat. Where *Anchorite* was in the midst of her operating cycle, meant that shore time was sparse and for the R.A.'s, good management of the little time at home with the family was a priority alongside *Medway*, but when not, it certainly swung toward the boat. Besides, there were more single hands and V.M.'s on this one and most of those who were R.A., were always up for working hard and a good run ashore as well. At sea, humour of a drier sort abounded with witty comments whether you were in the donk shop, the main passage, or in the control room.

One afternoon we were deep and I was off watch and sitting in the motor room, mildly yarning with the not-so-busy, propulsion switchboard operator, "Darky" Savin. The telephone rang. "Motor room! Is that you on the line?" Darky replied, "Yes, it is!" "Well, get off! There's a train coming!" warned the caller. Later, the engineer officer came through who was of the idea that he should always make comment on equipment and practice his impressions of really knowing the boat. He stared at a wooden grab bar on the motor room's open switchboard that closely resembled an operating lever in the same proximity. He grasped it while remarking to Darky, "LEM Savin. The astern switch is jammed!" Darky looked at sir with a smirk and said, "Yeah. I know sir! We're gonna sort that out when we pinch another boat hook off the African Queen."

Our first stop at Honky-fid, took us alongside HMS *Tamar*, the old RN headquarters for the former China Station. We were billeted ashore in barracks and that was a welcomed opportunity. It was my first time back to Hong Kong since *Crescent*, and what used to be a graving dock in 1958 had now been back-filled the following year. It was now utilized as *Tamar*'s parade square.

The inboard digs were new, clean, and had good ten-tonners. There were lots of skimmers alongside. The Aussie Darings, *Voyager* and *Vendetta*, *Hartland Point* the destroyer tender, and the kiwi frigates, *Taranaki* and *Otago*. Out in the midst of the junk and sampan dotted harbour were the carriers *Victorious* and USS *Shangri-La*, in on R&R from 'Nam, along with a number of pusser's supply ships.

Here we got stormed by "Jenny's Side Party." Jenny was *Tamar*'s best-loved character and history has it that all the way back to 1928, Mrs. Ng Muk-kah and her band of females would scrub down and paint ships' sides

for relatively little reward. A nominal fee perhaps, with free gangway on useable gash. But the lads from hundreds of ships' companies over all of those years would reward Jenny and the girls with extra rabbits including bread, eggs, clacker, and tinned food because they'd also come down in the ship and turn to in the galleys and sculleries.

The stop in Hong Kong meant three Sunday routines as the exercises north from Singapore were successful with no breakdowns and few defects. This was encouraging and gave everybody a confidence about the major exercises we were to undergo later near Japan as well as special ops in the South China Sea on the way back to Singers'.



In the meantime, the paybob had showered us with lolly, the inboard digs and galley were top-drawer, and a run ashore was very much in order. Hong Kong in the early sixties was a good "burn" where everything was cheap and duty-free. As you got out into the streets either in a fast black, walking, on a tram, or in a rickshaw, it was difficult to choose where to start. The historic China Fleet

Club (that opened in 1934) was a popular mustering point for it sat on the harbour's edge and was surrounded with shops and stalls along the front with the Wan Chai district in behind. This gave us a chance to sit down, have a wet, and decide on what to do from there. It came at a time that although we were not aware, of what had happened in that very year of 1964. The mammoth building was under renovation and it was learnt that during the installation of air conditioning, a live shell was found two feet below the reception room on the ground floor. The three foot, 83 lb. Japanese shell was removed by the police ballistics division. Undoubtedly, it had landed in the club during the battle for Hong Kong back in 1941.

When half a dozen of us arrived in "the wets," there was a high-pitched deafening clamour from uniformed matelots from all over as indicated by the nationalities of the many ships in harbour. There were yankee sing-songs, Brit' sods' operas, kiwis and aussies playing crown and anchor, and a lot of bootnecks and U.S. marines. It was lively and as we arrived, we were casually eyed and taken as RFA'ers as we were dressed in civvies. That was fine and we didn't mind it a bit for we knew that some of the perks in submarines were acers by being inconspicuous as "We Come Unseen," conspicuous by the lasting attar of eau-de-diesel. Our time would come, as the run would no doubt accelerate, as the day wore on.

We immediately gathered round a table and muckled onto somebody's empty beer mug. We declared a \$10.00HK "yorkie" with bills stuffed into the jug as two of the lads headed to the bar to get the round in. I browsed

around this huge, sunlit struck, smoke-laden bin of a noisy clientele of about five hundred matelots who were in varying states of a good beer up. Tot time had packed up just about an hour or so before, gangways were opened, and evidence was that there was a lead among this sea of matelots and the *Victorious*' lot was well underway. "This Ole' Hat Of Mine," unable to hear the words, was obvious at one table as the showman's white front went flying onto the deck from the exhibitor's prominent stage on a table. At the other end was another bunch rolling up copies of the Navy News in prep for "The Dance of The Flamin' Arseholes." Loud chanting from another corner led into the strains of "Sing, sing, or show yore ring. But we don't want to see yore ring. . .so sing you bastard, sing!" The "Oggie Song" could be heard somewhere else while drowning out the orders of the sergeant-at-arms in the stage play presenting, "The Chelsea Pensioners." Where's our Mick D'Aish? we thought. Over against a massive, bare bulkhead which displayed but a lone portrait of Liz' and the Duke bearing witness, stood a lone juke box with very loud throbs of the Beatles playing "Help," and Frankie Ifield singin' "I Remember You." What was equally entertaining though, was this pie-eyed, tattoo-adorned, long bearded killick hairy-fairy donned in 2A's with cap flat aback, physically playing the juke box. He was seated in front of his instrument tickling the selection keys convinced that he was Floyd Kramer or Hogie Carmichael. He was in a world of his own and having a grand old time as he plunked away on his 'ivories,' while well-nourished with a quart of San Mig' and a packet of Seniors' and fumbling through a pile of coins for the slot between sets.

As we sat and scuppered our ales, in came Bagsy Baker off the boat. He always made his entrance by doing something that would grab some attention even when coming on watch in the engine room in the middle of the night and still half asleep. "Today," he declared, is the start of blow up your bag week!" Our attention was roused. Bags' then rapidly pulled down his fly and rummaged round a bit until out of the opening, came a closed fist. With his other hand toward his mouth, he began to huff and puff on an outstretched thumb as both of his elbows started to flutter up and down. Then suddenly from his lower grasp, the starboard side of his scrotum sprang into bulbous proportion. Just as quick and in upstart fashion, he put things away and corrected his dress, uttering in a boring tone, "Good ah-a-noon gents. Good run then? 'Aas abaat a wet then?"

Bagsy was dressed in a posh, teal-coloured suit. Being the ginger-beer's storey, he had perks and got ashore earlier in the morning and headed for one of the tailor shops. He went on to model his new lagging by pointing

out the tiddley glass-hued buttons, the white silk lining adorned with embroidered Chinese dragons, and a cut that was Beatle-trendy for the day. He got measured up at 9:30 that morning and had it on his back by 11 o'clock. While he waited for his purchase, he was invited to sit in the shop drinking complimentary Sapporo beer and by the time he got fitted out with a Thai-silk shirt and tie to match, he had had the best part of a dozen ales.

After the yorkie ran out, we up and headed for the Wan Chai. Out on the street in this mid-afternoon, it was hot and typical Hong Kong bustle was everywhere. You could smell the groceries cooking away from all the little stalls and a quick nosh was in order. We had a smally piece of chicken or goat with rice in a banana leaf and whatever the meat was, was spiced enough that whatever animal you were yompin', didn't matter in the Far East. What did matter was how good it tasted and that would tide us over until the next "hands to noshin' stations."

As we approached an intersection to cross a narrow lane, a Mercedes 'fast-black' pulled up right in front of us and stopped before making a turn. Bagsy, not a foot away from the rear door and without missing a beat, opened it and said, "C'mon lads. Get in!" As we followed, Bagsy opened the other rear door of the taxi, got out, and carried on across the lane. We six all followed suit offering a "Good afternoon" to the driver as we nonchalantly transited through the back half of the cab. Picking up on this little caper, Pete, who was last to follow, upheld the quality of submarine gentlemen by shutting each of the doors behind him accompanied with a thank you to the driver as we strode on without cracking a smile.

Then Pete saw a rickshaw and convinced the coolie that it was crucial that four of us had to ride together. The coolie looked a little doubtful but then reasoned that for an extra dollar for a \$3.00 fare, he could draft this heavy load. Four of us piled on and we were on our way. After a few steps by the coolie, Pete hollered, "Two-six . . . le-e-e-an . . . back!" We did so in unison when suddenly the 'shaw tipped up and here was the coolie hanging on to the pull bars for dear life, while his legs were flailing about high in the air above. The whole intersection came to a grinding halt as the four-man cargo came toppling out onto the ground like a dump truck while the coolie went hurtling back to the earth on the other end. The whole of the Wan Chai was in fits, we got up, dusted ourselves off, and paid the coolie triple what he thought he'd get. It was now late in the afternoon and time for a bar or two right in the middle of the Wan Chai. Coloured drinks for the bar girls in their cheongsams and incense scented air conditioning was the next run-ashore order of the day.

It was a carefree good time and the run went on into the night until the wee small hours. Tattoos were in order at midnight, big eats at the stalls, while others went for a bag-off. In the end while on my own in a rickshaw heading back to *Tamar*, it was the only time in my naval career that I had ever been rolled and robbed. I kick myself to this day, and the only thing worthwhile out of that episode, after an uncomfortable night on the pavement and a very sore brainbox, was to be reminded that you should never end up ashore on your tod'. I knew that, we all knew that, yet somehow and sometimes, we tried to defy the fact. Did it ever make for good discussion at tot time on the engine room platform the next day along with the tattoo parade!

“Yorkie and the Bulwark fire-fighter”

Nearly a dozen lads ended up in an ‘India ink grot’ the night before, and in the morning, it was time to come to the donk shop, take off the Kleenex tissue and scotch tape bandages, and see what we all got. How ideas for tattoo designs extended into a game of ‘black-cattin’ and doing one better! Just a few weeks earlier in Nee Soon, I got a little half inch, very discreet, snort head valve engraved on the inside of my forearm. It was tiny and just sticking up from a feather atop of some banners that gave an impression of a snorting submarine. This appealed to many stokers, as well as Mick D’Aish who among other “tats,” already had on the back of his right hand, a majestic eagle spanning its’ wings.

As the bandages were carefully removed, the exhibition began to accelerate. Propped up on top of the eagle’s head was . . . a snort head valve. Griff got yet a larger one, entangled within a maple leaf on his bicep, then “Taff” Davies topped everybody with one going up the side of his leg that showed a little more mast tube, but “Yorkie:” Birkhead (the bucket) black-catted us all. He was on loan from *Amphion*. In her donk shop, Yorkie was a stoker from the infamous watch that held the record for the most snorts in the boat for 1964. They had turned into snarlers and teamwork beasts and became known as the “animal watch.” Yorkie thus made his entrance by removing his shirt . . . and there in all its glory over his entire chest was . . . a-a-a-nother head valve. This one was so large you could see the spray mat heaters and the rivets on it. At the top was an aerial warning light with a shitehawk in the distance, and circumventing this masterpiece were the inscriptions, “LORD SCREAMIN’ BUCKET. . . ANIMAL WATCH SNORTING”

Tattoos in the RN were commonplace and in the Far East, you could estimate that ninety per cent of the matelots had them. They arose from naval superstitions. They were expression. They were naval spirit, a trademark of their profession. Some of the designs were artistically magnificent as they draped across backs, around legs, and of course, on the naughty parts. Tattoos were aesthetic for their time, as orientals were very talented and imaginative in their tattooing artistry. . . especially with bamboo needles. With angelic displays, "Mom and Dad," "My Love Judy" . . .with traditional flags and sinking ships came much humour. . .some quite bawdy. . . some coarse and some very original. Others had a dotted line around the neck . . . "Cut here" . . . or two round circles on the edge of the right hand that when the wearer saluted an officer, the recipient might just notice that he was being verbally greeted with "Bollocks!" Oil cans on belly buttons, hinges at the joints complete with Phillip's head screws . . . crucifixes, a pig and cock on the knees. There was a real popular part of the anatomy that best served as the centre-fold page of these 'walking comic-strips'. Backside banter gave a sailor's arse more usefulness than just sitting on it. A pair of green or blue eyes or two four-bladed propellers with the accompanying precaution, "Twin screws-Keep Clear," were examples. Or take the standard two-sittings tattoo, [pun] depicting a devil with a pusser's cap on an ass cheek, shovelling coal into the register where huge flames are seen shooting out on the opposite bun. In doing one better, we were on one night at an Armada Pavilion ship's dance, witness to yet another ho-hum exhibition of "This Ole Hat of Mine." A relentless stoker from *Bulwark*, up on a table for his stage, flashed his we-seen-it-before, cartoon for everyone's pleasure. However in opposition to this devil who was keeping the steam up, was an angel aeronautically flying above the scene in a "fearnought" suit. She had a two-gallon pusser's foam extinguisher tucked under her arm, trying desperately to knock the flames back.

"Venus turns off at night"

We sailed from Hong Kong and spent the next two weeks dived. It was now time to surface and head in. Yokosuka (Yokoska/Yakooska in hairy parlance) is on the main island of Honshu. On the night prior to entry, we did a north and south reciprocal passage up and down the coast near Shizuoka to kill time as our ETA alongside wasn't until in the morning. Shizuoka is a spit of land south of the entrance to Yokosuka, the U.S. naval

base, Yokohama and then Tokyo. It was a serene evening with a flat sea and at about dusk, Rick Selka and I thought we'd go up to the bridge for some air. Lt. "Del" Shannon, the OOW, was *Anchorite's* navvy. Also on the bridge were a few other tourists and the lookout was Mad-Mick D'Aish.

Del Shannon was a fine budding officer who always had a smile for stokers and sometimes we worried about that. He must have been alright though for he went on to be skipper of *Alderney* and of the belief, as skipper of a nuclear fast-attack in years to follow. In the meantime, he came across as a young officer who gave an impression that he was always "one up" on the lads.

When Rick and I got to the bridge there was the usual "Who's all here?" and "What watch ya' got next?" to the half a dozen already up there. As I looked about at the sinking sunlight and placid sea, I saw a very bright light just off the horizon to the starboard side. I nudged Mick, the lookout, and pointed into the general direction of the bright illumination on the landfall that was at about ten miles. Mick said, "Cheers Buster!" under his breath, and with his binoculars in place reported, "Very bright light . . . green 90 . . . angle of sight, five . . . approximately 20,000 yards, . . . probable light house sir!" "Thank you Able Seaman D'Aish." came the reply from Lt. Shannon . . . but I think you'll find that that is the planet Venus. It casts a very bright light in the Far East at this time of day!"

Well Mick then felt a little embarrassed in front of his touristy audience of non-lookouts and I felt all the more awkward for not keeping my place as a stoker. "Never mind D'Aish . . . after all, you are the lookout!" said this very well-informed naval officer in a superior tone. Then suddenly, the bright light went out. Mick then opined, "Well if we're steamin' due south sir, that should be Venus on the port beam now ain't it?" We all looked at each other with a shrug and the navvy looking dead ahead, cleared an already clear throat. Mick then began to croon away in his southern Irish twang to the tune of Jingle Bells:

*"I 'tink I see a lighthouse sir,
Sinkin' down on me.
I 'tink I see a lighthouse,
as plain as plain could be.
Navy got 'is star globe out,
and from it quickly read:
It's not a Japanese lighthouse D'aish,
but Venus there instead!"*

As a UC, Mick was proficient as well. His trick on the 187 and other sonar sets was always well regarded and valued in the control room and his emphasis after the watch over tea, tot, or a beer was the sounds and tones of marine life as well as the din from ships above. His personal accounts of his experiences from the watch were quite audible, relating his conversations with a pregnant whale, sharks, minnows, shrimps, and a horny jelly fish mingled with the din of carrier turbines, Y-100 gearing, Loch Class recip's, an RFA, and even the whir of a Pearl Harbor-bound yankee bomber that went by. . . over, or under us one day.



Bottom left: Soapy... and the staff in front of the M.A.S.T.U. semi-trailer in some city somewhere in Canada. No officers here.... #3's with no lanyards spells "on duty."

many tales to tell in such a jammy inland mobile draft as that one. Although at times. . .

Soapy was proud to be a Canadian and now, in the midst of his kipper oppos, constantly served in illustrating his tenacity, determination, and adeptness of every Canuck possessed. Because we in *Anchorite* were to be heading into Yokosuka, thoughts about one of Soapy's adventures stuck right out in everyone's minds that had occurred just one year earlier in this very Nipponese U.S. naval port.

"Soapy" Watson was another top of the line sonar rate who was reared in the RCN as one of the listening experts. I had met Soapy in *Micmac* and it was obvious that his experience as an underwater detector specialist came as a result of his travelling with the Mobile Anti-Submarine Training Unit (M.A.S.T.U.) in the late 'fifties'. As a very small but informed team, they were assigned to visit the Naval Reserve Divisions all across Canada and train local requisite personnel with typical shipboard sonar equipment in its use and operation. There could be

The case of Scotch.....

While alongside the Tang class USS *Wahoo*, a mixed crowd from *Andrew*, including the captain, LCdr Frewer and our Soapy, were invited aboard to rally relationships. While touring the boat, they were fascinated at the presence of *Wahoo's* endeared mascot, 'Miss Wahoo'. She was similar in size and as significant to what the Canadian navy had in the names of effigy mascots "Percy the Penguin" in *Terra Nova* and by the mid-seventies, (Pandra Rosetta) "The Pink Panther" in *Okanagan*.

"Miss Wahoo" was located in the captain's cabin. She was alluringly poised in Polynesian attire that included a blossom in her hair, a lei obscuring her ample breasts, and a grass skirt that concealed extra anatomy that was accurately realistic. It was well known throughout the US Submarine fleet that she was "up for grabs." The captain, in his confidence, issued that if anybody achieved in kidnapping *Wahoo's* popular mascot, he or they, would be rewarded with a case of fine scotch whiskey. His assuredness extended from burglary prevention for if a perpetrator was to be successful in capturing this fine Hawaiian princess, he had to deal with a technicality. She was wired to the submarine's diving klaxon alarm. Once disturbed from her pedestal, the klaxon would emit its' very audible "a-a-o-o-o-o-gahs" alerting all hands to 'swing hatches shut' thereby imprisoning the culprit and keeping the worshipped idol intact.

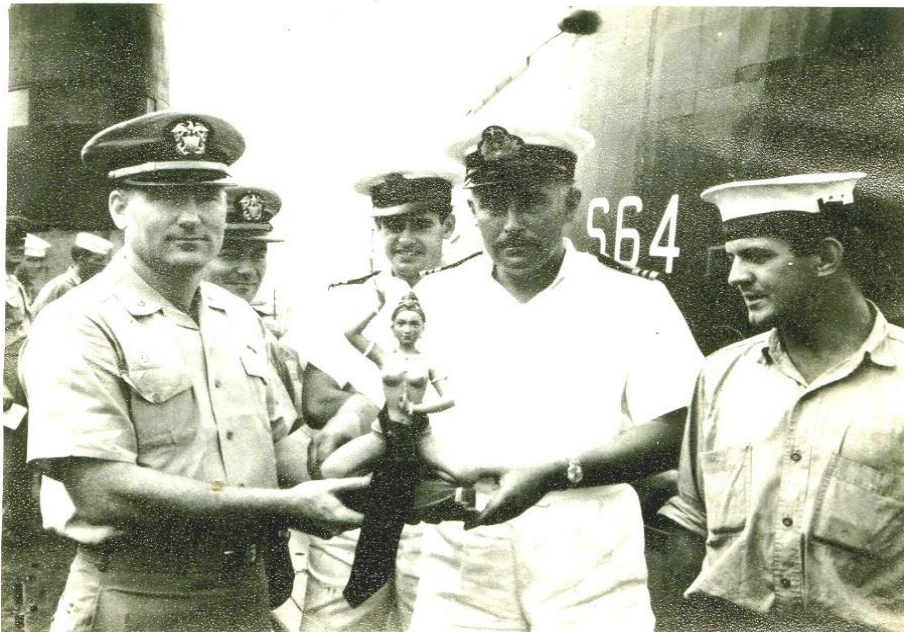
By the next day Soapy had been on a 'first night in-run ashore' and had become more and more determined of the challenge. From the tour, he foggily remembered that in order to get at Miss Wahoo without being seen, he would have to get into the conning tower. He would have to slip down a ladder into the tower and head for the captain's cabin only a few steps beyond. He would also need the assistance of the trot-sentry to avert the attention of *Wahoo's* sentry.

When darkness fell, he sneaked his way across the shadowed ballast tanks and got into

Wahoo's side access hatch at the sail. He immediately discovered that a wooden 'false hatch' to the conning tower was padlocked. He then noticed that a periscope and its bearing housing had been withdrawn for repairs. Soapy examined this small opening very closely and figured out that not only could he get into the boat, it would also provide for an exit when he got his hands on the Polynesian princess. It was a tight fit though and Soapy started to get thoughts of getting stuck. He stripped off his shirt and tropical shorts and was now in his shitnicks. Typical of any submarine in way of a watertight hatch was grease . . . amply applied in keeping the

mechanisms operable. So he smeared gobs of it on himself to help him through. Feeling like a gallant commando on a mercy mission who looked like a staggering Japanese POW, Soapy began to edge his way in. After a lot of wriggling and inching, he found himself through the opening and into the conning tower. A few steps forward and into the cabin, there she stood in her splendour. "What a trophy! I got her." he thought.

He grasped her quickly and immediately the klaxon engaged in repetitious, "A-a-o-o-o-o-g-gahs." Below, the repeated blasts of the klaxon were interspersed with frantic voices, rushing footsteps, and slamming doors and hatches throughout the boat. Out of the cabin and up he went and in order to evade the *Wahoo* pursuers clambered straight up to the bridge. When he arrived, he realized that in his efforts to escape, Miss *Wahoo*'s head had broken away. He fired Miss *Wahoo* across to *Andrew*'s trot-sentry who quickly sent her below. Soapy then decided to remain on the bridge in hiding until the excitement died down but most of all, he had to get that head back. He did not bewilder. More determined, he knew that because the wooden access hatch was shut, they'll never think about that periscope opening. He waited for a few moments until it was absolutely



CO *Wahoo*, LCdr Frewer, "Soapy" & "Miss *Wahoo*" Yokosuka Japan 1963

quiet. Off he went again retracing his steps, putting on more gobs of grease and slipping through the opening once more. In his rush something had

happened. He was now not only looking for the head, but also his shitnicks. To his alarm, they had gotten hung up somehow and somewhere as he groped about in the darkness of the conning tower in his nakedness. On hands and knees, he slowly made his way to the captain's cabin where he thought the head might be. When he arrived, he felt around on the deck but there was no head. At least there was some assurance. A bath towel (bath towel???) owned by the captain would serve as a means for covering himself up. As he folded the towel around his waist, the doorway became shadowed with some Wahoo-s. "Caught ya'!" they said. In the hands of one of them was the head of Miss Wahoo. The next day, as both captains boarded their boats, the news was passed. Soapy, LCdr Frewer, and HMS/m *Andrew* had won the case of scotch, the POLTO had cemented her head back on as she was returned to *Wahoo*, and the boat fitted a blank where the periscope wasn't. When the CO submitted to defeat, he regarded the Royal Navy as being the first to ever being successful to the challenge. Then, and still a little hung-over, Soapy replied. "Hold your horses for a minute! You mean the Royal **Canadian** Navy!" "Yore quite right Leading Seaman Watson!" acknowledged both captains in unison, as cameras clicked on *Wahoo's* casing. Later in the day, word had swiftly spread to all submarines alongside as well as to the bar owners ashore in nearby "Submarine Alley." Soapy was a Canadian hero and an honoured free-tab guest in all of them. Rightly so.

Subic Bay

By February, *Anchorite* and *Amphion* had sailed from Japan and on our south-bound patrol, stopped at Subic Bay in the Philippines before linking up with a multi-navy exercise. From the start, there wasn't room to go alongside until later in the day so we went on the carrier *Victorious* at anchor in the harbour approaches. This was a dodgy move but when you want to get a shower, and there was plenty on the *Vic'*, you've got to be resourceful. The top of the fin was only as high as the gun sponsons that were situated below her flight deck and it appeared that the only way we were going to get aboard was with a wooden plank that bridged the fin to a gun sponson railing. The wind was up and *Victorious* never moved . . . but as a smalley craft in comparison, we were bobbin' up and down like a fiddler's elbow. The only way to get across this ten foot distance was on your hands and knees. My, those hairy-fairies must have thought that not only were we primitive apes, but looked like them as we swayed about as

in the jungle vines. We were greeted at the sponson by a third in line, duty subby' who insisted that we salute his quarterdeck as we shakingly traversed the plank with manky smelling towels hanging from our necks. Well now! *Victorious* is a 'long ship' ain't she? In that term with nothing to do with her mammoth lines, defined as inhospitable, a long way astern from the fount of hospitality...a long time between drinks as the Governor of North Carolina declared, to the Governor of South Carolina in the Civil War.

The next day, we and *Amphion* left the towering shadows of the carrier and RV'd with *Ambush*. She had just arrived from a southward patrol and as a joined trio, went on a trot outboard of USS *Perch*. She was one of two U.S. boats discarded of tubes and bunked for transporting marines to Vietnam. She had had her forward engine room converted into a bunk space and could carry up to 160 personnel.

Subic Bay was a very busy naval station that was geared for supply, replenishment, and quick "shave and a haircut" type docking repairs. Before that though, we stokers were to strike down engine lube-oil to the



l. to r. USS Perch, HM S/m's Amphion, Anchorite and Ambush at Subic Bay

tune of over a dozen 45 gal. bbls. but as luck would have it, no crane was available on the jetty. Being on the outboard trot and four boats from the jetty, presented a problem in that no way could the weighty barrels be carried. Many 'Sem-I's' on the pier, aboard *Perch*, as well as a few oppos

on ‘*Bush*, and *Amphion* seemed amazed when they witnessed us securing the barrels with a heaving line and pushing them into the harbour from the jetty. Simple physics said this was effective but with precarious doubt on some stokers’ minds, each of the barrels plummeted into the water with a woosh and a ker-thunk and disappeared for ever so long. With a visible sigh of relief, one by one the barrels surfaced some moments later as their contents having a lighter SG, rendered them buoyant in sea water. We would now hand-tow them to *Anchorite*’s outboard plane guard to wrestle them onto the duck’s ass to the lube-oil filling connection on the after casing. The ‘Sem-I’s’ and our oppos were impressed and where an element of doubt had prevailed, we were pretty chuffed with ourselves in relief.

Philip joins the submarine service

That same afternoon, the scratcher’s party was turned to, painting the casing and ballast tanks. All of a sudden we heard the cry: “Oy. Look wot’ I got!” It was Mad Mick in his ovies’ all covered with chocolate admar preservative, climbing out from under the after casing. He had what looked like a bird in his hand that turned out to be an oil-laden duck. Everybody came to a grinding halt as we headed below to break out a dishin’-up fanny of warm water and teepol to administer this poor duck with a dhobey. We finally got him reasonably cleaned up, replenished the fanny with fresh water, and anxiously put him back in to see him swim. He sunk! We pulled him out and dried him off and decided that he was probably hungry. We had lots of mouldy bread on hand (fresh stores hadn’t arrived yet) along with a tin of ‘Carnation. Well, didn’t the duck suck back on that!

By now, Mick had rightfully assigned himself as the master and keeper of the duck, who when we finally got him afloat in the fanny, could only swim astern. This duck didn’t seem very bright for not only could he swim properly . . .he also couldn’t “Quack” . . .just “Wheep!”

Well that didn’t fizz Mick. First things first. He needed a name to create some affection. Later in the morning as the duck circled round the messdeck table at tot time, everybody unanimously agreed on the name “Philip” because after all, he did come from the Philippines. Also, because he was very quickly determined a single hand and victualled member, his christening extended to “Philip, the V.M. Duck.” (Phil’ for short) Naturally, if Phil’ was going to be a submariner, he had to have some identification and would certainly have to do his part three training. Mick then went down the passage to see the ‘swain and returned a few moments

later with a blank ID card and the Coxswain's rubber stamp ink pad. Mick stood Philip onto the stamp pad and then transferred his distinguishing marks, namely a pattern of two webbed-feet, onto the square on the card that otherwise takes the photograph. Next, he needed a stock number and now a big dispute started about whether he was a Guzz', Pompey, or a Chatham rating where RN service numbers incorporated a geographical prefix signifying a rating's assigned home port much like "E" and "H" in the RCN. The argument went on for some time but as the James Bond movie "DR. NO" was aboard (and we all admired Commander Bond like good submariners), everybody settled for "007 ½." Once all that was established, somebody said: "Wot if 'e ain't a bloke?" Well that did it. Everybody cheesed down then finished "the Queen's."

Being on tropical routine, leave was piped at 1300 and Mick headed over to the Subic' PX and bought a book on ducks that had illustrations. As it happened, it was quickly determined that Philip was a drake, quackin' was off, and he was the brand that didn't like to swim much. He was not to be handled too frequently as this would minimize his buoyancy grease secretion, but Mick said "Not to worry 'down the boat. We're all covered in it!" The book went on to say that Phil' would probably not grow any more than he was, which was convenient, and a diet of fresh not mouldy bread, and evaporated milk was a good substitute.

The fuss continued later in the day. The captain, LCdr Pat "State Express" Purdy, so labelled for his fag brand and frequent "one all rounds," had learnt that Phil' had joined the boat and declared that he indeed, did have to do his part three qualification by, at his own capability, scaling the hatch coaming from the tube space into the fore ends. He also inquisitively stated: "Where is Able Seaman Duck going to sleep in case he needs to get a shake to go on watch?"

Mick then went to work again to get Philip a bunk. He got out an old pusser's string net vest, a small square shaped cardboard box, and a couple of carefully selected bed sheets from the engine room rag bag. He would then suspend the box between the forward tubes just under # 1 main vent and very near where Mick's pit was in the fore ends. This way he wouldn't get seasick and Mick could keep a fatherly eye on him.

The only problem we were left with now was how Phil' would react to a vacuum in the boat when we snorted. "Well, well then! The jimmy exclaimed. "Let's have a vacuum test!" Mick was pleased with that but a little uncertain. "Ow's he goin' to clear his lug 'oles if 'e ain't got any?" he asked. He furiously paged through the book and soon found that ducks'

ears would be the two holes on the beak. Well, we all looked at each other whispering: ‘Think ‘e’s confused nostrils with lug’oles!’”

We sailed from Subic Bay and within five days, Philip passed his part three, had been down to five hundred feet several times, could handle the heat and humidity when the fans went down, could clear his lug ‘oles by shaking his beak in the air, and became extremely fond of the rum dregs on the messdeck table at tot time.

One night during the exercise, the captain was on the dimly lit plot table filling in his night order book when Philip was very curiously wandering about on top of the chart of the immediate operating areas. He paused and looked at Father’s face and then splatted right on top of Pulau Tioman Island. The captain unfizzed, turned quietly to the trimming officer and said, “Pipe Able Seaman D’Aish to the control room please Hugh . . .with his duckshite cleaning gear designed for black and white admiralty charts!”

Two weeks later, our trio of boats were back alongside *Medway* at *Terror*. It was good to finally get ashore and get a ten-tonner in the high pressure showers up in Keppel. God knows, we needed it and discomfort persisted. Some of the guys were nursing prickly, others, skin infection, yet more with ‘chinky toe-rot’. Then we’d all spiffy up and put on real shoes for the first time in weeks after wearing leather sandals that were by the end of a patrol, rotten and falling apart from being constantly oil and sweat soaked. To get your feet all cleaned up took about a week as everyone’s toenails and foot wrinkles were deeply penetrated with carbon off the donks’, spud water, and/or pusser’s telemotor oil if you were on the wrecker’s staff. To put on fresh shirt and long trousers for a change, the pleasure was indescribable.

Mad Mick in the meantime, felt that Philip deserved a run ashore too, and we all agreed. He was now a seasoned, qualified submariner and to make him legally ashore, Mick had been to *Terror* barracks MAA’s office and acquired a mini brown, special-duty, (no watches) station card and filled it in with the appropriate information including “G.” It was stamped “COXSWAIN, HMS/m ANCHORITE.”

Philip’s head was sticking out of Mick’s shirt pocket and the two would steam ashore turning in their station cards to the Duty RPO at the main gate. Coming back aboard was treated very seriously, where Mick would request return of the station cards by declaring to the RPO: “Able Seaman D’Aish M. and Able Seaman Duck P. . . .’Anchorite!” The Petty Officer would hand both ‘cards to Mick and would state in his cockney: “Crikey,

e's doin' awright! Bran kawd job 'n all!" while leaning across and stroking Philip's head with his finger, "'Av a good run then Phil'?"

"Who dis' bloke, Pelly Como?"

On the topic of shirts and other clothing, nobody familiar needs to be reminded of the intricacy and skills of the Chinese/Malaysian dhobey-wallahs and tailors. Mick, like Bagsy Baker, and most of us, had a passion for tailor-made clothing that would even get you socks, nicks, or shoes made to measure, let alone a suit at a rock-bottom price. When Mick was in *Andrew*, he did a lot of running ashore with the previous M(E)1 R-r-ronald, Camer-r-ron, 'Jock' McAlpine, the Scottish troubadour who was handy at '12-strings' and knew a lot of Scot odes too. Before sailing on a ten-weeker, they got their orders into 'Pinky the Sembawang tailor, and good friend to all "Johns" at *Terror* barracks.

Because of the language barrier, it was difficult to assure Pinky of exactly the style of shirts Mick and Jock were referring to. Material was understood as were the accoutrements, and so was the process of taking measurements including the head. The problem arose in the style of collars they preferred. In the early sixties, you had to be in vogue and many a Brit' was to have a Perry Como type collar that was broad and wore very high up on the neck. Pinky had never heard of this thing called Perry Como. To help puzzled Pinky, Mick and Jock illustrated with their hands horizontally about a foot apart and just above the shoulder exclaiming, "You know Pinky. Just like Perry Como. Big collar!"

Off sailed *Andrew*, to the Indian' and after the excitement of returning to *Medway* and a run ashore had worn away, Pinky was busy making his deliveries throughout Keppel. There were fine suits, colourful hats, the odd pile of clean clobber, new shorts, some brand new shoes and of course the Perry Como shirts that Mick and Jock had waited for so eagerly throughout the ten-week trip.

The shirts were of Thai-silk complete with studded buttons, frenched cuffs, personal mono-grams . . . and buttoned collars that began from below the nose on down to the shoulder blades. This now explained why Pinky had wrapped his tape measure around their heads in way of the lips. Jock looked at Mick with that Scottish gleam in his eyes, and Mad Mick immediately twigged. After paying Pinky off and passing the usual "BZ" at a job well done, Mick and Jock had their ten-tonners and dressed for the Saturday night run ashore at the Brit' Club in Singers. They met at the top

of the stairwell with their new shirts donned and smartly buttoned up with a necktie whose knot began below the nose. They would spend the night with much attention-getting from people wondering both who and what they were, and having their beer and 'naz-zers with the button undone that was immediately in front of their 'gobs. If you should lift the tie and sight the area of the second button hole down, you could easily see that the evening's libations included beer, rum, lemonade from the gin, finally having a dash of nasagoreng, more chil crab, with a hot madras and chapatti.

There were a lot of animals in *Terror* barracks including the four-legged kind. Evidence to the fact were the dog droppings that appeared on the parade square every morning. It seemed that after jack got ashore on a run, he'd get a few down and then start feeding the dogs with bits of 0300 nosh out of sympathy, go back on board and have the dog or whatever follow him home patting his head all the way. At times, the friendly lapping dog would go home with jack as an added paying passenger in a pirate cab from the Wai-Lee-Sun in Jay-Bee (Johor Baharu) or Bugis St. in Singers'. Some were taken into care but others weren't, and it got to the point that many had to be gathered and put down by the local authority.

Oggie the doggy

There were however, legitimate but unofficial mascots. In addition to Philip, there was a monkey, parrots of course, a goat, a special UK bound cat and a dog named "Rubbish" from my time to come in *Alliance*, and "Oggie" who belonged to the lads in the minesweeping Tenth Squadron's "woodpecker fleet." He would always show up at the Armada Club for his lunchtime sesh' with the 'sweeper lads. While Philip on one table lapping at the Tiger dregs on the table, Oggie was splashing his way through his bowlful of beer, and a monkey cheetah-ing about for a pat on the head from one submariner to another. The growling would start as Oggie, the senior dog, felt that his turf was being encroached with all these continuing newcomers. Oggie was an old salt. He'd done it all so stated the lads from the 'sweepers. As a matter of fact, he had earned acclaim to his name that reflected his boldness and deeds ashore that earned him a social disease. He became popularly known as "Oggie the doggie . . . with the leaky dick."

Philip in the meantime, was no slouch and always demanded attention to his presence. One day after the club had shut, everybody scurried off to *Terror* galley for din-dins before they shut at 1330. Philip followed,

waddling as fast as he could. A bunch of us including Mad Mick, sat at our traditional lengthy table that accommodated fifteen men per side. On the other were Royal Marines from 42 Commando.

Philip meandered about on the table as he always did, in search of crumbs, handouts, or anything else that any diner, including the marines, had to offer. As usual, he wasn't fussy and as he waddled from plate to plate and taking the time he needed, he became attracted to a bowl of cream of chicken soup. He dipped his beak in the gumbo to get a sample, or check the temperature as may be the case. All of a sudden, he stretched up to his fullest, flapped his tiny wings, and jumped right into the steaming hot soup. Soup, chunks of chicken, and veggies flew in every direction. Philip "wheep-wheeped" louder than we'd ever heard him. He almost arrived at the decibel of a quack. All the submariners started with a chuck-up. "Ca-a-am'on Phil'. You can do it!" or, "It's aba-a-t toime Phil'. Awfter all, y'after earn ya' keep, ya' know." "Oy Phil', d'ya wanna quacka wiv' yer soup?" And at the same time, one helluva big bootneck wasn't too charmed. Not only had his soup been infiltrated upon, but his starched and immaculate khaki shirt was covered with bits of celery and carrot stuck in his row of 'undresses'. Mick said inquisitively to 'royal, "Wot's that one fer? Losin' yer' ringbit on a run ashore in Sarawak 'er smugglin' jennies inta Eastney?"

About three months went by and poor Philip met his fate. He had become a famous duck who made the front page of the RN's "Navy News." Phil' and Mad Mick were in a picture on the front page sitting in the layer's seat of *Anchorite's* deck gun enshrouded with the boat's horseshoe kisby. Phil' was heralded on the headlines as:

**"A.B. PHILIP V.M. DUCK 007 1/2 (SUBMARINER)
DEEPEST DIVING DUCK IN THE WORLD"**

The accompanying story read similar to the above but with the juicy bits left out. Philip became adored in the boat, at the club, at the inboard galley, in K Block and throughout the 7th Squadron. He would be seen waddling along as fast as he could go, following Mad Mick ashore across the pontoons from the *Medway* and everywhere else that Mick would have to go. He had seven months sea time, most of it dived, and one morning during an alongside scrub-out he had been "weeping" about in the fore ends. Unknown at the time, he had ingested some white spirits out of a shallow tin that was used with steel wool to cut oil film on the cortosene

layered decks. We supposed he thought it was water because the boat's fresh water smelled like white spirits as well.

It wasn't until tot time when it was noticed that Philip wasn't really interested in lapping at the rum dregs. It got worse when he suddenly keeled over, so immediately a first aid party headed by Mad Mick was organized. They carried Philip up to RNH sick bay in a greasy old pusser's cap and ask to have him examined. The duty SBA said, "Sorry . . .I don't have a clue!" One of the first aid party said, "Well, we already know that!" At that meagre response, Mick then demanded to see a doctor and ask for a diagnosis, when out of nowhere came a four-ringed Surgeon Captain. "Captain, Sir. Could you look at our duck? Seem's he mighta scuppered



somethin' this mornin'!" The Captain very curtly in his posh accent replied, "Oh give him some milk or something to neutralize it then." Mick then asked of the Captain, "Don't ya' know 'oo this is sar?" to which the party somewhat perplexed, rushed him over to the galley for a tin of armoured cow. Philip died in transit.

A burial was held the next day in the grounds behind Keppel Block and Mick made a little cross for the head of his grave. There were about forty of the lads present including the skipper and SM 7 himself. Had more people heard of the news, many more might have attended. Mad Mick was so depressed, he went out and bought another duck. He was yellow, about

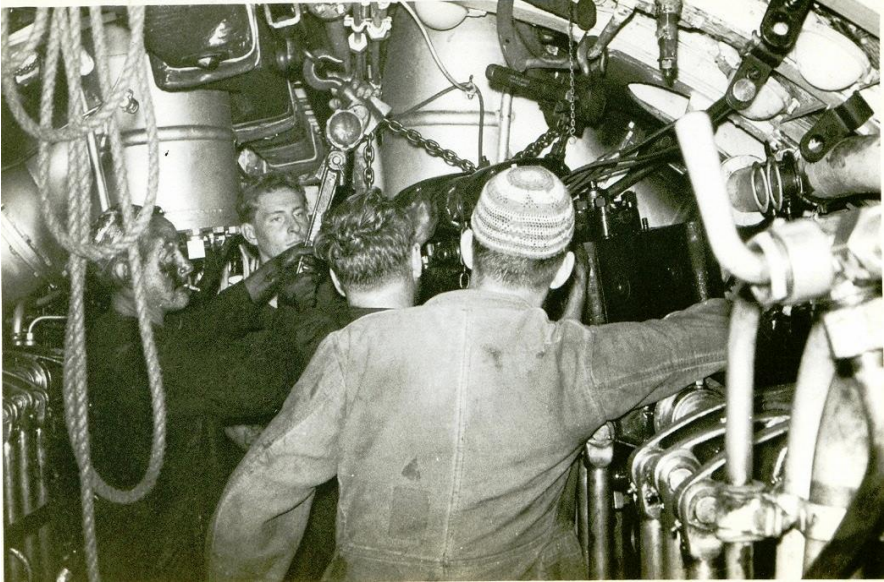
the same size, but had no personality. Mick called him Daffy. There was a highlight. Daffy could quack, but not much more. Daffy lasted a week until when one afternoon, Mick rolled over on top of him during an afternoon zuzz' and he was either crushed or suffocated. He said after. "Oi give oop. Thar' ll never be another Philip. 'Sides ... Daffy couldna' passed his part three anyway. 'E was too yellow!"

So, I returned to *Andrew* and fortunately, just for a short time. Now that the boat was well into refit, the doldrums had really set in. The routine was lifeless at RG(S) and much more suitable for the R. A's. Although I had a car, a sporty 1951, Light 15 Citroen, it gave me and my many V.M. riders a lot of flexibility to get around the dockyard, the barracks, Jay-Bee, and downtown Singers' itself. In short time however, there grew an anxiety to get back out there where I wanted to be. *Anchorite* was just completing a month long maintenance after the Japan trip and the buzz had it that she was now preparing for another deployment. This time it would be to the Persian Gulf and exercises in Jetex '64 in the Indian Ocean. A relief was required . . . this time, my good friend LSEM Rick Selka. Like Soapy, Ken, and George, Rick also owned a sports car . . . a '51 maroon MG. He was a good driver but a little heavy on the petrol pedal. During a night out in his car, we ventured out to R.A.F. Seletar to see some W.D.'s. The Yuji Khan road leading to the Jalan Kayu and Kampong Seletar was fabled as being constructed by Australian and British P.O.W.s in 1943 and, in their engineering ingenuity, had built the 7 mile winding stretch so that the bends in the road were all banked in the opposite direction. Twenty-one years later, the base of the road still remained the same, so when Rick and I came barrelling through at 60 mph that night, it didn't take him long to leave the road and head straight into the jungle . . . just missing a thirty-foot tree with a three-foot trunk. A few weeks later, Rick, this time on his own, had another accident. He was granted a request to remain behind to settle his business and even repair his bod' if he could find his own relief. I jumped at it.

We sailed and headed north through the Malacca Straits and into the Indian Ocean. There would be a stop on the way at Rangoon, or Mangalore, or even Bombay again. Other than that, every indication was that it would be a straight passage to Bahrain and the gulf and do exercises with the Middle East squadron, save for a daily trim dive and a few evolutions to keep ourselves honed.

Liftin' heads. . . and puttin' 'em back

The mankey *Ankey*'s engine room was in pretty rough shape because of the constant running and the price of a very hectic maintenance period. A lot of big engine work had gone on, and on the third night out, a column stud had sheered on the starboard side . . . number five outboard. In order to get at it meant removing # 6 and all its "top gear" first and this would find us down to one donk for about seventy-two hours. That cancelled any

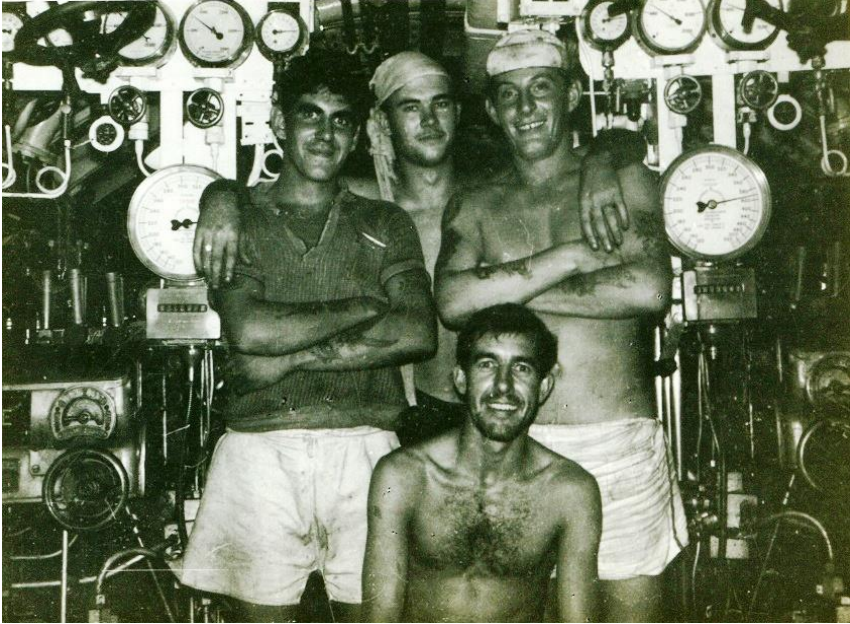


0200 on the 2-5 watch. Donk Shop Horse, Mechanician Bertie Ruler cinches up on lifting #5 cylinder head. Chief 'Tiff' Bob Dickey and stoker Tex Mellum (w. beanie) look on while the author, just out of his bunk, arrives in the engine room for the watch.

port visits for the transit. Such is the life in submarines. When an engine goes down, it becomes an all-hands-in evolution so that repairs are made good until completion. Because of the minimal numbers available, watches are reduced in numbers as well as the rotation from three to two. There will be little sleep for the next three days. Bob Dickey the Chief Tiff, and Chief Stoker, John "Cuddly Studley" will take over the watches and the whole job would be headed up by a very scruffy Mech', "Dirty Bertie" Ruler. He was the donk-shop horse who in short years to follow, was the Chief Mech' in *Artemis* when she sank alongside *Dolphin*. Mechanician "Brum" Nichols and ERA2 "Tiny Joe" Travers from Newcastle, the two other chiefs in charge of their respective watches and the

inclusion of “Ernie” Clayton, the Stoker P.O. made up the two shifts of senior rates. Each of the shifts would have two stokers on it that were taken off the one in three watch bill.

Not only was it going to be strenuous and filthy work and make for a lot of congestion throughout the boat, but having to deal with this in the stifling heat was another affair. With decreased air flow through the engine room, made the place like a greasy carboned up, green-house with



Back to normal, the Power Watch on the surface doing 420' both sides. The Goose, Knobby, Buster and ERA of the watch “Tiny Joe” Travers.

temperatures bathed with high humidity in the engine ‘centres’ at around 130 degrees. Because of the weight and dimensions of the heads and liners, blocks and tackles and whoopee-size whitworth ring spanners, sampsons, and sledges were part of the standard pusser’s A-boat engine repair kit. Let’s not discard the fact that five stalwart stokers would be heaving up on this array of pullies and farm machinery to obtain a ball park precision cylinder head torque at the order, “**Two-six . . . HEAVE!**” The situation at sea in an engine room with tossing, oil-laden, and sweat-soaked deck plates can be a very dangerous place to be. Then comes the confusion of verbal orders and communication over the din of the other supercharged running engine that necessitates the engine room branch to steepen in the art of sign language.

The job finally got completed in three and a half days. We were all exhausted and manky, and some were suffering from heat exhaustion and prickly heat. Nevertheless, father opened the casing as the boat got back up to 420 rpm both sides, both ‘screamers’ “In,” and everybody not stood down could clear up the boat while the players got an extra tot, two beers, and some well-deserved and easy to do kip. The satisfaction of getting it right again, as always, is indescribable.

The Bootneck and the Submariner

The passage now continued direct to the Persian Gulf and HMS *Jufair* in Bahrain. It was February in 1964, and what was surprising is how cold it suddenly became. Here we were, dressed for the desert with steamin’ shorts, sarongs and sandals, only to find that when we came alongside the minesweeper repair ship HMS *Striker*, a former amphib’ landing ship at *Jufair*, there was frost on the date palms and clouds of breath coming from the passing camels on the jetty. Cool air surrounding oily and greasy sandal-ed feet makes them very, very cold.

Along with several minesweepers, the Middle East Squadron that ran from Bahrain, boasted the new type steam/gas turbine Tribals: *Mohawk*, *Eskimo*, *Nubian*, *Ashanti*, *Tartar*, and *Gurkha*. It would be the first time that I had seen what a Machinery Control Room (MCR) was supposed to be. I just couldn’t fathom how sitting in an air-conditioned space watchkeeping over running machinery that was in unmanned spaces below you. Aboard *Nubian* was a Royal Marine commando, Corporal “Knocker” White, who later teamed up with our Griff” on a run ashore.

The story goes that after an ale or two at the *Jufair* wets, they decided to swap uni-bags before venturing into downtown Bahrain to visit the bazaars. Griff” and Knocker stayed that way for the evening until they came aboard *Anchorite* when everybody was about ready to get turned in after the evening’s run wash up and a can or two. Down the forehatch and into the stokers’ mess they came, brandishing this three-foot hookah pipe. Well we had to have a demo. Griff”, the marine, quickly shed his khaki red badged garb into a corner of the mess while Knocker the submariner watched in his bulky jumper and too-short bell bottoms. A burqa was quickly produced and donned and then Griff” proceeded to wrap a towel around his recognizable head that had grown through his hair. To complete his costume, he intertwined an H.M. SUBMARINES cap tally into the folds of the towel, crawled up unto the messdeck table and squatted behind

the hookah pipe and began to suck. What was in the top of that pipe anyhow? Did it ever chuck up! This went on into the early hours until finally, Griff got his swede down. His pit was the coffin which was fore and aft on the settee and only half of it opened into the mess. This made it convenient as a slack hammock in the morning for Griff wasn't on his pins until Chief Stoker "Cuddley" came in at 0800 to get everybody out and turned to. He was still turned in in his sleeping bag when finally, he got the big nudge from CHIEF Stoker. There was another peculiar but familiar "chuck-up" in the mess that morning. We thought that maybe there was a sick cell in the battery box from below or that maybe chef had a bubble and squeak jacked up for dinner that day as the pong wafted all about. Griff scratched his ba-a-aldy heed and straightened out his burqa and commenced to fold up his sleeping bag to zip it up into his mattress cover. In the process, he inverted it and gave it a shake, when out dropped this 'John Brown' that fell with a resounding, "ba-boomph," onto the battery board deck of the mess. The stokers never cleared the mess to turn to so quickly before and by tot time, an account of the morning's greeting was delivered to the mess from the sailors' mess next door.

"Ode to the pit of Griff"

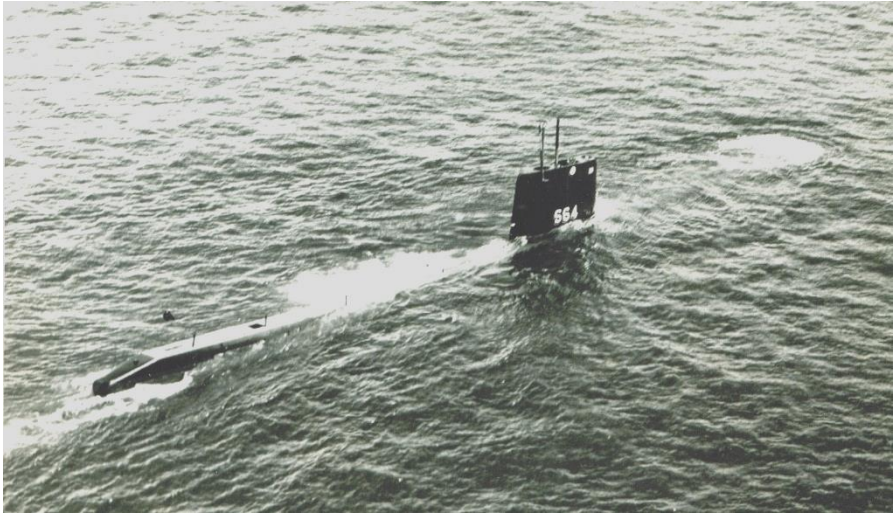
Griff crept from out of his pit one day
His bag of chink, he chunk.
There on the deck after shakin' his bag,
fell this 'George', that landed "ker-thunk."
The clankies, out of the mess they stole,
holding their shonks, they shunk.
Many a wicked smile Griff smole,
and many a wink, he wunk!

After Bahrain, we played a little with the Gulf squadron and then the Pakistani Navy in the Arabian Sea off Karachi. After a week or so, we shaped a course that would take us into the Jetex exercise near Sri Lanka, among the allies in the exercise were R.A.N. ships and HMC Ships *St. Laurent*, *Mackenzie* and *Saskatchewan*, as recalled. Then we learnt of startling news that during an exercise in Jervis Bay, the carrier, HMAS *Melbourne* (later dubbed the Killer Ship from a second collision in 1969) had rammed and cut in two, the Aussie Daring Class destroyer *Voyager* with 82 casualties. We were stunned in wondering how it could have ever

happened. Later, RN Daring Class, *Duchess* was to be sent to the RAN to supplement the loss.

With the extra time, we were now destined for sparsely inhabited Nankowri in the Nicobar Islands, a union territory of India since her 1947 independence. The Nicobars are a group of nineteen small islands in the Bay of Bengal that form with the more populated Andaman Islands to the north. We went alongside the rat-familiar frigate I.N.S. *Trishul*, at anchor in a lagoon. Also, much to the amazement of my kipper oppos and to the pleasant surprise of Griff and I, we had joined the anchorage with *Mackenzie* and *Saskatchewan*, who were to later depart for return passage to Esquimalt. ‘Sally’ (*St. Laurent*) was on her way round to Halifax from Esquimalt after the first of class to be converted to a DDH, helicopter borne destroyer. We just couldn’t comprehend this new floatin’ airport.

After we had doubled up on *Trishul*, it was time to snare a ten-tonner and boy, did we need it after being away from ‘the wall’ for almost three

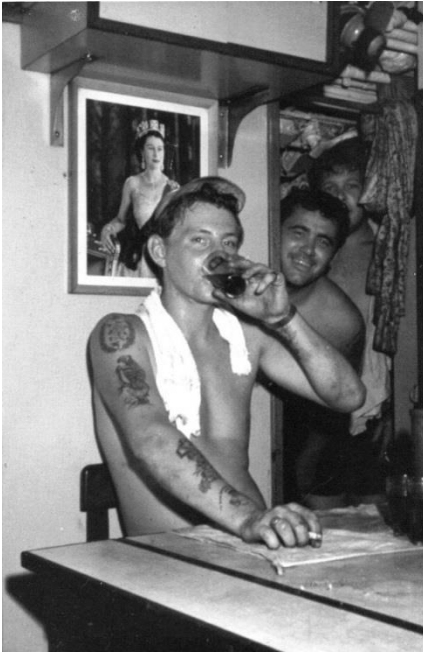


*Bridge cleared for diving. HMS/m Anchorite after Bahrain - March 1964.
Middle East Squadron and SM7 insignias displayed at top of fin*

weeks. As always when we got near a skimmer, the request went out to blow down and descale 65 hummy bodies, and the reply from *Trishul* was a well-received “Yes please, Effendi! Bloody help yourself please. . .oh yes please!”

The Bar-B-Q . . . and the stingray

Griff was to steal the show once more. He was a member of a local civilian divers' club in Singapore whose interest was pleasure diving. As members they would collect sea shells, bottles, and anything else of rare-find value for 'show & tell' at regular meetings. Apart from the fact that Griff was also a pusser's ship's diver, his equipment as a club member was complete. It included a wrist worn depth gauge, a razor-backed knife and lanyard, a netted bag to stow his findings, and a "snort mast," as he would affectionately label his snorkel tube as a devout submariner.



*Relieved for tot and back on watch
The Queen ... God Bless Her*



*Fore ends Anchorite. A lot cooler in this
compartment*

The afternoon wore on where we had built a large fire and managed to wrestle the contents of babies' heads onto a large tree branch that served as a hand-driven rotisserie, was just not typical of a North American barbecue, but it would do fine in these relaxed surroundings. We were all getting hungry and the tins of Tiger kept flowing. It used to bother me in the days of can spanners and church keys that it forced me to have to drink beer and goffers out of a glass. You used to have to open the cans with opposing holes to allow a vent for the liquid to flow out. My rather large

nose used to act as a plug on the venting-in hole as I tipped the can toward my lips, and in defiance of physics, the liquid just wouldn't come out.

Nevertheless, it was time to eat, and about twenty feet out from where we stood was Griff panning the lagoon's seabed in search of anything worthwhile. He was snorting and as such, his ears were just under the water enough that he couldn't hear our claim, **"Hey Griff! The nosh is getting' cold and the beer's getting' warm. C'mon in and get lashed up!"** He didn't respond but instead, carried on pingin', and snortin', and lookin' for shells.

Then, I noticed that semi-buried in the sand of the beach was an old burlap bag that was damp and stiff. I pulled it out of the sand and in an attempt to get Griff's attention, threw the bag out onto the water. Instead, it landed square on his back to which in a panic, he stopped snorting and went deep. Then he came flying out of the water with mask askew and choking with water. In his hand was the razor-backed knife as he flailed away in panic at the burlap bag that in his startle and panic, was a huge stingray.

The confusing gearbox. . .who's confused?

Griff was a victim of a lot and many predicaments. For a change one time, he decided to hire a car for the weekend in Singers'. It was a fire engine red, late 50's MG sports car with a standard shift. We were just lazing about around Keppel and in the mess on this warm Saturday afternoon, when the peace and quiet was broken with a thunderous and continuing roar from the roadway below. We spurted out onto the balcony to find that here was Griff, manoeuvring the car toward the block and in his bewilderment, crying out, **"How in the hell do ya' get this goddam thing outta second gear?"** He had driven the fourteen miles from downtown Singapore in that mode and the heat and smoke coming off the gearbox was worse than a flash-up from cold, to put on a battery charge.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HMS/m *Alliance* The “Appliance”

In the middle of the year, I joined *Alliance*. The captain was LCdr Tony Pogson. “Poggy” was very poised and expectant in his direction. He was a huge man and very proficient as a captain. He was extremely dry and witty and knew well how to associate with his crew. He was a master at blending times for serious attention as well as the more pleasurable things in life, and knowing when to relax was a loud signal to us, his supportive crew.



The coxswain was CPO “Bert” Mallows who was my former escape tank instructor who later, went on to be the commissioning coxswain of the brand new “bomber,” HMS/m *Resolution*. It didn’t take us long to dub him “Malnutrition”! His tight control and scarcity in delivering the groceries was abysmal. The tanky would approach him saying of pusser’s peas, “ ‘Ay Swain’. . . there’s only fifty peas in a bag!” “So wot?” he’d respond. “Fifteen men to a bag? Mash ‘em!” Meanwhile, Scouse Moody the chef put out reasonable fare. He would bake a cake now and then. The outside wrecker, on watch at the time, had to trim 200 gallons from forward to aft when the seamen’s mess took one forward. Trimming is a hazardous occupation when the chef bakes.

Since *Alliance* had arrived on station the previous year, her running was at first, sparse. She had encountered a plunge to great depths while transit snorting. She had hit a fresh water patch off a river tributary while close in to the African Coast. When she arrived in Singapore, she was knackered from the eight-week run it took to get there. She had also suffered a ballast shift which meant going into the floating dock and fix things right before she was out on patrol with the rest of us. It didn’t take long after she came down to get her fitted out with surface gunnery as well. It seemed that the pusser had run out of 4-inch deck guns and had to resort to weapons that didn’t take kindly to being immersed in sea water. So, *Alliance* was fitted with a 20mm Oerlikon mount with two detachable gun barrels stowed in the gun tower. To further supplement, portable Vickers .303 machine guns were fitted on the bridge and struck below when diving. A haven for a gun-layer, where this time, care and custody came from none other than the

only submarine gun-layer the RCN had on inventory, good friend LSLR “Roy” Donovan.

In a short time to come, *Alliance* had done a number of “sneakies” landing the SBS commandos, conducting patrols in and around Indonesian islands and on one occasion, well penetrating into Indonesian waters quietly in search of the possibility of two “in harbour” Sverdlov cruisers. On one patrol, it was meant to sail at midnight and the crew in anticipation, prepared for six weeks dived. In order that the groceries would last, we went to “double-decking.” Cardboard cartons of tinned food filled the passageways and as long as the tanky procrastinated and rummaged the vittles out of the Coxswain’s store first, meant no scrub-outs and the subsequence of saving precious fresh water. All of this at the expense of bumpin’ yer head and a sore back from wobbling through the boat all doubled over.

We were to sail at about midnight and I was already aboard, in the donk shop doing a battery charge. The stokers’ mess all decided that it was a good idea to shave off . . . their heads. They arranged to have the barber close up at 2000 that night at the Armada Club’s barber’s shop. As they guzzled their ‘Tigers’ and ‘Anchors’, one by one they shifted from the barstools of the wet canteen to the adjoining entrepreneurship of the barber next door, and returned to sip more until the last one had his “shave off.” Then in timely fashion so as not to be adrift for Harbour Stations, fourteen ‘clankies’ dumped the drops of their “south wind” glasses upon their heads and did a **“HI-Ho, Hi-Ho . . . It’s off to work we go!”** all the way down to the boat on the pontoons leading to *Medway*. Once the boat had cleared the darkened navigational hazards of the Johor Straits, we dived and would come shallow only to snort, until six weeks later at the entry from where we started.

Watch Your Fingers

During another “sneakie,” around the same time, the T.I., “Bonzo” Chapman and his tubes crew, were loading a salvo of mines up the tubes. As one of the cylindrical weapons was being eased into the breach, Bonzo decided to use his index finger as a tube top stop. Alas, his finger was nicked off at the knuckle and went up the tube along with the mine. It was dark in there and the slack fit tube gave little room to rummage round with a torch looking for Bonzo’s “personalized top stop.” To unload the tube meant more toil and a considerable loss of time, so Bonzo said, “Fukkit . .

. I'm signed for it. Leave it in there!" The next day, the boat moved to within the areas designated for the minelay. When #3 tube was flooded up and fired . . . the jimmy's voice, that of Lt. Frank Grenier, came softly over the tannoy announcing, "The boat will observe one minute's silence for the T.I.'s finger. As we are in the ultra-quiet state, everyone shall refrain from joining in the Naval Hymn!"

On other operations known as "Goldfishing," we were to transport, land, and recover the bootnecks from the 3rd Commando Brigade SBS. (Special Boat Section) These commandos were quite different for not only were they in perfect physical condition, their expertise extended into being soldiers, paratroopers, divers, to submariners, and now in this case . . . canoeists. There were twelve of them and we were to release them inshore on Sumatra and/or off-lying Indonesian islands in the Java Sea in the black of a moonless night. The operation required that we launch them from the casing in their six canoes in a controlled dive. The versatility of the gun tower in also acting as a two-man escape tower provided SBS landing parties to sometimes lock-out and exit the boat when shallow instead of surfacing. This way, when surfacing off shore out of visual range, they would be all ready to retrieve their weapons and canoes that were stowed under the casing or at times in the fore-ends and later released through the forward torpedo loading hatch. Two commandos would enter the gun tower, flood up, and when the pressure equalized, open the upper lid and swim out. This would be done several times and on one occasion aboard another boat doing the same operation, a swimmer also lost his finger while battling with the upper tower hatch. In serving as an example of their daredevilry and barmy courageousness, the bootneck Sergeant in charge opined, "E'll be awlroight! It wasn't 'is trigga fingal!"

Meanwhile, our thoughts were that if this keeps up at the rate of two a week, the sandy seabeds of the shallow waters off Sumatra are going to be infested with "written-off" fingers deemed as: "No longer an operational necessity to Her Majesty's Armed Forces."

Once ready with all the "Cockleshell Heroes" in their canoes, we would do a gently controlled dive allowing them to launch from the casing. They would then make a line around the search periscope mast tube so that the canoes could be slowly towed in-line very close to inshore. Once released, they would paddle ashore while we would slowly retreat to deeper water. After they had completed their operation, usually before 'first light' or 24 hours later, it was time to make the recovery. Close inshore once more, the means by which the commandos would sight our periscope-tow was simple, but revealing if not done fastidiously. At pre-determined exchange

intervals, a red-lensed, torch with weakened batteries was aimed through the inter-ocular eyepiece of the search periscope, thereby signalling the retreating canoeists of the submarine's rendezvous position. Another means for locating position for retrieval was with the use of a "Bongle," an SBS device which could transmit a weak signal through the water to the boat's 185 U/W telephone. By paddling out to the located RV position, they would halve themselves and prepare a line across the anticipated track of the boat's periscope. We would then snag the line and tow them back out to sea, surface and bring them and their canoes back aboard. On this operation, we recovered them the next night. One of them didn't return. His colleagues never spoke.

Vendetta and a real rabbit

Weeks later, another patrol was evident and like all others, there was never a need to take more than three changes of 'nicks and two sarongs for steamin' gear. Much to everyone's surprise, as soon as we cleared Johor Strait, we made a very abrupt and sharp course alteration to port and headed north for Bangkok instead of across the equator, back into the Java Sea. "Strange," this navy! Strangely enjoyable at times! Why it happened eludes me to this day, but guesses are accurate that we were either a decoy or was there a tip-off? Who will ever know when you live on the lower deck? Ours of course was not to reason why, so we got on with it.

Once the view of Bangkok harbour became a reality, it was now seen as a challenge to get ashore. As sarongs and chopped-off Jesus-boots were not part of the Coxswain's repertoire for creating a good naval impression with the Thai locals, we were left to our own resources.

As we went alongside against something with a "We're here!" bump in the donk shop, we soon found out that the inboard catamaran was none other than HMAS *Vendetta*. Still baffled with a decision as to what to wear ashore knowing that it had to suit the whims of "Malnutrition," I popped over the plank to the stokers' mess in this Aussie bateau. Attached to the vertically opened w/t hatch leading down to the mess, I noticed a well-made chromed propeller surmounted with two stars on a wood backing. I somehow felt welcome as I descended the ladder while rapping on the hatch coaming with my free fist. "Gosh, that hurts!"

Being a fellow colonial, it didn't take me long to insist upon the Killick of the Mess that like him and unlike the RN, I too wore shoulder flashes on my uni-bag while taking every precaution to introduce myself in a

quickly-regained but slipping Canadian accent. That homemade affiliation rid him of any doubt and his loyalty now possessed him to not say "NO!" in helping a fellow colonial, the request for the loan of a dozen sets of half-whites was reasonable. After all, by saying no he realized he would be singly depriving us of getting a run ashore in as we were only in for one night. It became even more assuring and spirited to the killick when the invitation was made to come round Ally-ancee's 'clankies' mess for a tot with some of his oppos at 1100. He turned to his mates and in his Oz twang ordered . . . "Right you lot! Everybody dig out a white front, a pair a' white trollies, belt, shoes and socks. We're gonna help out these sewer-tubers next door ta' get a run in . . . and it's worth a tot all 'round." He then turned to me and said with a grim look, "I s'pose ya' got yer own tiffers seein' as ya' didn't take yore's off when ya came down the mess." He reminded me of Willy in the *Micmac*. This was a "Leading" hand!

The next morning, we got under way at 0600. Before going, there was one thing to do with the greying, brandy-stained, beer soaked, and in some cases, torn clobber and scruffy white shoes. Get it all back to the Aussie' stokers. We did. We rolled it all up in submarine gash bags with tins of Tiger beer in each of the 24 shoes. During delivery in the darkened gangways of *Vendetta* at 0500, the two starred propeller was to be disconnected, transferred, and relocated to the formica'd fan trunking in the stokers' mess of *Alliance* . . . Where else?

It is seldom the case that no matter where you go alongside, you must always take home a "rabbit." Bangkok was certainly no exception but because there was precious little time to do any roamin' 'round the shops, something had to be done quickly. Ron Manison, a killick RP and I, were running back aboard in the early hours prior to sailing. We were passing a stall that sold everything from veggies, to fruit, to nice warm venison, when I noticed an old crate with live rabbits in it. Always prepared to black-cat the boys, we quickly decided to buy one and take it back aboard. Name? "Bugs", of course. . . and within an hour, we were on our way out of the harbour and the fore-endies had already jury-rigged a new home for "Bugs." Everybody started to make a fuss. Fresh greens were aboard so out came the lettuce leaves and carrots. About a dozen of us were circled round the converted spud crate while tickling the rabbit and twitching our noses in affection when grocer "Malnutrition" came barreling into the fore-ends. "Roight you lot. Wot's up then? Wot we got 'ere then?" asked our demanding Coxswain, when all the while we thought that he was as intrigued as the rest of us. He wasn't as we were soon to discover. "Roight LM(E) Brown. Let's 'ave a bog at this rabbit then!" he said. I picked up

Bugs by the scruff and held him up for the ‘Swain to see. He paused and while grasping the rabbit by his hind feet, he took it and said, ‘Now that’s not ‘ow ya ‘old a rabbit. That’s cruel. ‘Ere’s ‘ow ya ‘old ‘im. By ‘is feet.” The rabbit was now inverted when suddenly and much to everyone’s conclusion about the ‘Swain’s new-found affection, he whacked ole’ Bugs with a traditional rabbit chop. Bugs croaked, and as he vented off on his last breath, everybody went, “O-o-o-o-oy ‘Swain. That ain’t propah!” Malnutrition stood back and declared, ‘Roight! Ya’ can ditch this bawstard ova’ the soide. You all know the routine abat transportin’ animals ‘round the Far East. They’re fulla diseases. Ya’ can’t do that . . .so ditch ‘im. That’s the end of it!” Thinking back, it didn’t seem to bother Len Tapsall, the ‘Swain in *Anchorite* when we salvaged Philip. Oh well. Different ship. . .different tally, as we say. “Lest we forget.” There would be and was, another time.

Noisy binoculars

We were now cotted and on the roof, running down the Malacca Straits at 400 rpm, bound for Singers’. In the seldom experienced days of “passage routine,” was like another dimension in the submarine. The engines ran better and the air was at least a little drier, but above all, the watches were extended so that minimal numbers were closed up at any one time. Even the fore hatch got open so a few could get a “Zalpon soap” sea-water bath under the casing.

Although the Indonesian threat was close at hand, the Vickers machine guns on the bridge were cocked and ready to go and the oerlikon down on the casing was well prepared to pound off at a moment’s notice. Ammo numbers were “as detailed,” in the watch bill and everyone felt at least, just about prepared in the event of any action.

A new Sub-Lieutenant had just joined the boat and he was very inquisitive about the submarine. Industrious, he would go about asking people all sorts of questions about how systems ran and what valves did what. One day, up on the casing, he was looking over the after plane guard at the port hydroplane. He asked of the outside wrecker, Mechanician “Les” Beadle, “Wreckah! . . . What is that big square thing down there ...?” He had potential to completely damaging his chances of success in later life. Time passed, and he was on the bridge for his first surface watch on his tod’.

Aft on the bridge was “Geordie” Scott the lookout, and leaning over the port bridge rail was none other than “Poggy” the captain. Father was just



A camouflaged Alliance (with deck Oerlikon) as we return from patrol in the Malacca Straits

like everybody else on board, in his sarong and sandals and taking in the sweet air and just watching the seas run by in the hot afternoon sun. “Sub” had just taken over the watch making sure that his course was correct, knew the charging rate, what masts were up and down, and the boat was sea-cottered in “patrol routine.” All of these things had finally been mastered after constant weeks of study and blasting away at every theoretical aspect of the requirements of surface running. He felt good about himself and that the captain was very pleased with his accomplishments as a qualified surface OOW. Things were quiet and so peacefully in order until “Sub” felt an urge, after only just having his lunch but an hour beforehand. He felt that he was so absolutely well prepared to take his first watch but through the anxiety and busy-ness of mental preparation, had forgotten about nature. On the bridge of course is a pig’s ear for which many a submariner will tell a skimmer or landsman that, “That is the voice pipe to the engine room!” The submariner would then pull down his fly and demonstrate an additional use by relieving himself, when really it was an open-ended drain that trickled down into the fin to the channel where ballast tanks meet the pressure hull.

In a fluster, “Sub” said to captain, “Sir! I know what I’m going to say is dreadful but the pig’s ear isn’t really going to help my needs at this time. It seems that lunch has caused my stomach to ache and I must relieve myself. As you are on the bridge sir, could I go below for a few moments?”

Poggy continued to look down at the brilliant white wash of the straits and without a movement, said in his dry gentleman’s tone, “Sub, you must remember that there are many things one must do before one assumes the watch on a submarine and unfortunately you have made an error in remembering your requirements in basic needs. I can only suggest to you that now you are here, and have full responsibility for the safety of the submarine on my behalf, you must consider all of your resources. I’m not one of them . . . nor would I expect you to disturb your wardroom colleagues in such a dilemma. Your popularity will hurriedly diminish I can assure you.”

Moments went by when the captain heard a very distinct and echoing, ‘ba-boomph’, emanating from the top of the ballast tanks on the starboard side. As “Sub” slid down onto the bridge deck from his perch over the starboard bridge rail and adjusted the hang of his sarong, Geordie heard of Poggy inquire, “Drop your binoculars “Sub”?”

Station Leave

By 1965, the Indonesian crisis had accelerated. There were curfews issued to all Commonwealth personnel throughout Singapore and the lower Malaysian Peninsula. A local civilian had been gruesomely decapitated by a Dyak native at dockyard’s Woodland’s Gate and therefore a potential threat to lives in any neighbourhood or any street in and around Singapore. This meant that for us, V.M.’s leave was confined to within the gates of the entire naval base including *Terror* barracks and the dockyard. Hence and expectantly, the dockyard canteen and the Armada Pavilion in *Terror* began to run dry of beer within a week and Jack was left with little choice of the less popular demand of Guinness or mild ale. Ships and submarines alongside doubled up on their sentries and were issued sten guns. Floodlights were lowered around all hulls in providing view in the dark toward any means of the enemy attaching limpet mines. Well, all of this was very exciting and brought everyone to bear. And along the lines of, “All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy!” the Royal Navy insisted that although a threat existed, leave at designated times must be taken by all personnel. In order to do so meant that Station Leave and the regulations

provided therein were activated. As leave was “approved,” it had to be to a safe and assigned destination. Ours was the NAAFI’s “Sandycroft Leave Centre” off the western shore of the Malay Peninsula on the island of Ipoh, near Penang. Sandycroft, because of its location, served as a leave centre for the larger concentration of Commonwealth servicemen that were in Northern Malaysia and Vietnam as well, consisting of Royal Marines, the R.A.F., and the British, Australian, and New Zealand armies. Well why couldn’t matelots go there too and in this case . . . submariners? We were never to be assured if our attendance remained as “welcome”. Six of us boarded the train at Jay-Bee across the causeway and travelled north to Kuala Lumpur. When we had arrived there the next morning at about 0600, it was time to have breakfast while waiting for another train that would take us to Penang to board the ferry for Ipoh. Well, breakfast at 0630 meant musical entertainment provided by a juke box in the K.L. train station bar and our bill of fare consisted of chapattis, curried goat, nasa goreng, and lots of Tiger beer to wash it all down. They never closed in the Fezz’. It had been a hot and dry trip through the jungle during the preceding day and the sleepless night that had just ended. We were still thirsty and as we had consumed our breakfasts, the “opera” resumed while laughter never faltered. We felt good about this joyful change . . .the break in routine, new surroundings, the fresh to some but still sultry air, and some well-earned freedom for a while. We were very content and justifiably proud of who we were and what we did for a living. Nothing could stop us.

After a hairy old start to a good day, we finally arrived at the leave centre in late afternoon. Immediately, we were welcomed with smiles from the native NAAFI staff, but odd looks from the many people already there that also included wives and families of the few who were entitled to be accompanied. Wives and families? What kind of wars were going on anyway? It was well-known that many aboard the ships in Singapore were foreign for eighteen months at a time and their families were all back in YewKay. But the army, the air force . . .what was going on? In any event, we moved into our “six men to-a-cabin” digs. We immediately saw that the bunks looked more like boudoirs through the bundled-up mosquito netting that was draped over each of the pits. It would do just fine. The deckheads were high and flat, there was lots of shower water, and the place was clean. It was time to head for the beach side bar and meet the gaffer.

The first sign of restriction was a placard in front of the bar that clearly read: “SHARK WARNING. DO NOT ENTER THE WATER WHEN RED FLAG IS FLYING” Well after sightin’ that, what are submariners to do? In we went. The water was lovely. Moments later, we were hollered

at from what seemed like six directions. **“Can’t you see the bloody red flag coppers? Get outta there you flamin’ twits!”** came this horrible and booming Australian accent that belonged we found out later, to an Aussie pongo club-swinging whose job it was to regulate the beach. “What a number he’s got! Bleedin’ PTI’s!” we all thought aloud.

Later, we strolled along the white sand beach that was caressed by jungle palms and coconut trees. Then we came upon a stream that cut across the beach. It was about 15 to 20 feet wide and wound its way from the balmy sea into a lagoon behind a stand of trees. The water was grey and murky looking and we couldn’t see through it. To swim through it in order to get to the other side of the sand approaches quickly became an obstacle. Sea snakes, crocodiles, sea-urchins, Portugese men ‘a war, and other critters . . . the like that snap, sting, bite, and yomp, were the primary objects in our minds. So how to get across?

Baggy knew that my new wristwatch was special to me. In an earlier trip to Hong Kong in *Alliance*, I had purchased a timepiece ‘for a song’ that I thought would well replace the “Birks special” that was cuffed in Karachi. It was a “Titus,” that in the 1960’s was popular as it had airplanes and rocket ships flying about in the bezel. Baggy and Pete then wrestled me to the ground and seized the watch, to see it being hurled across the stream to land harmlessly into the warm sand on the other side. Well, that did it. Somebody had to go first and briskly. I had been elected. As I configured to make a rapid swan dive and then swim like hell to the other side, nervously I looked to either side. Here were Baggy and Pete in the same pre-dive position with Baggy about to holler, **“On three. . .in, and swim like a bawstad! One! Two! Three!”** In we went ...in all one foot of the murky stream. There we now lay propped up on our elbows, looking at each other and laughing as if there was no tomorrow. We stood up and walked the rest of the distance. That comical event reminds me to this day of the affection and commitment of true submarine messmates.

The week sped by in an eventful way. There was a call for blood donors at the local clinic. We went and passed off a pint each and much to our pleasure, were rewarded with in-coming free beer in order to replenish the out-going free pint. There was no curbing of the overflow. Money in our pockets then became a serious problem as usual. Poor financial management and having to pay for our digs by the end of the week almost left us to starve. By the time we had paid for our return train fare, we pooled our tin. We found that among the six of us, we managed to scrape enough together to buy three bowls of rice only, but then fill up with drinking water to make it swell up all the more after we had ravenously

yomped the ish' within a few seconds. Then of course, we ran out of fags so it didn't take long to scour the decks of the train carriages in finding a few dog-ends. It was a relief to finally step off the train in Jay-bee once more and get back to the boat.

A new flag

By April, although not home in Canada and privy to the goings on in the RCN, we had learned that something ceremonially significant had occurred. News finally arrived that two months before on the 15th of February, 1965 the White Ensign ("en-sin") in Canadian warships had been hauled down and replaced with the new Canadian flag. Soapy, Roy, and myself just couldn't imagine what this new flag looked like and we felt a little left out that such critical news was so slow in getting to us. We had also heard that there was a lot of gronkin' among Canadian matelots and those that were, over the displacement of a flag we all so proudly sailed under. When we stopped to think about that, we became a little objective too. The good news though was that because we were still sailing under the exact same piece of proud bunting in the RN, we weren't as reminded. So just how did this proud flag ever come to be?



Naval history is intriguing and by discovering that from the outset, the origin of this piece of proud bunting stems from it being disengaged from

the family of three standards. . .the Red, the White, and the Blue Ensigns. The Red Ensign was introduced into the Royal Navy in 1625 and was being worn by merchant ships soon afterwards. In 1674, it became the legal and recognized flag of the Merchant Service. In about 1650, the Royal Navy was using all three ensigns and the fleet was divided into Red, White and Blue Squadrons, each commanded by a Flag Officer of the appropriate “colour,” whose ships wore ensigns or pendants of that colour. All three ensigns remained in use in the Royal Navy in this manner until 1864 when the Red Ensign was made the exclusive “property of the Merchant Service.” The White Ensign was then reserved for the Royal Navy, and the Blue Ensign for the then newly formed Royal Naval Reserve. And then and well into the twentieth century the Blue Ensign’s familiarity evolved to identify that as worn by Fleet Auxiliary vessels.

So here we were on the other side of the world while quietly and proudly doting that Canadian submariners, in RN submarines would probably be the last of RCN matelots to sail under the white ensign. Some of us were destined to do it for some time to come yet but when the last Canadian matelot would do so, we would languish to an ode:

The White Ensign

A wind-torn rag on a worm-eaten pole,
It does not look likely to stir a man's soul:
A rag which told of its country's honour,
Of the ship and the men who once sailed upon her:
'Tis the deeds that were done 'neath the wind-torn rag,
When the pole was a staff, and the rag was a flag.

“Bring #4 tube to the Action State”

Meanwhile, we were quickly closing in on our last few taskings before returning to the YewKay. We were to do a quick visit back into Hong Kong for some R&R, but then news came that a typhoon was approaching the areas. Pogy decided to sail to ride out the storm. As we cleared the harbour, it was to be an eventful time which led into three uncomfortable and miserable days. As the storm had not yet approached, we were earlier tasked to expend a MK. 8 warhead torpedo whose history on RNAD’s inventory was past its time as was the workings therein were approaching the end of their useful life. The target was a small uninhabited island that

lay in distant proximity to the harbour approaches. Immediately, it reminded me of the iceberg we fired at with a MK. 9** in Micmac and missed by half a mile. To be accurate and on the very safe side, the torpedo was to be fired at a range of one mile, the boat on the surface and DIW. The ‘kipper’ finally let go with a “Wha-woosh,” after a lot of preparation and banter between the control room and the tubes crew headed up by “missin’-a-digit,” Bonzo Chapman. With a running commentary by the first lieutenant, Lt. Frank Grenier, we anticipated the hit from his audible



countdown that suddenly went off at 15, 14, 13 . . . “**KA-CRACK.**” The post-firing comment later was, “Jimmy must be usin’ ‘is Bugis St. Rolex!” The boat shook violently, an indication of what *Conqueror* was to endure in years to come when the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano* went down in the Falklands deploying the same fish. Being dived, the impact was to be more significant. After the success of the evolution, it was time to divert attention. We secured for sea to ride out the storm on the surface, giving nothing to chance as the typhoon began to bear down. Not knowing the extent of time that the storm would last, by choosing to dive and go deep for a long period was totally relative to the duration of main battery power. Added that because now, the seas were so heavy, there was further risk. As submarines pass through a state of neutral buoyancy when diving, stability becomes crucial in unpredictable heavy seas that can cause a boat to take on a heavy roll and “spill the battery,” or at worse . . .even capsize.

The dangers associated with surfacing also presented stability risks compounded with how much juice was in the box for the main motors to drive us back up. The storm strengthened and *Alley-ancee* rolled heavily as conditions rapidly worsened. The captain was now obliged to ride it out.

“Stop Trim and Turn in!”

A short time later, he was looking aft into the engine room when we took on a heavy roll. He was to witness an all-steel workbench part its mountings and hurtle across the donk shop platform with a violent crash, just missing “Jock” and his boney legs. That did it. The captain briskly ordered, “Uncotter main and auxiliary vents . . . clear the bridge for diving!” He wound the main motors up to maximum revolutions steering into the sea, and with “Q” tank flooded. . .drove us under with some heavy leaning difficulty. After getting a reasonable trim and battling with the after planes to stay at periscope depth, he ordered, “Raise the AWO!” in order to pass off the diving signal. The AWO got up, but then became battered and entangled that it was now u/s. No one would know that we were dived except us. It was time to go deep where at 200 feet, the boat continued to roll heavily. “Three hundred feet!” the captain ordered, and still the boat demanded planes and propulsion to steady up. Finally, at a depth of 400 feet, *Alliance* began to behave, and a “Stop Trim” was ordered. This relieved the requirement for planes, rudder, and propulsion thereby conserving the battery. In addition, no electrical machinery was to be run. Lighting was reduced to one or two bulbs per compartment, no fans, no galley stove, and no physical activity to conserve oxygen and minimize CO₂. That meant turn in when you’re off watch, eat from tins with mouldy bread . . .and life became a standstill in a submarine surrounded with an 85 degree sea temperature. Hot, humid, dark, dirty, sultry conditions in a foul-air cylinder at 400 ft. soon brought back the prickly heat and dreaded lergy to almost everybody. We did this for three days, only running CO₂ absorption and burning oxygen candles both electrically. Meanwhile ashore, a SUBMISS went into effect, accelerated by the insistence of the wives of the crew. No one would hear from *Alliance* for three days, and all ships and submarines in the area were alerted. We finally surfaced as the slow-moving typhoon exited the Hong Kong areas. A message was sent immediately, announcing: HMS/m *Alliance* “safely on the surface,” that included the coordinates. We put back alongside at *Tamar*, and people wonder why submariners run so

hard when they get ashore. It was an experience I shall never forget. To this day and during times when it's hot and sticky, I scratch in certain anatomical places that emotionally offers a grim, but sometimes, proud reflection of that encounter. Later in Singapore, the panic had subsided and wives (and girlfriends of course) were in glee with relief. So were "we."

CHAPTER NINE

“FAREWELL SINGAPURA”

Nearly two years had passed in the far-flung, and time was drawing near to sail home. Many things had to be done to prepare the boat for the eight-week passage to YewKay that would take her into refit in “Guzz.” We were to depart and go into a seventeen-day surface passage to HMS *Sheba* at Aden for fuel and overnight leave, then transit the Red Sea and Suez Canal to the Mediterranean. We would stop at Malta to replenish for two to three days, then resume passage for Lisbon, Portugal for a three-day jolly. The last leg of the voyage would take us across the Bay of Biscay, then on to Devonport.

As A-boats were considerably faster on the roof, we became encouraged in learning that the 7,000 mile passage would not include any requirement to dive, not even to catch a trim and swap ballast water about in order to adjust to the varying changes in the sea water SG that were anticipated through two oceans, two seas, and three climates. We would be a skimmer for a change, “running cotted,” and that was very difficult but enjoyable to imagine.

To confirm the fact that there’d be no diving, the fin became a storehouse for fresh veg’, if indeed 100 degree shaded, humidified heat was conducive to its ready-use storage. Well it was much better than storing it all in the fore ends and it was a lot cooler and airier up there. Thirty bags of spuds, the cauli’, cabbage, onions, and even the bread and the eggs, would be stowed in the fin abaft of father’s cabin. It was in the fresher air and out of the way down below.

The boat would also lose her distinctive black and grey camouflage and this was a sure sign that running in the Fezz and the “sneakies” and Goldfishing was finally over. Added to that bittersweet reality, the oerlikons and mount, and bridge machine guns were unshipped and fitted in *Ambush* and that stood down our gun action and ammo handling quarter bills.

Being black again and void of gunnery, we now looked like a typical Pompey runnin’ boat except that we were directed to retain the gun sponson attached to the casing and more than anything, the fin was emblazoned with the returned S 67, the SM VII squadron identifier, a South African springbok, and a Bahrain dhow. Resourcefulness was also clearly required. The plan, with the aid of some DF’s and a “come round,” was to acquire from the dockyard sailmaker, a 10' X 6' X 4' deep canvas

enclosure that would be put to worthwhile use when lashed to the confines of the gun-vacated sponson; a swimming pool that could be filled with sea water from the cable washdown connection.

Now this was good thinking by the scratcher's dickey, our Soapy Watson (RCN). Daily, while runnin' across the Indian Ocean and transiting the boiling Red Sea, we could spend all our passage routine, one in four off-watch time on the casing and lollygag in the pool. What a change this would be, to be running with the fore hatch open, a constant breeze through the boat, and living like an average human at sea again. Meanwhile, us stokers thought that we've got to do more than just run the ballast pump to fill it.

Submarine casings such as they are, afford few seats except for the two raised disappearing bollards. Sitting on the sun-scorched, and in this case aluminum, casing, anywhere near the equator was a "dead cert" for instant blisters. Added to the fact that if Malnutrition' or the Chief Tiff was on the casing, they'd get first grabs at the twin seating arrangements and the rest of us, including the wardhouse, would just have to hang about. More resource was required. As part of a stokers' run ashore, we slipped down to *Terror's* #1 football pitch and "borrowed" the home-team bench. In the dark of night, we whipped it down the boat and lashed it under the casing among the torpedo loading rails with the already-paid-for canvas swimming pool. As it was a few days before sailing we knew the P T I's would be looking for it but to venture under a submarine casing was no man's land to an "inboard wanker." Now we could have seating at the beach for everybody and we knew it was in a safe stowage. Even the jimmy and the casing officer weren't aware, so that would keep them honest.

No heads to lift on this trip

Of the A-class, ten of sixteen boats built were fitted with Vickers' main engines and they all posed a similar defect in their aging. As these twenty ton engines amassed their hours, the huge column studs, about three feet long and four inches in diameter whose tensile strength began to diminish with time, vibrations and demand, began to sheer. As current engine hours steadily increased, we had changed several studs at sea as well as in harbour. Lifting heads to do so, was back breaking compared to the absence of them in the smaller components of the A.S.R.'s aboard the P's & O's. By now *Alliance* was having to live with seven suspect studs, and to have to remove heads and exhaust the inboard spares supply for the

boats remaining on station, was a questionable decision. It was then decided to do what had been done in *Alderney* prior to her return to YewKay from SM6 in Canada two years previous. She was also Vickers' engine and had suffered with the same problem.

The method required traversing bolted, longitudinal I-beams to the T-frames on the pressure hull immediately above the length of both engines. Hand-operated hydraulic jacks were then installed vertically, between the I-beam and each of the eight cylinder-heads of the engines. By regularly maintaining a uniform pressure setting at each station while underway, this network would provide assisted load upon the cylinder head pressures therefore easing the stresses of the four column studs of each head. The installation itself, was a very long and arduous job but rewarding in anticipation of eight weeks of steady engine running and lessened the welcomed probability of having to lift heads every second day. A wishful, hopeful rhyme we jitteringly muttered:

*No heads to lift, no rods to swing,
No bottom ends to tighten.
No studs will crack, no nuts to slack,
No clanky shall be frightened.*

Compression on the cylinder heads is at its greatest when admitting starting air to each cylinder so to further assist this "get us home" installation, both the surface and snort mufflers were opened on initial start-up that assisted the dispersal of gasses. In this very abnormal scenario, acrid black and thick submarine-smelling smoke would belch out of the snort exhaust standpipe outlet positioned at the back and top of the fin as well as the normal surface muffler tank discharge. Meanwhile down in the donk shop, when both telegraphs would swing to "IN ENGINE CLUTCH," we quietly anticipated a spectacular display on the day of departure.

A real mix of crew

The captain had gone ashore and we were sad to see him go. We were pleased however with his relief, "State Express" Pat Purdy. He was pier-headed from *Anchorite* to take the boat home and on promotion to Commander on arrival in Guzz', would become Commanding Officer, HMS *Ganges*, the new entry school at Harwich where "button boys" are

turned out. First Lieutenant, Lt. Grenier, was to become FOSM in the 1980's, was relieved by Lt. John Speller who had done time in SM6 at Halifax.

About two-thirds of the crew would remain, the rest made up of allsorts from throughout squadron, spare crew, the boats, and even people from SM4 squadron in Australia. They had volunteered to sail home via Singapore rather than fly to YewKay for a variety of reasons, and this of course would please the pusser and his purse strings. They came from the boats *Tabard*, *Trump* (the floatin' fart), and *Taciturn* (the tea-urn). As well, many of the departing lads in *Alliance* were near release and some opted to be discharged to Australia as civilians. In all, and by the time we had arrived in YewKay some two months later, sixteen were to release and three had already been finished "their twelve" during the trip, so they had a little back pay coming. In all, the whole exercise could have been called an economical clean-up.

Lest We Forget. . . animals in the Far East

Before we would sail, there was one more very important thing to do. We were to take an extra passenger who was not a submariner. Earlier, we deemed that lest we forget, and how the coxswain, "Malnutrition" Mallows, at the direction of the First Lieutenant, ordered the extinguishment of the Bangkok rabbit almost a year before, there came an opportunity to exercise some tit-fer-tat. The SM7 Commander and his wife were also soon to be drafted back to YewKay, but they were confronted with a problem. It appeared that they owned a cat and in the course of long-range preparations for returning home, learned that there would be a six-month period of quarantine imposed before it could be released to the Commander and his wife when back in England.

Therefore, the moggy would sail with us avoiding the quarantine period. Able Seamen Terry Roberts and his close oppo "Snotty" Watts, lived in the fore ends, and this is where the moggy was to be holed up. As such, they were detailed to feed and care for him for the long transit home and by the time we would arrive in Guzz, the Commander and his wife would have already rehabilitated. The moggy would then be personally delivered to their home somewhere in England, by a yet to be designated rating who was going on his disembarkation leave in that direction. In the meantime, the whole idea of a moggy coming aboard bothered quite a few people for many reasons other than the Bangkok rabbit episode, such as,

“Where’s he gonna’ pee n’ crap cuz’ they chuck-up? Can’t keep ‘im inna cage!”

A Bootneck band and a Paying Off Pennant to boot

The day of sailing finally arrived. Everything was as royal and as navy as could be. The entire squadron was alongside, save *Ambush* in dockyard refit, and we were outboard on the trot. There was lots of excitement and activity aboard *Medway* where a smalley bootneck band was closed up and stood by to play numbers 1 and 2 on the submariners’ hit parade . . . as far as they were concerned. . . “The Saints Go Marching In” and the “Spare Crew Song.” A ship, or in this case a submarine going home to pay off was always “played out of harbour” and important as it is, is not such an organized effort on the part of the fleet as it once used to be. There were wives, girlfriends, F.O.F.E. and other senior officers in their dazzling whites . . . SM7 and his wife, the duty Sin Bos’n, and Pinky, trying to convert his outstanding I.O.U.’s. All the lads on the inboard boats remained on their respective casings engaged in farewell chats with the “alley-ancees” as the crew casually worked their way across.

The boat was regally enshrouded with the traditional paying-off pennant in a soft, tropical breeze. It was raised by Ed Temple, our chef, who had the honour and courtesy to do so by naval custom. Commissioning pennants originated in 1652 when a Dutchman, Admiral van Tromp, with a fleet of eighty ships and three hundred merchantmen, encountered Admiral Blake in the Straits of Dover. He sailed up the channel with a broom lashed to his mainmast which was a sign that he would “sweep the British off the seas.” Admiral Blake heard of this, so he hoisted a “whip” as a sign that he would whip the lowlanders into subjection. That he did, and it is said that the present pennant is worn in memory of Blake’s whip.

The custom then extends toward the chief cook, and in this case Leading Chef Ed Temple, in raising and lowering the pennant as he being the supplier of a pig’s bladder. When inflated with air from the mouth, it would be attached to the end of the pennant to suspend it in the air and not get fouled in the wake astern. On this day, a more modern and less repugnant substitute was utilized...or was it? A weather balloon filled with helium. (The pennant was exactly 352 feet in length eg: the overall length of *Alliance*, 281’6" plus 70’6", symbolic of her three extra two month

periods beyond her present two year commission. Each two-month period was signified as 1/12th of the overall length)

On this day, there were extraordinary numbers of casing party which was far above the norm of four forward and three aft with the casing officer and 'scratcher'. Today, it looked more like we were getting ready to man the side and cheer ship and everybody was tripping over each other. At last, and for a change, many non-sailors would get to see what the dockyard looked like from the 'creek' (Johor Strait) as well as the Sembawang nosh-houses, RAF Seletar, Serangoon and other favourite runs ashore. As luck would have it, I caned the donk shop at "harbour stations," but we 'tricked each other for a quick shuftee uptop. We were "singled up and ready for sea."

We backed away from the trot at half grouped down, as the bootnecks played their music in salute. The "still" was piped and orders came across on the casing: "Face to port!" *Amphion* in her khaki green and emerald dome, was now outboard boat on the trot, and aboard stood F.O.F.E. and SM7 returning the salute. Inboard, stood all the jobs aboard *Andrew*, *Anchorite*, *Oberon*, and *Medway*, in company with wives and sweethearts, flailing their arms wildly in farewells.

As we swung about and began to increase way, a distant tannoy with a posh tone ordered, "Engine room, control room. In starboard engine clutch," indication that the port main motor was propelling the boat while the starboard engine was "turning up." The pennant continued to stream high above in the still and sultry air with the support of the inflated balloon. It was a proud moment as we eased down the 'creek. As we drew nearer to the 'dockyard, *Ambush* came into view, high and dry in A.F.D. 10. The "still" came again and from 'Bush's bridge could be seen two people "at the Ho," and choppin' one off.

Then came the greyhounds. "Best be on our best behaviour now!" warned First Lieutenant John Speller, as *Eagle*, then *Triumph*, and *Centaur*, *Dampier*, and *Manxman* came into view as they lie at their berths beneath a rise of blue haze and the distant 'clatter and clank' of dockyard activity. Outboard on their depot ships and by the jetties were *Loch Fada*, *Ajax*, *Barfoil*, *Duchess*, *Cassandra*, *Agincourt* and *Cavalier* with several RFA's: *The Tide*, the *Forts*, and our old friend *Retainer* moored in the stream. Salutes were smartly exchanged and the view was in a very unique way, spectacular. Poor ole' bunts was blowing his head off after repeatedly piping his "stills" and "carry-ons." Then moored right in the middle of the 'creek', sitting so high and intrusive was a sight that brought everything down to a common reminder. Change!

The submarine depot ship, HMS *Forth* had only just arrived from YewKay and with her came the thought that nuclear boats were just over the horizon. The A's would be moving on to the knacker's yard and *Medway*, in her compactness and simplicity, would have no useful role in playing mother to submarines as she so capably did for so many years. Soon, names like *Warspite*, *Valiant*, and some more of the newer Porpoise and Oberons would filter through the dockyard shops, Keppel block, and Sembawang Village. The Indonesian Crisis had come to an end as President Sukarno was deposed and soon, the Singapore Navy would take over and the Dockyard would be later disposed of to private enterprise.

As well, the "wrens" were about to embark to Singapore and that would be very different. This was the only foreign British base that I recollect, had never seen a need for "jennies," and that was about to change too. It was just as well, for I had enough on my hands with the girls from BMH and R.A.F. Seletar, that the inclusion of a woman dressed in navy blue as a run ashore partner would've started an internal war among the ladies...God luv' em all! Nevertheless, there was truly an element of pride and accomplishment as we were today, the focal point of the Fezz' fleet. Everyone and everything was paying their respects and wishing for a safe return home. Well . . . north, at least, for three Canadians named Watson, Donovan and Brown.

Moments later, up on the bridge, could be heard the awkward and stubborn sound of "starting" air hollowly echoing its message from the muffler tank. The starboard engine was now swinging over accompanied with guffaws of sea water and carboned haze. Suddenly, great belches of black smoke and a steadying stream of sea water came rumbling out. With some hesitation, ugly clatter, and plenty of thunk, the starboard engine was underway with the exhaust-routed assistance of two muffler valves. Worse, from the snort exhaust standpipe at the back of the fin came more huge clouds with chunks of rust and carbon that obliterated the sunshine as everybody scattered for once finally, dressed in white fronts and tropical shorts. From the bridge came sheer bedlam and shouting that could be heard clearly down on the after casing. "Sir! Sir!" cried Lt. Hugh Powlett, the Torpedo Officer in his starchy, Oxford accent to the captain. "There's a fire in the back of the fin!"

A short time later, HMS/m *Alliance* was now "haze grey and underway, and heading for home. She had had quite an eventful commission coming to the Far East from YewKay via South Africa and Cape Horn over two years before, unlike the other A's in the squadron. The other four had

detached to join SM7 from SM4 the Aussie' squadron, and within two years to follow, were to return home in timely succession as well.

After clearing the Strait's last channel buoy, we went to passage routine and now looked forward to the surface transit to Aden. As the bridge and casing parties stood down and secured from that memorable departure, Ed', in his new-found glory went up to the bridge and secured the pennant to not break it out again until entry to Guzz' dockyard after eight weeks at sea. We then came to learn that the meteorological device used to support the pennant that crafty ole' Ed' jacked up was not a weather balloon, but a french-letter . . .originality lives on . . .and on the topic of weather, the next day's forecast to everyone's dismay, promised strong gales.

Indeed they did, as the captain asked, "How's the glass today?" . . .with the reply that they would continue for seventeen days while the port lookout's left elbow was almost continually in the water, and as any A-boat man will tell you, many rolled their guts out.

The first chance we ever got to get up on the casing was the day we entered harbour at Aden only to find that the canvas bath and wooden bench had been smashed about under the casing and all washed out through the casing flood holes. It would have been nice. The only other events that occurred during what we thought would be a relaxed passage, was a riotous and costumed uckers competition, the same four movies shown three times over, and my 24th birthday.

"Who'll do my 4 to 6?"

In order to have a happy birthday in a continuous rolling and pitching, humidity-laden submarine was to have good planning. Within days before the occasion, meant posting a piece of paper on the passage noticeboard which read:

D'ya hear there

Buster's birthday is on the 30th of June. He doesn't need gifts like cuff links, socks, tie pins, or birthday cards but is very receptive to happy returns. Instead, splashers, plushers, spillers, tasters, queen's, sippers, half-tots or whole tots, and even the chance of doing bos'n without having to "get it up." The birthday boy will be available to visit the sailor's mess, the

senior rates', and the after ends starting with the after ends and finishing up at his home in the stokers' mess. If he is detained during his walk round, quantities may be deposited in a suitable receptacle for his consumption when and if he arrives. On completion, all are invited to come and sing Bappy Hirthday to him in the stokers' mess to lull him to sleep as he has the 4-6 watch. He then states that if you do not wish to share your tot on this joyous occasion, you can offer to stand his watch instead. Cheers!

During the final days of the run to Aden, the moggy had worked his way up into the fan trunking through a bulkhead flap access opening. As we sat in the mess having our nosh of "Cheese Oosh," we heard an increase in 10 x 6 fan speed and here were intermittent paws jutting out of the punkah louvres indicating he'd made about a forty-foot forced draught transit through the trunking. Poor moggy! (Cheese Oosh, by the way, was yet another form of delivery of submarine comforts; it was a mixture of eggs, grated Pusser's mousetrap (cheddar cheese), a little cow (fresh is better than UHT), and aregones (tinned tomatoes), all mixed together, as the name implies. It didn't taste too bad if done right. A submarine Coxswain known as Gabby Hayes and as the grocer, described the recipe as follows: Muster two or three pounds of mouse trap with a spice of diesel. Then mix in a couple of toenails to make it crunchy. Be sure to add twelve eggs that are at least six weeks old. Place mixed ingredients in a shallow tray, ensuring that the tray lies in the oven at a five or ten degree bow down angle. This shall provide the diners with a thin slice of Oosh at one end or a thick one at the other. Be sure to spill some of the ingredients onto the floor of the oven so that it stinks the galley out.)

Aden was a relief in the sense that we had finally completed our first leg of the passage. We went alongside the base, HMS *Sheba*, situated in Crater, the old city on a tiny but very hot and dry peninsula and within the walls of an ancient volcano. As we were only in for a night, the possibility of getting over to Crescent, the new city on the western peninsula was beyond capability because of the short time we'd had.

It was just as well, for as we had come alongside, it was highly recommended by *Sheba*'s "crusher" that we don't fall too deeply in love with the bumboats that came alongside selling their wicker and hand-carved souvies. He went on to suggest that he wouldn't put it past one of

the bumboat scrag to just as well throw a hand grenade down the opened fore hatch of the boat in demonstration of the revolt in order to break away from the union. Because of the local unrest and the fact that later in 1967, the YewKay had lost control over the Colony of Aden that had been in place since 1839, independence was the sought-after goal by many of the local natives.

Hot paws and blind as a bat. . .er' cat.

After we were doubled-up, we were further greeted by local naval staff, the Chandler for vittles and immediately hooked up to fuel. Meanwhile, Snotty and Terry decided to get the moggy up on to the casing to get some fresh air. By his own choice and unfriendly nature, he did not accept the submarine environment, nor the people in it. During the passage, moggy had lost weight as being food choosy, was crabby looking, and chucked up 'a diesel. Now the poor ole' cat had not seen the light of day since we had sailed from Singer's almost three weeks earlier.

Terry chased 'round the fore ends and the tube space and finally got a hold of him. He then went up the loading hatch ladder and as soon as the moggy hit the sunshine, his eyes went to the shut and clipped position with claws flared apart and here was the moggy, howling like a tom cat in heat with a frozen grip on the hatch rim. His hind claws were digging into his handler's bare mid drift and here was Terry, trying desperately with increasing tugs, to pull moggy away from his welded grip to the fore hatch. He finally succeeded and in pain himself, thrust the cat onto the casing. The moggy had oily paws and when they made contact with the very hot flat-black painted aluminum, he began what looked like St. Vida's dance; screeching, howling, and jumping about all the while blinded by the sudden daylight. It was a time of vengeance in remembering the fate of our "Bugs from Bangkok."

A-boats and Suez Transits

We headed north through the Red Sea at a comfortable SOA for we already knew that we'd be "tail-end Charlie" in the convoy through the Suez. The first night out was placid for to the west on the port side, we could see the lights and sunset silhouettes of Port Sudan. Then to starboard at an equal distance came Mecca. By morning we increased revs' and

proceeded through the Gulf of Suez. We passed Port Suez and anchored in the first lake and entrance to the 'canal. Later in the day, we "weighed and proceeded" and fell in at the eighteenth and final position of the multinational convoy. We were to be last, 'cause the buzz had it that *Astute* had gone through recently from the YewKay to the Middle East. On her way back north and at the head of the convoy, she tits'd-up and caused all kinds of congestion and fist swingin'. The merchantmen in their big fat freighters and oilers had to slow and inch their way around this "crabby ole' A-boat" slammed up against the wall doin' a fix-up, and apparently, it didn't go down too well with both the canal authorities and the various ships' masters.

So here we were for a good twelve hours in line astern and under the waft of a Greek freighter. My, the hum that trailed behind that bateau. It was choice! Later, as we'd pass close to oases and lidos, the locals were in the grenade throwing stance and started pelting the fin with spuds, eggs, and rotten fruit. We supposed the sight of the Union Flag or the White Ensign on the "duck's ass," became a grim reminder to them of the Suez crisis in the fifties . . . or were they practising for the yet to arrive "six-day war"?

We transited the canal with no further incidents apart from vocal jeering and as we neared Port Said, casting a huge shadow to the west was the Anzac Memorial. We'd been on the casing most of the day and as the sun sank slowly, the daily southbound convoy was just making their entrance in an adjacent passage concealed by long dunes of sand. The ships looked as if they were floating on the desert and as they passed, it wasn't long before we could again feel a gentle roll and a bit of a breeze . . . signs that we were finally entering the Mediterranean.

Come to port. . .steer 270

Within three days, we arrived in Grand Harbour, Malta. Malta has always been a strategic location, lying in the narrowest point of the shipping lanes that connect the eastern and western Med'. The Phoenicians came first way back in the days of B.C. They were followed by the Romans, the Byzantines, then Arabs, Normans, Spaniards, and finally us . . . the men of *Alliance*. We secured in the dockyard across from HMS *St. Angelo*, the naval barracks and soon after, were graced with the arrival of a boat from the YewKay. HMS/m *Orpheus* came alongside, fresh in from the 1st Squadron in Pompey.

Aboard, she had stars that included two Canadians. Lt. “Peter” Cairns was undergoing his submarine qualification and a huge gentleman by the name of P1LT “Bob” Churcher. He had not only been in RN submarines since the “exchange” began but was also a POW during WW2 in Japan. I was to sail with Bob later in *Okanagan* and find that his sense of humour was not only the funniest brand I had ever encountered, but the driest. Knowing him and describing his nature is the reason I considered him a gentleman. Also aboard was a bunch of the swimboys from the “tank staff” in *Dolphin* who were all geared to do some actual “escapes” in the open sea from *Orpheus*’ escape towers. Well wasn’t Malnutrition delighted to see them! Being a former swimboy as well, that was the last we saw of him until the next morning . . . late. He had had a good run ashore and came up on the casing for some air. It was quiet and he got to tell me about the time when he was running in the Malta Squadron a few years before.

The quick trim dive

He was aboard an S-boat that was doing a “jolly” into Piraeus, Greece . . . the home of the “Flying Fid.” The grocery order that was messaged in advance included the usual fresh veg’, bread, eggs, and in this case, chicken. The boat was just getting alongside when someone on the bridge noted that with all of the activity on the jetty, there stood a donkey cart loaded with crates of live, clucking chickens. The First Lieutenant and Malnutrition got ashore as soon as the plank was across and immediately challenged the donkey driver. After a long and “fowl” language-barriered argument, the chicken farmer had won. He refused to keep the hens and the Royal Navy was to pay for them whether they accepted them or not.

The First Lieutenant immediately went to the captain to report the results and now the boat was lumbered with sixty of the best free-range nurtured, cackling pullets anywhere east of Gibraltar. Within moments, the Scratcher’s party began to bring the crates on board to lash them down onto the after casing immediately abaft the fin. Meanwhile, the boat returned to Harbour Stations and as quick as that, she was on her way out to sea again for a quick trim dive. After a few minutes had gone by at safe depth, the CO, Jimmy, and Malnutrition all agreed that, “The five minutes was up and that ought to do it!” They surfaced, stuffed the main vent cotters back in, headed back into harbour, doubled up and finally secured. Leave would not be piped that afternoon until some final chores were completed. On the after casing, everybody cleared lower decks and turned

to, so that the soaking chickens were all nicely plucked and cleaned, and struck down into the freezer, thereby ending a bloody nightmare.

Bert blowing down

Alliance wasn't in bad 'nick by this stage. The main engines seemed to be enduring the steady demand, the good news being that not one column stud had yet sheared since leaving *Medway*. After storing the fin again with 'vittles', . . . spuds and cabbage, negative chickens, the workload would be light. We started some minor maintenance, took on fuel, and commenced to strike down engine oil. We were on the inboard trot this time and with the rare availability of a crane, the dozen or so barrels were lowered onto the casing instead of having to wrestle them out of the 'oggin as was done in the Philippines in *Anchorite*. But now the long process of striking down with gravity feed was to begin, but indeed, there was always time to be innovative. There came a way to speed up the process. By attaching a small air hose, pressure gauge, and flow valve to the vent connection and a discharge hose on the larger filling cap, we could apply a very gentle "squeeze" in the barrel. This was against all engineering safety rules as the barrels, with their "flat" ends, weren't akin to pressure build-up. If done very carefully however, the results were that the dozen barrels could get blown down in two hours instead of one in an hour at gravity feed. Results? Oil in the reserve tanks topped off and we're all off ashore, concluding that rules are often bent a bit to maximize your own time.

I was duty that day and "Bert" Lomax, who was saving his tin for leave in YewKay, offered to do me a sub'. He was a little leery about having to "turn to," striking down oil. But I assured him that by being absolutely careful and by hand-regulating a 2 lb. air supply very gently until the barrel ends puffed out then increasing to a 10-pound pressure, the oil would blow down as slick as snot on a rooster's beak. I had done this many times before and Bert now felt he had it cased.

About fifteen minutes later, I was the single passenger in a Maltese dghaisa, heading for the Valletta Steps and Straight St., the "Gut," to meet up with the lads. Over the din of the outboard motor, I could hear some faint hollering and shouting from the after casing for by now, the dghaisa was a good 100 yards away and "grouped up" for the 'Steps. The gondolier, for want of the Maltese word for coxswain of the boat, looked at me and asked in crooked English, "Do you wanna go back Jack?" I replied, "No! Keep goin' oppo" . . . so we did. When I got over to the

‘Steps, I met up with the lads who were on an SRD rum run at sixpence a shot . . . novel to Malta only . . . and we all agreed, “Is it ever good!” Later when we returned aboard that night, it seemed that Bert had been flown to YewKay and was to be admitted at RNH in Devonport. A barrel end had blown out with such force that it had broken his leg. I was to find out six weeks later when he returned, that he had put on the 10 lb. blow instead thinking that was the pressure needed to puff out the barrel ends. Sometimes Bert was a little slow on the uptake and on this occasion, it wasn't because one of his legs was now u/s.

Bells and Smells

The next day was Sunday and everybody prepared to get their ears plugged, and shut and clip the hatches. Church bells may ring was an understatement. Malta's 365 churches whose belfries housed near six thousand bells, tolled from the crack of dawn until midday. They didn't call Malta, “Bells and Smells” for nothing. Two good things about the bells though was that when the penetrating tintinnabulation finally came to a close, the Corodina Naafi canteen up from the jetty suddenly opened.

Then a pipe came across on the tannoy. It was the First Lieutenant who went on to say that two RAF Shackletons were in Malta and were anxious to get some submarine dived time training in. “Unbelievable!” we thought. They must have all been up to *St. Angelo* warehouse last night with their “inviter valves” open. So now it begins, just two hours prior to sailing, to strike down all the vittles from the fin to the fore ends. Mutter, mutter . . . discontent! “Put on the trim . . .” “Out harbour cotters . . .” “In sea cotters . . .” and soon after sailing, “Open Up for Dive!” . . . just to “keep our hands in.” As we dived, it took nearly an hour to catch a trim and transfer half the Med' in exchange for twice as much from the South China Sea. “Ah well. Such is life in submarines!”

CHAPTER TEN

“THE PILLARS OF HERCULES”

Within a few days, we had reached the Straits of Gibraltar, the Pillars of Hercules, so called by the Phoenicians who often passed through them to trade with the ancient Britons. They were then faced with “sailing into the unknown” and traversing the Green Sea of Dark Waters, which is now known as the Atlantic Ocean. In those times, and as knowledge of the world increased, religious rites were conducted at the various geographical points of the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, the Equator, Arctic Circle, and the Pillars’. These occasions extended to the modern-day picturesque King Neptune reparations that we know today as the “Crossing the Line Ceremony.” With the exception of some good old horse-play and a good sousing, is quite contrasting to the rough execution of the ancient past that probably included human sacrifice. More recently and by the 1990’s, even that mild horse-play is today and since, unacceptable, and has been toned down all the more through the demands of a hyper-vigilant civilian society . . . that probably don’t even know what, or where, these geographical points are. For us in *Alliance*, whose motley and “three-badged” crew looked like Phoenicians who needed a sousing, it was like a bittersweet welcome home to familiarity when we hit that green sea of dark waters of the North Atlantic. In two short years, most of the *Alliance*’s crew had sailed in five of the seven seas discounting the Antarctic and the Arctic. We were back where we belonged after sailing the North Pacific, the warmer climes of the South Pacific and the Indian, having crossed the equator some thousands of times it must have been, in the operational waters surrounding Singapore. Never once had any boat in the squadron conducted a “Crossing the Line” ceremony. We may have traversed 0 degrees lat. while “186’in” as many as a dozen times a day in a single patrol, let alone a multitude of them throughout the busy space of two years. I was never to officially enter King Neptune’s Realm until I was to ride the oiler HMCS *Preserver*, on a brief trip much later in 1992.

Phoenicians and submariners

The sea and air temperatures were dropping in a hurry and the change in humidity now allowed us to think more clearly. That was helpful

because the alarming reality of re-entering civilization meant that there was a growing need to have to do that again. It would have been good to drop into Gib' for a shower in HMS *Rook* and a run ashore for a night, but instead we went past "the rock" still feeling like Phoenicians and shaped a north-easterly course for Portugal and Lisboa.

Phoenicians, or better known as Phoenys among sailors, were very salty and skilled sailors. It is sometimes difficult to comprehend that many customs and traditions of the sea came as a result of the Phoenys' discoveries during lengthy voyages. Contrary to what we had been taught about "port" and "starboard," or how an adze became symbolic of the shipwright's branch as examples, today remains in arguable dispute among the generations that evolved from the Phoenys.

The Phoenys

The Phoenicians, the earliest known navigators, used to hollow out logs from the juniper tree to make boats. They used a tool that when misused, caused them to mutter words that consisted of all the letters in the alphabet. This muttering led to the slang term, "A-da-Zee," that was enjoyed, and it quickly became the name of a tool called an adze. When one of the Phoenys became careless with his adze while hollowing out juniper tree logs, he might lop off a toe, or hit his foot or ankle and go jumpin' around on one leg holding the other foot and now...really muttering adze things. Because of the excruciating pain, the Phoenys quickly described this discomfort in such a way that the term "Jumpin' Juniper" had found its way into Oxford's Phoenician Dictionary.

Once the log was hollowed out, the Phoenys would put to sea. At first they paddled with their hands, (could not kick-paddle as most of them were missing parts of their feet from building boats) Now that was using your head they thought, and to prevent them from confusing a head with a sea-going toilet, they called it "skull," or "scull" which is another way of paddling. But on one hot day however, a Phoeny unrolled his burnous to cool off. He noticed that if he held up his burnous, the wind would

blow it around. He rose and discovered that if he stood on one end of his burnous and held the other end with his hands high in the air, the wind would blow him . . . and his boat along, and that he didn't have to paddle or scull by hand anymore. Since the burnous was a sheet made from fine Phoenician cloth, the first sails thus came to be known as "sheets."

Now these Phoenys, who had feet missing from hollowing out their boats, are responsible for the term "short-sheeted," while standing on their burnouses. It then happened that the prevailing winds would blow the Phoenys in one direction only. (they had not yet discovered how to tack) As they sailed in milding desperation, they found that on their left hand, were their homes . . . where all the port wine was stored. Hence, "port" evolved and into the language of the seas. And on the next day, as the twilight of dawn cracked, the horizon appeared flat as a board, and was to be on the right-hand side. Then, to amuse themselves at sea, they would have a contest to see who could sight the first star rising above the board. (horizon), and now the term "starboard" . . . came to join "port" from just the previous day. But other terms did still transcend from the ways of this inquisitive lot.

Since the Phoenys could only sail in one direction, they upon reaching their destination would sell their boats and use the proceeds to return to their homes by camel caravan. This practice then evolved into the one of description known as "humpin'." And but last . . . eventually the harbours within which the Phoenys terminated their voyages became jammed with boats, and with such congestion, soon after evolved into the description known as a "log-jam."

There is no recorded information within naval history suggesting that Phoenys, at any time before or after their existence, were heralded as "Phonies."

. . . by airdale "Luke the Lid" . . . United States Navy.

Lisboa and finally. . .Guzz

After a three day stop in Lisbon, it was easy to see that the sem-I's often came here too. Bars named Texas, Arizona, the Californian, etc. wasn't an indication that the Brits' were known as big spenders. Sampling all the brands of anis and wondering how they got those jelly-like trees in the bottles was more than interesting. That, along with wearing the duty civvies hanging up in the backrooms of the bars and long enough for a short-time, was Lisboa of the "sixties."

We were now on the last leg to Guzz', running straight passage across the Bay of Biscay and you could feel the electricity throughout the boat in these heavy seas, with us going up and down on the oggin instead of through it.

Guzz' is named for Devonport from the days of sail that after ships had been at sea for long periods the crew, now short of good provisions, always looked forward to a "guzzle" of Devonshire cream and butter. Channel fever was setting in with thoughts of home, leave, refit, loved ones, old friends . . .all things that give sailors an up with the feeling of having done a good job, and now it's time for the rewards. Truly, there was no life like it. Not a bad outfit after all, to which many upon earth just don't have the pleasure of relating with. We had done a mountain of things in just two short years and the adventures of all the travel, hard work, experiences, and good times had come to roost. My outlook in the navy was reverting to what it was like when I joined and pleasantly again, I felt I owed it. I signed on in boats for another hitch. Much to my unexpected surprise that came some weeks later was a monetary reward. An envelope from HMCS *Niobe* had within it, a check made out to Leading Seaman D.H. Brown. In pounds sterling, it totalled \$1200.00...a sign-on bonus. Whoopee!!

"Like to drive . . .?"

The usual rigid atmosphere of the control room had transformed into one of a little relaxation for which many of us had never experienced before. As LM(E) "Plum" Woodcock was going forward after having his long-awaited scrape, Captain, LCdr Pat Purdy leaning in smiles on the chart with a "State Express" in hand, noticed him and inquired, "LM(E) Woodcock. . .Have you ever steered the submarine before?" Plum was a Yorkshireman and life in submarines was doing his job and away from the mess, to the donk shop and back was his lot and no more. He was always

willing to please and never said no. This time he broke his code, looked at the captain with a broad smile and replied in his broad Coronation St. accent, “Waa no sah! Be boogered if a ‘ave. a chance to do that is betta than ‘avin’ fraad bacon and ar-r-ra-gones! Are ya’serious sah?” The captain looked at him with a playful smile and ordered, “Relieve the helmsman!”

Plum jumped in behind the tapper gear and with a little help from the seaman who just climbed out, began to excitedly burble through the voicepipe with the OOW on the bridge. “LM(E) Woodcock on the ‘elm sah! Course to steeah. . .thuree, fav, eet sah. R-r-oonin’ chawge boath saads. . .doin’ four-r-r ‘oondred revolootions sah. ‘Elmsman releevd ba LME Woodcock, sah!” After all of that, from the bridge with a disguised tremor came a routine, “Rogah!” Two minutes later, the OOW then shouted down, “Helmsman. . .steer north!” . . . to which Plum glaring in shock at the gyro repeat very amiably responded with, “Wot noomba’s zat sah?”

Ashore a day early

Just a few days later, we arrived at Plymouth Hoe and went on Foxtrot buoy. No one could believe it. We had on “homeward-bounders,” and typical of any navy anywhere in the world . . .if your ETA was oh-nine-dubs’ on Friday, it meant that at the pleasure of the receiving senior officer, that’s when you went alongside. . .not Thursday afternoon at 1500 when we latched on to Foxtrot’.

There was good news however, because it allowed us to clear customs . . .the bastards. . . as it turned out to be. A lot of the lads got nailed for paying extra duty on photography equipment, and anybody that was importing wicker or Egyptian A.F.O.’s, had to chuck ‘em. The captain then decided that by now, we’d had a skinful. . .so he piped leave. We all got ashore, and everybody including the wives who just flew in from Singapore, girlfriends, and instant reliefs, none the wiser of our arrival. It was to be our last run ashore as a full ship’s company, so the plan was to meet at the very popular Barbican in Guzz’. Tomorrow would see a third of us remain with the boat for many went to release, some were pier headed to boats in the Guzz’ squadron, and the majority would be joining the brand-new bomber *Resolution*, building at Vickers’ yard up in Barrow-In-Furness. This was a shocker for all of them. The RN had entered the nuclear game calmly with the previous commissioning of SSNs

Dreadnought, *Warspite*, and *Valiant*, and the drain on diesel submariners was reasonable. Now however, with the acceleration of the numbers required to man the four new R-class SSBN's, the conventional fleet was being robbed and adjoined with skimmers from general service who were pressed into submarines. Many weren't too pleased with this new venture. "Submarines. . .with more than one deck? That's not a submarine! That's a black ship. . .and fancy that. . .scab lifters, jack dusties, and scribes on board as well. Where we all gonna kip?"

It was a bittersweet evening on the Barbican for as long as you stayed in boats, we were brothers that just wouldn't part. We were submariners with values forged from a different age, who loved the comradeship and the overwhelming sense of belonging. For those married hands to choose to remain with the gang for one last drink together probably had a lot to do with my opting to remain in submarines as long as I could. God bless 'em. Besides . . . it was a freebie said the R.A.'s, and the missuses would never know.

The next morning was miserable with rain and fog, as we slipped from the buoy to be at the north end of the 'yard at Battery Corner for "oh-nine-dubs." Eddie the chef, went and blew up his french safe again as we unfurled the paying off pennant for the last time. On the jetty were crowds upon crowds as we drew nearer to the strains of yet another bootneck band, in their ceremonial 'blues and 'piths' just as we had heard them eight weeks before aboard *Medway*. They must have flown the musical repertoire up from the "Flung," we thought . . .maybe it was even the same band.

The lasting memory

Well, here we go again. I was duty on the first day in. I wasn't too excited about it however, being single, I suppose that the married hands had more of a right to get ashore first. That night I was coming forward from the engine room after checking bilges when I spotted a little something on the wardroom door that I might appropriate as a lasting memory of a fine submarine. After all, somebody or something should pay for my detainment as the submarine was to enter refit and the boat would be "ripped out" for the purpose. A brass door knocker had been presented to the submarine during a good-will visit to Liverpool in the previous commission by a local Girl Guides organization. Upon the door knocker was the 'Guides emblematic "four-leafed clover" that acted as the knocker,

and tidily engraved on the base of the knocker were the letters ALLIANCE. This fine rabbit would remain with me as a memorable keepsake.

“See. . I told ya’!”

I was to stay aboard the boat until we de-stored, which numbered about twenty of us. Half of that number would stay on and into the refit which meant that they were on subsistence and lived ashore. Our crowd, destined for the Pompey squadron, had to live in the bootneck digs with coal stoves at *Drake* barracks. They were just up the hill from the reserve fleet, *HMS Bellerophon*, which included the cruiser *Belfast* and among other ships, *Tyne*, the paid-off destroyer tender.

Buster Brown was a namesake stoker who was to stay with the boat as he had just joined from *Tabard* in Aussie land. He managed to get digs ashore in Aggie Weston’s during the refit. We were working 24 hour shifts de-storing and getting the battery cells off, and Buster was working nights. He had been gone for a total of three years (unaccompanied), and his wife and 6-year-old son lived in Birmingham. He never used to write home much and his wife knew very little about the navy and its operations. Just by luck however, she had read in the local papers, **“H. M. Submarine Alliance returns home from the Far East.”** Frequently, she managed to telephone the submarine in search of her husband but could never nail him down. During the daytime, Buster was turned in up at Aggie Weston’s and each and every time she phoned asking for M(E)1 Brown, the trot sentry would reply with, “Sorry luv’. . . ‘e’s up at Aggie’s!” After three weeks, Buster finally got his leave and went “up the line” to Birmingham. When I saw him once again six months later, he told me of the difficulties he had with his wife. He had spent two hours trying to get in the door of his flat with his wife hollering out from a top window, “Go on back to Aggie or whatever ‘er name is. I don’t woncha’anymore!” And after he had finally convinced her that Aggie’s was a legitimate sailor’s rest home, she let him in, they sat down to a cup of tea and broke out the rabbits in the kitchen. Moments later his son came in the back door with his little snotty winger from next door, exclaiming, “See! I told yer I ‘ad a dad!”

Hitchhikers

Two weeks later, I got my draft chit and after disembarkation leave, I was to join HMS *Dolphin*, (Fort Additional), and wait for a draft to another boat. I managed to get a car ride to Portsmouth with a couple of the hands. As luck would have it and matelots would never say “no” to the opportunity, along the road we spotted two parties hitchhiking. We came to a grinding halt and the dollybirds came running as quick as they could. As they got nearer to the car, it turned out that they were two hands. Beatlemania had arrived in YewKay and for all of the time we’d been gone, we never knew that blokes stopped going to the barbers. In a squeal of smoking rubber, we were “outta there.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE “POMPEY SQUADRON”

HMS/m *Aeneas*



When I arrived in Portsmouth, I joined *Dolphin* and I was informed that with “Foreign Service,” I had over fifty days disembarkation leave coming to me. However, before I could go, I was briskly told that I had to re-qualify in the ‘tank’. As long as you were in the YewKay, you had to do so once a year, but by being out in the far-flung, I became delinquent. I was top of the shop for getting’ my arse up there. . . tout suite, and so I did, and then went on leave. I didn’t venture away from England at all, and in anticipation of joining the Pompey Squadron, I decided to rent a flat in Southsea. I got settled in and now I had a place to hang my hat. So what to do with free time and not enough money to go back to Winnipeg for some leave but for some reason, I was not really longing to anyway. It seemed more practical to jump on a train and head up the line to London for a few days at a time. Also, as a good bulk of *Alliance* had been drafted to stand by *Resolution* under construction, another train trip further north to Barrow-in-Furness, seemed worthwhile. It was great to see the lads again but there was a difference about them. Their outlook toward submarines was changing dramatically. A-boats were nothing near to the magnitude, technology, and way of life that was coming in the “*Rezz-O*” and her sister “bombers.”

They were hulked aboard the paid-off Algerine ‘sweeper, HMS *Pluto*. *Pluto* was not only built in Canada, but just a stone’s throw from Winnipeg at the lakehead in Port Arthur, ON (now amalgamated into Thunder Bay). My, what a small world, and as I went down into the messdecks, didn’t I have a leg up. There the lads would spend all day poring over schematics and system drawings of the new boat. Sitting among them in the mess, I was touted as a jammy bastard by being able to stay convensh’. Even the old coxswain, Malnutrition, was there. When he saw me, he talked of ways

that might lure this colonial into nukes. . .but that was an international impossibility and I savoured it. It was my introduction to the now fledgling claim . . . “Diesel Boats Forever.” At the end of the day, we all headed ashore on a run for old times’ sake. It was a good ‘burn and from that day on, there were many of the old Far East gang that I would never see again.

Oberons on Canada’s horizon

In the meantime, things were happening in Chatham, Kent to the east of London. Canada had finally agreed on a contract to construct three O-boats in H.M. Dockyard and with this grand news came the corralling and round up of Canadians from RN submarines, a lot of whom by now, were veterans of “the Trade.” The program was headed by the Canadian Naval Submarine Representative, Capt. Galbraith (CanNavSubRep) whose small technical organization was to oversee the three ‘builds’ until completion.

Among the *Ojibwa* crowd in Chatham were guys I hadn’t seen in many years. “Ole’ ships” like Don Patterson, Pete Hartoon, and Sandy Powers from *Micmac*. . .Gary Hopkins, Doc Thompson, Vince “Art” Carney, the ditty-singing Tom McVarnock. . . killick stoker “Pony” Moore, and three-badged killicks “Stumpy” Stauber and “Spud” Murphy. And there was a radio-lady who had freckles, fair hair, and a huge groping, continuous smile on his face that resembled a television personality. Bob “Howdy Doody” Davidson had been heralded in his actions aboard *Bonaventure* when while at his morse key, picked up the distress signal sent out by the doomed “Super Constellation” airliner that ditched off Shannon, Ireland in 1962. His alertness allowed *Bonnie* to speed to the area and rescue survivors. Bob did his submarine training with me in *Dolphin II* and like many of us, had the ability to also act a little “bombed-out” as occasions should merit. He had a passion for motorcycles but while in Submarine Training at *Dolphin II*, he mildly settled for another means of two-wheeled transportation in the form of a Lambretta scooter. This machine was built for a maximum of two riders but I can personally attest that with Bob as the operator, could make several successful commutes to his rented mansion in Horndean, some 26 miles away from Portsmouth, without being hauled over by the police for carrying two additional passengers. It wasn’t to end there either. Bob often invited Kenny King and I to his home to spend a weekend with a further gesture that he would provide the transportation to get us there. He would show up for Saturday rum issues after scrub-out and skirmish in *Dolphin II*, and then have us carry his

Lambretta up onto the second deck of Turbulent Block where we were barrack'ed. While Ken and I were getting showered and ready to proceed, Bob would be doing end to end drag runs up and down the blue-smoke filled gangway, while guys were going in and out of their mess-deck dorms. Beyond those adventures, all the time I had been in the Fezz, he stayed close to home in YewKay aboard *Rorqual* running from Pompey. The next time we would meet up was in 1965 when he was standing by to commission *Ojibwa* in Chatham . . .and was now commuting back and forth at a 100 mph aboard an old beat up Harley Davidson.

Ojibwa's Commissioning day came in September of that year and in so doing, the RCN's *Cape Scott*, *Kootenay* and *Nipigon* had arrived at Chatham 'Dockyard to help celebrate the day by mounting a 50-man armed guard. Among that guard was a killick stoker who is earlier referred to from *Micmac* and *Cornwallis* days. Tom Pitt, from Picton in Ontario, was a dear old winger from *Fraser* Division as well as sharing watches in *Micmac's* No.3 boiler room. Some years had now gone by and Tom and I linked up for a short but, what was to be a memorable moment. Tom was to be part of that armed guard and after we had gotten over the emotions of meeting again, he stated that he needed a new pair of parade boots from dockyard stores. As we entered the clothing store, we were served by a "Jill Dusty." After she looked after Tom's needs, she began to wait on me.

I always recalled that the RCN never issued matelots with toothbrushes but as I had earlier discovered in *Dolphin* during submarine training, the availability and price of them in the RN stores system was not only convenient, but certainly a bargain. ". . .and what would you like?" she asked where my answer could have been anything other than stores items. "Can I have a pair of toothbrushes please luv?" I replied. She looked at me in that expected over-authoritive tone and in her Yorkshire accent dryly stated, "Sorry! They're obsolete now." . . .the term applied when stores items are no longer available in the system. I looked at Tom with a wink and then turned to the leading wren and said, "That's a bit odd. We still use 'em in the Canadian Navy!"

It was to be the last time that I saw Tom.

A good friend departs

With the commissioning completed, *Ojibwa* was to be a busy boat with trials to do, then followed by work-ups. Meanwhile, I returned to Portsmouth and Blockhouse. About three weeks later on the 25th of

October, disaster had struck HMCS *Nipigon* in the English Channel. My long-time friend and messmate Tom had died from a JP5 aviation fuel explosion while lying on top of his bunk having a power-nap. In the mess just one deck below, he had made it out of his bunk and managed to get all the way forward to the ship's sick bay . . . where he then collapsed. The sadness as I think of our final moments and having a laugh. I will never forget him.

Where next?

I wasn't too chuffed about being in Fort Addish' as you never knew what job you'd cane next. Unlike spare crew, you could be sent down to any boat at anytime in any job, and sail at any time . . . and that wasn't bad. What was not much to look forward to though was instead, spending three days a week preparing Arrogant Block, the stokers' grot, for rounds. Nice name . . . and most appropriate for the head janitor. He was an infamous, jock Chief Stoker who trailed little popularity as a human being throughout the submarine "clanky" branch. We used to wish that instead of being a Chief Stoker, he should have been a bow gunner on a WW2 torpedo.

I took a little hope in knowing there weren't many fit-for-sea, killick stokers lying about in the Fort, and I wondered why as I was surrounded with tons of them who weren't "fit" for a variety of reasons. . . some self-invoked. I let it be known that I was anxious to get back to sea and was available at the drop of a hat. *Ojibwa* by now was coming into Pompey yard to degauze, and then head for work- up. Word was swiftly getting around that her crew weren't overly thrilled about new ideas and initiatives that were suddenly developing in Canada's reincarnating submarine service. In earlier anticipation of acquiring US "nuke attack" or conventional Barbel class boats, and the logistical common sense and convenience of spares and repairs available from the country just next door seemed that this was the right and practical way to go. That of course didn't happen and efforts to establish training standards for O-boats in the RCN was about to become a tender issue. From the outside, it was naturally perceived that such a collection of seasoned submariners would have little difficulty in commissioning and working up this brand new boat and because of all the talent aboard including that of the captain, *Ojibwa* would go down in history as the most operationally capable and experienced of all time. It was said by many that the captain was over-demanding and irrational in applying new procedures. But then if you thought about it a

little, he had a boss too and so it was difficult to determine where the problem was rooted. That didn't matter. What did matter was that there was unrest and almost everybody on board wished they weren't, and Canadian submariners who weren't, opted to steer clear. In establishing a revised standard of submarine training, the RCN in transition, was caught up between three navies. The already established west coast crew of HMCS/m *Grilse* understandably, were practically committed to USN training policies and procedures taking their training in US submarines and schools in the 'states'. As the buzz had it, things in *Grilse* were going very well but such methods weren't practical for their east coast counterparts. The larger percentage of Canadian submariners of course, were trained aboard RN submarines and the acquisition of three British-built boats looked like it was going to be a very smooth transition by the men running them . . .so it seemed. The RCN very appropriately went to their senior resource as the man assigned as Commander of the fledgling, "1st Canadian Submarine Squadron." He was to be the driving force and decision-maker on how these new submarines would operate and everyone upstairs would agree. He had much experience with the Royal Navy in having his own commands, but there remained a mystery on the lower deck. The USN training program was viewed in the decision as far superior, and so was opted for. However, the problem of teaching old dogs new tricks became compounded by teaching those very dogs in a very familiar environment that yesterday was Royal Navy but today was USN, in an otherwise wishful and flourishing RCN submarine service. Routine and terminologies were bastardized. Such terms as foreplanes became bow planes, snort became snorkel, and through unchecked personal insistencies, the trim system was to be referred to as the drain manifold while "Q" was more favourably familiar as "Negative" tank. The so-called part three training program required that everyone had to requalify for the onset of the new boats by adopting the qualification handbook used in *Grilse*. What didn't make sense was that the people and their familiarity within them, had to adapt to another navy's methods from a grand old WW2 submarine a quarter-century old. There seemed to be a breakdown in communications and a secrecy about the whole concept. This, in itself, was regarded as uprooting the professionalism of most people who grew dedicated through accustomed support and recognition of their former superiors, that seemed now to have withered because of ill-feelings toward RN methods. There came an emptiness from abandoning standards and this revision to training in O-boats glaringly contrasted with the high-flying morale of their brothers aboard *Grilse*. In many instances

nevertheless, there came an opportunity. It didn't hurt at all to clean house of many of the "perks seekers" that opted out of submarines when the good life and the entitlements in the YewKay concluded by returning to Canada. Some of them might have better been described as "out-of-the-know-ers" too in discovering that here was a discreet way out. In submarines, there's just no room for slack ballast and incompetence, as people started to thin out. In any event, as a brand-new boat and knowing many of her crew, I felt that being drafted to her would be a challenge. Assured by my affection to submarines and the confidence that I had gained since being in them, together made me feel that I could make a solid contribution.

While during the degauze, I had learned that Spud Murphy was headed to RNH *Haslar* for a hernia operation and there would be a need for a replacement. In *Dolphin* there was just one other Canadian stoker, namely LS Dave Brocklebank whom I also sailed with in *Micmac*. Dave felt vulnerable so he went into hiding. Within a day, he ended up getting the nod because he didn't do it right. I suppose he thought that I would go in his absence but instead, "drafty" elected to remain with his original plan. . . rousting out and sending Dave to *Ojibwa*, and drafting me to *Aeneas*. I was just as happy and felt good that I was to remain in YewKay aboard a submarine of a class that I was already familiar with but more so, fortunate that I wouldn't be stepping into any turmoil if any should continue.

Well, all my Foreign Service Leave was over and it was time to get on with it. One thing I clearly understood from the time I had spent in submarines by now, was the perks to duties. Much like it was over five years before when in *Micmac*, I became lured to the realm of outside machinery and external systems. Although I persevered in standing watches in engine and boiler rooms and steaming a snorting engine room in submarines, eventually an element of monotony crept in and the challenge would tend to fizzle. Just by the nature of the requirement meant standing constant vigil on main machinery and in time, everything grew repetitious until something would inevitably break down as was often the case. Now, there was a challenge.

Unlike those duties, there was an attraction to the independency of working on "outside kit" and the boat's dependency toward the small staff maintaining it. I had always admired the knowledge and versatility of the outside machinery chief in ships and now more than ever, his counterpart, the outside wrecker in submarines. To see him go through the entire boat to "open up for dive," sighting and confirming the positions of every valve, button, switch, and handle at the same time reporting their states to the accompanying first lieutenant, appeared to me that he was some kind of

super human being. A mentor indeed! As well, it took little to realize how dependant the “wrecker” was of his immediate two-man staff of a “killick” and a “greaser,” both knowledgeable, energetic, and available at any given moment day or night, whether the boat was on the roof, at 500 ft., or alongside in a maintenance period. The vastness of systems on his charge included anything mechanical outside of the engine room that went up and down, back and forth, and round and round, and through pipes . . .and that was a lot. As submarines carried no shipwrights, docking, trim, stability and structural maintenance were added responsibilities and if a guy didn’t mind hard work and wanted to “get stuck in” to keep it all going, this was his niche.

This was to be the changing point in my career. The outside wrecker in *Aeneas* was Fred Searle. Fred was a mechanic, a product of the stoker’s branch whose qualifications paralleled that of an ERA apprentice which took me back to the echoes of George Faithfull in *Micmac*. Fred complimented me as having steamed the donk shop and the diving panel on three A-boats. He quickly went to Chief Stoker, “Inky” Penn, to claim me as soon as I arrived.

Working with Fred as the outside killick was to become both a privilege and more than all other virtues, a good schooling from his craft as a mechanic. His knowledge of submarines was unsurpassed and of greater value was his ability to repair and fix things. Fred taught me right out of a tool box and it wasn’t until some months later that he gave me “the other key” to that box, entrusting me to respect its contents and be dextrous and capable of using them. To paint further of Fred’s character and capability, he would later go on to serve as Chief Mech (Chief ERA) in three “bombers,” *Renown*, *Repulse*, and *Revenge* and to this day as “retireds,” we remain in personal contact.

Refit Group (Portsmouth)

I joined *Aeneas* at RG(P) to find that *Olympus* was also refitting and that *Totem(T)* and *Turpin* were being converted and taken over by the Israelis and renamed as *Dakar* and *Leviathan* respectively. Ethnic comments ran wild in “the sixties” and it didn’t take long for jack to construct a riddle that seemed to suit the transformation for at least one of the boats: **“It ain’t the paint that makes the *Dakar* blacker . . .It’s the new crew!”** for which our Israeli friends took in stride, reciprocating with a wide-grinned simile of a kipper. . . **“All head, and no guts!”**

Most will recall that *Dakar* was the submarine that the year following her commissioning into the Israeli Navy, went down with all hands somewhere in the Mediterranean. There are four theories and it is still unsure as to what caused her fate. But when looking at her in the quay alongside as part of her conversion, might have revealed another possibility. The boat's length had been extended by twelve more feet. The fin had been stretched to disproportionate dimensions which within either the escape or conning towers, incorporated a diver lock-out capability. Many a layman observed of her newly-converted, impressive lines while uttering their doubts about this new unproven capability in what looked like a boat with questionable seaworthiness. One of the four theories is a mystical one. In the Royal Navy as HMS/m *Totem* in her first commission, she was honoured with a 3 ft. replica of a totem pole by the Cowichan tribe in Canada. The legend was that as long as the totem pole remained aboard and sailed with the submarine, harm would never come her way. When she was passed to the Israelis, all artefacts from former *Totem* (T) were passed to the submarine museum which included the totem.

A flood in Pompy 'yard

In refit accommodation, it's every man for himself and the only ones guaranteed to have a roof over their heads each night were the R. A's. Among some single hands, Telfer's steak pies at the NAAFI canteen and a room at the "Home Club" were at least a means of staying alive. Word had it that if it was blank week and the lolly was just about gone, meant sleeping in an SNSO CHAKON packing crate on a jetty in the yard and saving what tin you might have left to at least get a pint, an "egg sarnie" or a "chip buttie" each bare day until payday. To warm you up might mean hangin' about at the RGP when a married hand would put on a pot of tea, enough for someone else in the room. He might have even had a spare rasher of bacon and a piece of bread left in his brown bag that he was willing to share in the 'Group's galley.

Aeneas was captained by the veteran skipper, LCdr James, William, Alexander, Greig known throughout the submarine service as "Bos'n." His wife had just recently died of cancer. He was a kind and patient, full of help, advice, and never critical of people. He had been passed over for promotion so they gave him this last hurrah, his fourth command. He was 39 years old when he joined the boat . . . ancient in submarine CO years, and his thinning hair and deep-thinking expression spelt of a very colourful

career in submarines. He was determined to enjoy himself and that he did, as well as be an excellent leader and teacher to his officers.

Bos'n somehow managed to convince FOSM that submarines should retain the ability to fight the battle from the surface as well as beneath it, so another familiarity returned. Would I ever stop humping ammunition? A 4" deck gun was found lying about that had no doubt, found its way from Singapore and was smartly fitted in *Aeneas*, she in 1965, being the only boat in "home waters" with a gun.

The First Lieutenant was Lt. Ed Falstrem, RCN who spent time in a number of submarines, and in years to follow, sailed in all five of the then current Canadian submarines including *Grilse*, *Rainbow*, and the three O's. On the lower deck were three other Canadians. Fore-endee LS Cliff Montgomery, LSRP Bill Buckley, and an ERA by the name of PO1 Bill Bruce. Chief Stoker, "Inky" Penn, was a formidable race track hound. You could always find Inky checking over his form in the layapart store and heading for the betting shop at dinner times. On a good day, you wouldn't see him until the next one or sometimes, the one beyond. The Chief Mech was a Londoner named "Speaky" Lowe. Speaky, at the end of the work-up was to be drafted to *Anchorite* still out in the Fezz. In the stokers' mess, we were sorry to see him go and as a tribute, we called him round for a tot alongside in *Dolphin*. He went on to talk about a lot of things he had experienced in the boat during the previous commission, but he never wanted to talk about work. That was a given, for Speaky was a driver. Instead he told us of the opportunity he had never taken for as well, being a real daredevil too. In his very broad cockney accent, he told us of the time that there was a "cake 'n arse party" in the control room. "Ya' know wot it's like when they 'ave their bash back awft . . . the lights are all gone red and flags and pennants are stuck round the control 'ouse to cova the mank'. Well it was always my intention to rig up a tape recorder in numbah four trap . . . ya know the ossifa's bog that's put out for the 'orses durin' the party. Well just as some darlin' would park 'er arse down on the seat in the dark to 'ave a wee . . . I would switch on this tape recorder that would say, "**Ang on a minit luv' . . . I'm workin' down 'ere!**"

Dockyard Mateys

Well, it was time to "get down the boat" and indeed I did. Cables, tools, lumps of machinery, temporary lighting, and just a complete myriad of obstacles that made it look so unlike the appearance of a submarine. There

were dockies everywhere you looked and added to the clamour, any compartment in the boat resembled the activities at the face of a coal mine. The boat was to commission in just two very short months and it was difficult to conceive of the idea that she would be ready to go by then. But surely there would be overtime for the dockies of course . . .and overtime pay of course. And unbelievably, those perks all started in a place called Nova Scotia.

In 1805, the commissioner of H.M.Dockyard in Halifax declared: “*A Man working from 5 o’clock in the Morning to 7 at Night is as much labour as he is capable of performing faithfully.*” Two years later in 1807 he then directed: “*In times of Absolute Necessity, Everyone in the yard is to work two hours and half Extra by Candle light in refitting His Majesty’s Ships.*” (half Extra being a half-more portion of pay) There was added a footnote that cancelled on the perks of dockyard workers that was to be halted forthwith: “*Hogs, Goats, and Geese being a very great Nuisance, none are to permitted to go at large in the Dock Yard.*”

Well, what all that meant by the twentieth century was that the dockies could put in 16 hours a day and get over-time pay for doing it. Then it came to argue on lunches and suppers, so they built canteens to loaf in, brought in their brown-bags, and were to leave their food-bearing animals at home. Penniless Jack carried on as ever.

Never “assume” in a submarine.....a lesson for life

Aeneas of course, was an Admiralty designed A-boat and differed from the Vickers type A’s in Singapore. Their main engines had a different fuel configuration along with slight variations in sea water systems. One in particular was the positioning and piping routes of the ballast pump six-valve chest. My familiarity of which combinations of valves were to be operated in order to “shift” sea water, were ingrained within me. That assurance used aboard an Admiralty boat however, led me to a lesson to be well-learned and never to be forgotten through a good dressing down from the engineer officer . . .and in pusser’s parlance, “a dose from the foretopman’s bottle.”

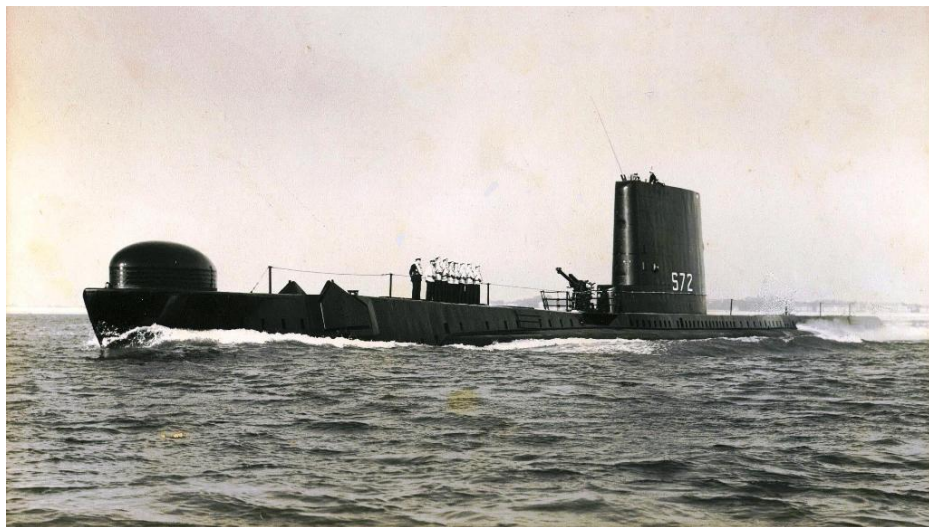
With all the activity going on, the engineer, LT.(E) Ray “Jumper” Collins, an ex-periscope tiffy, had decided that it was time to start setting the trim so that we could start “comping up” as the boat had completed the refit’s final docking. Colin Ashmore the outside greaser, had been in *Aeneas* the previous commission but was still a part III. Colin’s knowledge

of the boat was limited by his own admission but as I was lining up the six-valve chest to pump out the after trim tank, he said, "Buster! I think you got the wrong valves open and ass-backward . . .but I'm probably wrong." It was typical tradition of the navy where an AB, an ME (1) in Colin's case, would never question the seniority of a killick. Confidently and thinking from experience of three submarines, I opened the requisite valves to pump the trim tank from "Aft to Forward" and then overboard and then started the ballast pump. Twenty minutes had passed when looking to the after ends bulkhead, the door swung open and three dockies came rumbling out of the after ends surrounded with a flourish of seawater spilling over into the motor room. I had instead, "flooded" the after trim tank into the after ends. Immediately, I reversed the position of the valves and commenced to pump from "Aft to Forward" instead of "Pump to Aft." While the pumping continued, it didn't take long for "Engines," Speaky, Fred, Inky, the OOD, and the duty bus conductor . . .to show up in the engine room to see what went wrong. "LME Brown!" said the engineer. "Would you come to the wardroom after the after ends is pumped out please?" he said mildly. "Aye-aye sir!" I replied in one hell of a quiet tizzy. "Yes sir!" I said all the quieter while steadily growing un-nerved.

I was up on "Engineer's Defaulters" shall we say, in an empty wardroom, "Engines" insisting in his own mind that there was no need to have anyone else present in sensing my feelings of stupidity and embarrassment. He looked at me very sternly and said quietly, "Do you realize what you did wrong Brown?" And anxiously and in detail all at once, I replied, "Yes I do sir. In *Andrew*, *Anchorite*, and *Alliance*, we always opened those two valves to pump from aft and I assumed that even though the six-valve chest is reversed aboard *Aeneas*, I was still doing the same thing." I was quivering with lost confidence. He saw it. He then said, "Well Brown! There appears to be no damage. No one got hurt. You've got a lot of mopping up to do, haven't you? . . . You've got the rest of the day to do it in." He dwelled, then raised his head, looked at me square in the eye and said. . . "Never assume in a submarine! Alright Brown? . . .Carry on!" he said, mildly.

I finally got ashore at 2200 that night, every nook and cranny of the after ends dried out, holes in my dungarees, and my hands and knees worn out. My head was pounding and my pride hurt in making such a silly and stupid mistake. Imprinted in my mind for the rest of my time in the navy and as it still prevails today, came from a living example . . . "**Never assume in a submarine!**" It was difficult for me to face the lads the following day. I apologized to Colin for not heeding his comments and

bowed to the mess in its entirety. Typical of matelots and especially submariners: “Don’t worry about it mate!” uttered Colin. . . “And you can have my tot today as well!” I languished in a feeling of returning confidence.



SSK 72- HMS/m Aeneas with deck gun at Spithead

Trials done . . .Now for work-ups. . .3rd Division North

The traditional commissioning ceremony at jetty-side was given by a re-make Sin-Bos’n, who gave us his blessing. He was once a submariner and the boat’s first skipper, when *Aeneas* first commissioned in 1946. We sailed for work-up in Faslane Scotland, the home of SM3, 3rd Division North. During WW2, Faslane, sheltered by the Rhu Narrows from the Clyde Estuary and situated on the seven-mile-long Gare Loch, was built as an emergency port for Glasgow. It was integral to the support of the North African campaign but by 1957, the squadron had moved there from Rothesay. We arrived on a miserable, wet, and windy day which typifies the west coast of Scotland. The opener in the tune in the flick, “My Fair Lady” rang ever so true . . . “The rain in Spain falls mainly in Faslane,” and as we gently neared the trot on *Maidstone* the depot ship, you could smell the mix of greasy chips and fuel oil and hear the cadence of the cockies trying to hump the chips ashore. Inboard, was HMS *Narvik*, the ex-amphib’ hulk that had extra inboard bunks for *Maidstone*’s overflow and was used to stow stores not required in the boat for the work-up.

Across the near mile wide Gare Loch and seen through the mist was a vague outline of AFD 58, the floating dock built to receive destroyers but since modified to dock-down submarines.

We moved aboard and found immediately that life in *Maidstone* was an inboard-wanker's paradise and "1600 and shot ashore" was an understatement. The bunks and lockers were typically transient . . .and in reality, the messes about ten grades lower than good old A Block in *Stad'*. Talk about being a hulker . . .*Maidstone* was it. Her Latin motto "Urbis Fortuna Navis" translates into "The fortune of the city is the fortune of the ship" which if the Mayor of that Kentish town were aware of *Maidstone's* aversions, he'd resign. And as well, it seemed that the SM3 crowd really didn't want us around. The time were such that old A's and T's and their visiting crews were classless among the up and coming posh and modern muppets in nuke' "attacks" and preparations for the SM10 "bombers" that were about to run from FISB-land.

Now getting ashore was sheer mud, for at the end of *Narvik's* bogged in brow was a mobile canteen. It sold oggies, faggots, pies, and chips and was open late at night for two hours after the pubs shut, and the tail-end customers weren't too fussy about what was left to eat, however cold and lard-saturated. A steep hill led up to where construction had just begun to build what was to become the Clyde Submarine Base and HMS *Neptune*.

Once ashore and along the narrow Fas Lane, from whenst it came, you could catch the bus or go on the thumb to beautiful downtown Helensbagels, some three miles away, and enjoy a dinner time sesh' at the



Royal, the Station Bar, or the Clachen, just across the high street from the Church of Turkey. . .38 rooms at 6 shillings a night. It might then be the time to "Catch the wee blue tr-r-r-ain for-r Glasgow, Queen St." It was only a 45-minute journey but after a skinful, many of the lads needed to get to a bog and the blue train ran without fitted heads. There were two choices. Take a goffer bottle with you and fill it up as the train whizzed through

Craigendorn, Dumbartonshire, and Clydebank . . .or get off, find a pub, and catch the next train a half hour later. When you got off at Queen St. station in Glasgow, directly across the street was the Dog House, the starting point for a run up Sauchihall St. as the day wore on into the night. Watch your fingers on a Saturday night as the FISB's shut 'er down at exactly 2100. Often times, we'd thumb our way into Glasgow where you could expect to be relayed as many as a dozen times. One early morning in pouring rain on the way back, Jock MacAlpine and I had ridden in an

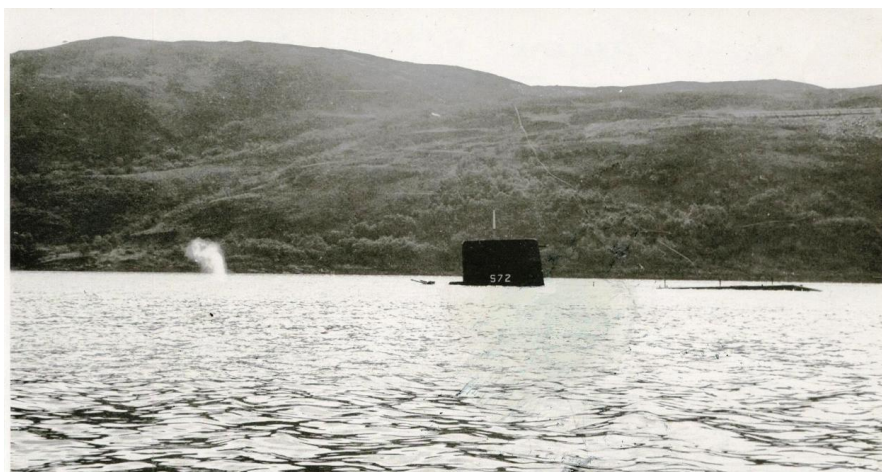
off-duty bus, an ambulance, a hearse, an egg van, and finally, a horse-drawn milk cart.

On another sojourn into Glasgow on a late Saturday afternoon, Cliff Montgomery and I had done a good job of thumbin' a ride, and found ourselves within the last stop on the bus route that took you into central Glasgow. The bus came and Cliff jumped aboard the platform first. I was running to get aboard when Cliff reached up and pressed the button twice, the signal for the driver to pull away. He did. I ran after that bus until the next stop when by now, I saw Cliff through the rear window of the upper deck. He stomped his foot twice, the other means for the driver to pull away when the conductor is not in reaching distance of the button. I gave chase once more, in full rig, sweating, panting, and cursin' Cliff when again his smiling face re-appeared through the rear window of the platform along with an equally amused bus conductor. They both had a finger gesturing toward that dreaded button once more, but finally, the bus waited. It took the trip into the city to get my breath back as everybody around me on the bus could smell the "eau-de-diesel" coming from my sweat-soaked uni-bag. There would be no trapping a wee hen at the Saturday night dance at the Lucarno in Glasgow that night.

During work-up, we went into Ardrishaig for the night, behind one of the islands in the Clyde area. A diving tender, ironically but prehistorically tallied HMS *Neptune*, spent the night alongside us and Bos'n was invited by their captain to join him for a glass. He being a gentleman and not wishing to be inhospitable, agreed to do so. Come the next morning, we were due to sail at 0600 to our areas for the day's exercises. The boat went to harbour stations, shortened in the cable and First Lieutenant, Ed Falstrem, reported to Bos'n that we were ready for sea. Well, the boat may have been ready, but the skipper wasn't. Not wishing to have the good-name *Aeneas* soiled by showing up late for our assigned areas, Ed decided to take the boat out. We were well on our way, when Bos'n finally went to the bridge, looking much worn from his previous night's engagement. His only comment was to commend Ed for taking such action. Ed had returned from two horrible years in skimmers in Halifax and then spent two months in 3rd Division North, as Second Lieutenant in *Osiris*. Having finally convinced the drafting commander that he was due for a First Lieutenant's job, he was sent to *Aeneas* and this initiative further convinced Bos'n of his worthiness.

The work-up went reasonably well, save for the over-abundance of the silly things that ST Staff had organized for us. Fires, floods, air bursts, and telemotor failures became the arduous routines of both night and day. Then

it was out into the Irish Sea for the operational phase and three more weeks of hectic activity. We had achieved a “Sat”(isfactory) standard in everything, but ST staff by recommendation to their Commander, insisted that there was still lots of time left in the safety programme so: “We’re sure you’ve got better things to do than waste time ashore in any of the surrounding ports for the night!”



S/m Aeneas dives in Loch Fyne near Inveraray

Back up north again

After seven weeks, we finally returned to Pompey for leave, maintenance, and a bit of the good life by living in my flat ashore. Four weeks went by in a flash and but a good trip was about to begin. We’d be heading back up north again, but this time with an air of worked-up independence. We returned to the lochs on the western approaches to Scotland, then across the Irish sea to Bangor in Ireland. We then headed further north through the Inner Hebrides and the Minches at the tide-assisted phenomenal surface speed of 26 knots. After exercises with the fleet near Scapa’ we were back down the Irish into Londonderry. Along the way into ‘Derry was Loch Foyle where at the end of WW2, what seemed like hundreds of surrendered U-boats were mustered, and then scuttled. Wiggy Bennet the coxswain was a wartime submariner and talked of the kit that went down with those boats. The Brits’ had opted to scuttle everything including the “high-tech” navigational equipment, periscopes, and torpedoes . . . even the caches of wines and spirits in the wardrooms. Nothing was left available to filch.

As we drew alongside ‘Derry, we secured on HMS *Stalker*, another ex-amphib’ and sister to *Narvik*. Again, we were graciously invited to live aboard, but by the time you drew linen, made up your pit, and got in bed with the cockies, I thought it was more time-saving and less of a hassle to get a shower only but instead, sleep aboard the boat. That day brought a little comfort to me after the flooding episode back in Pompey ‘yard, and one that I shall never forget too.

It seemed that by noon, leave had been piped and everybody went inboard to *Stalker* to get ready to go ashore. It was pouring with rain so instead, I decided to get a little work done before proceedin’. By looking through our defect list, Fred had *starred a radar mast bearing as being a priority repair. I went up to the bridge and saw that the cap screws in the bearing retaining ring had sheared and the ring was free to go up and down with the mast. I went below, threw on a slicker, and gathered a bag of tools to go back up to the bridge to see what I could do. After three hours and being soaked to the skin, I managed to extract the sheared screws and fit replacements. The mast now worked correctly and by the time I put my tools back in the box, a hot shower aboard *Stalker* was in order. I went across the ‘plank and headed for the washplace. As I passed an open curtained door, I saw a whole bunch of our chuffs ‘n puffs sitting round a table in the Senior Rates’ mess. They were still going at it from tot time, which by all accounts should have packed up some four hours ago. Fred was in there and by now, was thoroughly enjoying himself when he saw me. “Buster!” came this attention-getter. “Wot y’up ta then?” he asked. “Just gettin” shocked and blown down, then steamin’ ashore!” I replied. “Oh! ‘Finished doin’ that seaguard bearing by the way. ‘Seems alright now!” Fred quickly rose from the table and fumbled toward the curtain, while the rest of them carried on yappin’ in their noisy tavern-like din. “You wot?” he asked with a puzzled look. “Just done the seaguard bearin’. Why?” Fred backed off a bit then said, “Did you know that that one was a stopper because we can’t get spares from ‘Eaglescliffe? Wotya’ mean, ya’ done the seaguard? Crikey, father needs ta know this! Now we can sail tomorrow!” I had quickly learned that initiative sometimes paid off big time, not even aware that the radar mast was an ops defect and we couldn’t sail. Now that it was repaired, tomorrow we could head back to Pompey and get on with the leave and maintenance period.

A night ashore in ‘Derry

On the jetty, not a stone’s throw away, was Joe Cassidy’s pub that was bombed by the IRA in the late 1980’s. It was our muster point before heading to the Mecca dance hall in down town ‘Derry. The colleens you’d meet there all worked at the same places . . . Londonderry’s world-renown shirt factories. So, if you weren’t on the alert but you should be, you might ask, “So where do you work luv’?” One would reply, “Ah’ works at the shorts factory!” Then in cunning pursuit I ask, “So wot d’ya do with the shorts?” She’d reply, “No! . . . I said I works at the shorts factory puttin’ the buttons on the cuffs ‘n makin’ the collars stiff! We don’t make shorts at the shorts factory. . . just shorts!”

As well, what was a good dare was to nip just across the border to county Donegal for a pint before headin’ back aboard. Some dodgy IRA’s were in our midst, but we had no bones to pick and as it seemed, neither did they. A pint or two added to our “skinful,” and the price of a “fast black” back to the boat, typical of anywhere in the British Isles after midnight, rose by 500 percent. It was always a good run because of lots to talk about the next morning.

A race to ‘Blockhouse

We sailed early that next day. When we cleared the ‘Foyle, we met up with *Alderney* who was also on the roof and heading home. She was now skippered by newly promoted LCdr Del Shannon of “Venus fame” aboard *Anchorite* off Japan. Immediately, a challenge was made and whether it came from our Bos’n or “the keeper of the Venus light,” remains a mystery. A-boats were traditionally, the RN’s fastest diesel boats at about 16 kts. on the surface in long passage, and a race was in order. The boat that entered the gut at Pompey first would be declared the winner and celebration was in order for drinks all round at the wardroom in *Dolphin*. Well wot about the workers then? Never mind, so off we went, “haze grey and underway.” And haze grey the exhaust trails they were. To dab-toes and general officers alike, on how getting there first was dependant on how much coal we could throw on the fire. To us clankies, *Alderney* had Vickers engines and of course, *Aeneas* was integrated with Admiralty pattern. The only difference might be that our donks’ were three tons heavier, but yet max brake horsepower between the eight cylinder engines had identical output. *Alderney* had a longer piston stroke but we had a

larger cylinder bore and so four of Her Majesty's Stone-Crushers were dutifully called upon to perform to their maximum expectations. As long as the maintenance was up and the sea conditions were the same, the only disadvantage might be external where the state of hull preservation dogged with sea-growth could be a factor. It seemed to be negligible however, for by early morning two days later, we were within a mile from *Alderney* on her port quarter as we passed Bournemouth on the port beam. Bos'n was on the plot as the steady tempo of the clickety-clack of the top gear of the supercharged roar of the engines wound its way into the moisture-laden corners of the control room. With a spurt, he ordered port wheel, and steer a course that would take us through the Needles and the Solent on the north side of the Isle of Wight and pass Southampton. *Alderney* slowly disappeared amid the distance through the longer route to Spithead via the south while at the expense of speed restrictions through the narrows of the Solent, *Aeneas* was much closer to the finish line. Traditionally, the passage to Southampton was always plugged with liners but during a time when the mammoth "ladies" were vanishing from the seas, port authorities had not changed the driving rules. What had changed was that there was little traffic other than the odd fishing smack and the occasional ferry boat, and a clear track lay dead ahead. Besides . . . what officials would ever question the needed presence of this slippery sentry of the seas in conducting business "on her lawful occasion" in such a fleeting and necessary mission? It was two hours later when *Aeneas* chugged along behind the ferry to Portsmouth from Ryde on the Isle of Wight. *Alderney* could be seen making her approach through the bastions of Spithead when Bos'n ordered, "Port thirty . . . handsomely!" *Aeneas* rounded the sea wall and made the 180-degree entrance to Haslar Creek for a berth on Trot 2. By the time we had doubled up and opened up hatches, *Alderney* had lost way and had to penetrate into the middle of Pompey harbour to come about and draw alongside but 45 minutes later. She had blown it by following the rule that didn't work at all. "First the Nab, then the Warner. Haslar Creek 'round Blockhouse corner." In any event, the "wardrooms" headed for the bar and well. . . Wiggy Bennet, the coxswain, piped a make and mend for "workers all."

Ah-h-h, to be livin' ashore

Alongside in Portsmouth meant getting ashore for a night out, but as that night drew to a close, it was either sleeping on a 'sweeper at *Vernon*

pierhead or getting back to *Dolphin* if you were in time for that last P.A.S. boat. Although I wasn't entitled to any allowance, living ashore in my flat in Southsea was a good idea. It was home and self-contained, and it gave space for all of my rabbits and civvies that were continuously growing. It was also very popular among the stokers aboard the boat and it seemed that everybody groped for a chance to sleep on the couch or my armchair for the night instead of having to go back aboard. Many a night would go by and quite often there would not only be one guest, but more like four or five which meant whoever was the last one proudly standing, he was kipped out on the deck.

Christmas was nearing and the anticipation for going up the line for leave was running rampant except for those like me who were to stay in the port areas over the holidays. Two days before, several guys were to start their leave and it seemed like a good idea to get ashore and have a little party before they left. By one in the morning, we all got back to the flat where everybody opted to spend the night, even on top of the kitchen table. They were all in a panic to be awake on time in order to get back aboard. I told them all that they were not to worry as I had gotten into the habit of getting up at six every morning and the few hours left in that night was not to be an exception. Well, I did well by getting up at five and noted the confidence of the shower of "zonkers" surrounding me. With one eye open, they all agreed, saying, "Go on Buster! Have another hour! We'll be alright!" they said in the belief that I would get up again at six, as I assured them. I went back to bed, and the next thing I knew, it was eight o'clock. Panic hit the flat, and within ninety seconds, nine hung-over submariners filed out onto Nightingale St. trying to pucker their lips in whistling for a fast-black. By the time we got onto the jetty at *Dolphin*, it was obvious to all of the onlookers that we were adrift, evidenced by the fact that we were all still dressed in civvies while displacing less volume in lacking our station cards. "Groan! Groan!" They're goin' to jam us with stoppage of leave. "Thirty days hath September . . . April, June and Buster Brown." "One little bell" was I and LT. Ed Falstrem saw to it that Christmas leave would not be jammed, satisfied that we all came back in one big heap. As for me? On Christmas Eve, I sang Silent Night to myself, the trot sentry, on the pitch-black casing from midnight until three. It seemed an appropriate thing to do. . . nobody was stirring, there were no mice or rats, and the imaginary noise of big hairy reindeer on the roof was no more than heavy and steady raindrops falling on the casing.

North again . . . with an easterly circle

By the following year, we were relegated to short patrols, Portland running, and working with the skimmers. It was about this time though that I had taken a fall while loading stores into the fore ends. I was manhandling a wooden crate of eggs when my feet had slipped away from the loading hatch ladder and took a 6-foot drop landing flat on my back on top of the trench covers. No eggs broke but I was feeling a horrible ache somewhere around my lower back. I scooted ashore to the sick bay to get looked over and through my insistence, forcefully declared that I'd be all right after a couple of days and everything would be fine. Through that insistence, the sick bay tiffies had no option but to agree with me in declaring, "Well 'Brown. Then take it easy for the next few days." Besides! We were sailing and I didn't want to miss the next trip. I was to find out that that fall was going to plague me with pain for a very long time to come.

We sailed and headed to Scandinavia to work once again with the SBS Commandos. After stopping into Blyth near Newcastle, my back seemed a little better but there lingered a constant dull ache that I had never experienced before. It was then to Bergen and the nearby naval base at Hakkonsvern. From there we headed to Odda, a town stood majestically at the very end of the hundred-mile-long Hardanger fjord. It was a beautiful spring afternoon on the way in, when Bos'n came into the control room for "his look" through the after periscope. Suddenly, and without taking a breath, he ordered, "Raise the forward periscope . . . train on the port beam in high power . . . officer of the watch . . . pipe tourists to the control room at the rush!" Everybody clambered in to have a quick shuftee through both periscopes at a nudist camp just five hundred yards to port.

The locals in Odda didn't really appreciate the RN's presence there. That, we suspected, had something to do with Royal Navy visits and what might or might not have gone on during Norway's neutrality in WW2. Shortly after we had gotten ashore in uniform, we were rounded up and ordered back aboard and into civvies. It was too late by then because the few numbers that made up the town's population already knew what we looked like. It had nothing to do with how accent-ed kippers speak of course, but it sure had a lot to do with the sudden scarcity of women. Norwegian dads from Odda sure took charge of their beautiful blond-haired daughters and had them all curfewed in their homes for the three-day stay. Maybe this visit had nothing to do with WW2 after all!

A Rogues' Gallery

After some contact exercises with the Norwegian Navy and “special ops” with SBS 40 Commandos, it was time to surface and drink the air. The bootnecks, who looked like they hadn’t eaten in a week were in combined ops with the Norwegians aboard one of their hi-powered gunboats, and as they drew alongside in one of the fjord inlets, they hollered for bread, bread, and more bread. Up came all the mouldy penicillin-dotted loaves from the fore-ends and a pitcher’s jackstay transfer commenced. Sombre faces grew to broad grins and a happier lot of marines you never did see.

It then seemed that there was some time to spare before “COMEX,” so what better could we do than pose for a picture. As a collective crew, we had never taken the opportunity to get a picture of ourselves, especially one of a “Rogues’ Gallery” . . . that included the Jolly Roger.



The Jolly Roger and the Netley pirate crew of Aeneas- Norway 1966. Seated left (with thin hair), C.O. Bos’n Greig. Author (with cheese-cutter cap) standing directly behind looking aft. 1st Lt. Ed Falstrem seated right in conversation.

A corruption of the French “Joli-Rouge,” and near of the time when RN submarines and the people within them first went to sea, the “skull and crossbones” would become a symbol to the cause. It began through the temptation that if submariners are to be compared to and labelled as pirates, then, “We’re going to conduct ourselves accordingly, aren’t we?”

Fatuous judgement was passed by Rear-Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, Comptroller of the Navy to the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1901 who insensibly prompted this to happen when he proclaimed: "*Submarines are underhand, unfair and damned un-English. The crews of all submarines captured should be treated as pirates and hanged.*" By 1914, Lt. Cdr "Max" Horton, in command of submarine E-9 was the scourge of the German Battle Fleet, and in attempting to shelter out of harm's way in the Baltic, raised two black flags of piracy after sinking the cruiser *Hela* and destroyer S116. By World War 2, it then became common practice for submarines to fly the Jolly Roger on completion of a successful mission where action had taken place. Now emblematic of the submarine service, it is an indicator of bravado and stealth rather than the lawlessness of piracy on the high seas.

Well as we were all dressed in pirate rig, the personalities within the photo were to be well depicted. On the sponson, straddled and poised about the 4" deck gun, we too would support a jolly roger with accompanying silhouettes depicting a Netley coach, a dagger, a silhouette of the deck gun, and a bottle of pussers' neats. Apart from the motor coach, the remaining symbols were indicative to the nature of *Aeneas'* recent special ops with 40 Commando, surface gun-action engagements, as well as the well-earned "runs ashore" of her motley crew. Meanwhile, "Netley" had become the passageway word in the boat. During the recent work-up and up to the day, it seemed that everybody was attempting to drive us "crazy" and on many occasions, we'd go to "cracking stations," the term derived from being "cracked down the middle" in frustration. To compensate or mend the feeling, it was thought in jibe that boarding a coach to Netley Abby Village in Hampshire where a mental institution was once located, might just be in order.

A very rare sight

So then as the "J.R." and camera were stowed away, we were about to see something very scarce. . .among submariners who seldom see the light of day. We were on the inside of a fjord inlet when the P-boat *Finwhale* and Super- T, *Truncheon* joined us to form a three-boat flotilla for the remainder of the trip. *Truncheon* laid off at distance to the west while we remained DIW. Between the two "stopped" submarines, we were about to witness a most rare evolution performed by *Finwhale* . . .running at "Batteries-in-Series" on the surface, a function that is only carried out

“dived,” and in an evasive mode. Whether she was showing off as a younger, more modified submarine or just looking for the quickest way to perform a battery self-maintenance “quarterly-discharge,” remained the question. There she went against a backdrop of an increasing sunset nevertheless, carving up the mirror-like surface of the inlet while turning and leaning sharply in an array of varying tracks. It seemed odd, but very impressive, to see a submarine running at top speed . . . without the traditional exhaust smoke and cooling water sprays belching away from her muffler tanks.

Cab Fare? ... at times, anything will have to do

The three submarines then headed for the Skagerrak and the Baltic Sea to Helsinki. It was to be a good run ashore and it wasn't cheap. I had met a Finn girl who by golly, looked just like Doris Day but my, what a language barrier! After a three-day run and without a duty watch, my money was all gone. It was at her home in the very early dawn before sailing, and “Doris” insisted that she call a cab to get me back to the boat. The cab arrived and I spent the half-hour trip to the boat in trying to explain to the cabbie that I would get a “rubber” to pay the fare from somebody back on board. He wasn't to be easy to convince for several times, he pulled over to the curb insisting that I get out. I won the battle as we finally arrived on the jetty. Feeling good that it was only five in the morning and I got back in good time, I got out of the cab, again assuring the driver that I'd return with the fare very shortly. As I went across the plank, the trot sentry greeted me with, “Mornin' Buster. Good run then?” and I immediately countered with, “Ya' haven't got any shrapnel left have ya'?” “Neggy mate. I'm toppled.” he replied. So then I crawled down the fore hatch, waving assuringly to the driver that I would return with the fare. Once I got below, to no surprise, everybody was still asleep. Now how in hell do you shake somebody and get him to lay out some tin an hour before he has to get up? I then went aft to the stokers' mess to find that the two curtains were drawn closed and hereto, everybody was still kipped out. There wasn't a soul on his feet throughout the boat. Feeling worried that the driver was by now calling a local cop, I then went back to the fore ends in a hurry. I cast a quick glance around the space and saw that mingled among all the sleepers, the “groceries” had been struck down for sailing. And there at the front of the compartment were three wooden crates of eggs. I tiptoed forward and opened one up. There on the top lay a flat of

two and a half-dozen, Finnish-farm fresh, eggs. Bingo! I muckled on to the flat, wobbled up the ladder, and headed for the jetty. It didn't take much for the driver to start smiling. He carefully laid the flat down on the seat beside him and looked at me with an appreciative grin. The trot sentry mused and as I stumbled back aboard and the cab sped away, he muttered, "The things ya' see when you're on duty and got the fukkin' trot! Un-fukkin' believable!"

The loss of submarine Hai

We cleared Helsinki and then headed to Lubeck, Germany. Because we were early for our official ETA, we "dropped the pick" off a place called Travemünde, which was at the head of the inlet leading into Lubeck. During that lengthy wait, we had little to do except amble about on the casing until we were cleared for harbour entry. The surrounding water was still and as clear as gin, and one could see that the "grass" on the pressure hull below the waterline was no longer there. When we had left Pompey, the growth was lengthy from being waterborne for nearly a year, but had now mysteriously disappeared. It was an indication that for the three weeks we had been in the Baltic, the growth on the hull had slowly eroded from the once, foot-long streams of seaweed to a mild coating of peach fuzz. Well from that we thought, "Somebody ought to tell the Admiralty to send boats on jollies to the Baltic and save money on dockings for a 'shave and a haircut'."

We finally got clearance to go alongside and seeing as we were senior boat, we'd have the inboard trot. There was a welcoming reception on the jetty that ran parallel to the main strasa of the town of Lubeck. Among the V.I.P.'s were the town's Bergermeister and none other than Admiral Otto Kreschmer, the WW2 German U-boat ace. *Truncheon* then came alongside and as they were doubling up, *Finwhale* was beginning to draw near. Heaving lines descended aboard us when suddenly, there was some rapid wardroom chatter between the bridges of the three boats and the heaving lines were cast back. We were to learn soon after that the German submarine *Hai*, was reported to have foundered and gone down off the Dogger Bank in the North Sea. P- boats had an updated and more effective re-compression chamber capability aboard, therefore *Finwhale* was to immediately proceed to the areas where *Hai* was last seen. *Hai* was only a two-compartment boat and purportedly, was on the surface and at the tail end of an in-line squadron when she began to take on water as a result of

heavy stern seas. There was to be one survivor who had managed to amble through the flooding conning tower before she went down . . . the ship's cook.

After we had left Lubeck, we proceeded through the locks of the Kiel Canal. While waiting for water levels to meet, an elderly lady approached the side of the quay and looked up at the bridge while beckoning. In her grasp was a bouquet of yellow flowers. Bos'n immediately left the bridge to the casing to see what was the matter. After considerable difficulty with the exchange, the lady then passed the bouquet to the captain. He paused in looking downward, stepped back, and then surprisingly saluted her. Something was apparent and we were to discover that she was the mother of one of the crewmen who went down in *Hai*.

Later in the day, when we arrived to the open-ness of the English Channel, Bos'n was to do something extraordinary which further immersed me into the pride and honour of being a submariner. We were to go DIW and clear the orlop to the casing for a solemn service in memory of *Hai*, and to all who went down in her. "Daw" Griffiths, the gun layer and our steward who specialized as a bugler, were to clean into No. 2's. They would position themselves beside the also uniformed Captain Greig while the remainder of our pirate-rigged crew straddled the fore casing. A running sea occasionally encroached the low, rolling casing and our feet were often awash. A short hand-written prayer had been hastily assembled, copied several times, and passed about among us to share. We prayed, as Daw would fire a round of volleys while Stew' sounded the Last Post on the bugle. Bos'n then cast the flowers onto the sea. As the seas washed across the ballast tanks, the flowers formed a message. While remaining in a cluster, they stubbornly clung to the tanks. . . then into the sea and repeatedly back on the tanks until finally, they trailed away in the current astern of the boat. All eyes remained rivetted to the flowers. . . until they disappeared. It was a moving and fervent experience.

The loss of "our Bos'n"

When we returned to Blockhouse after that trip, we were shocked to learn that Bos'n wasn't in good shape. He finally confided in the first lieutenant Ed Falstrem, that he was suffering from constant stomach pains. That explained why as the captain, he tended to overindulge a little during his runs ashore . . . probably to try and relieve the pain. A visit to the doctor confirmed that Bos'n had stomach cancer and the outcome was

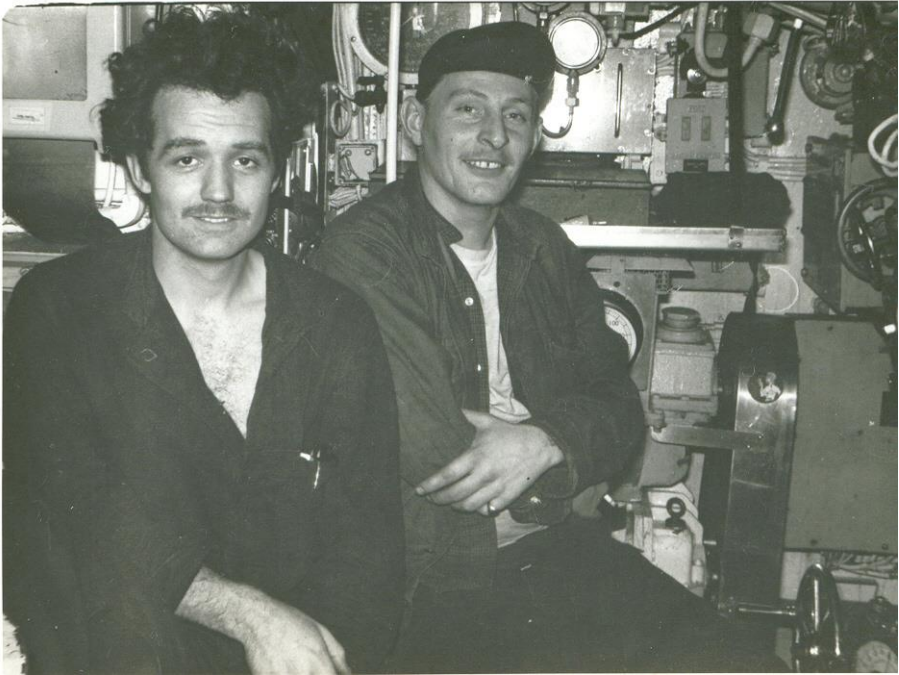
unbelievable. He was soon to pass away. He was relieved by LCdr Richard Sharpe. Sharpe had been scheduled to take over the following April but instead came earlier. At 29 years old, he was much younger than Bos'n and was a very intelligent and witty sort.

My fourth . . . and last A-boat

After returning from a short patrol, we came into Haslar Creek to find that the place was plugged solid with submarines home for the Christmas holidays that numbered about eighteen, making trot space very scarce. The harbour master had no option but to put us outboard on the trot at petrol pier, the berth where paid off submarines normally sit high out of the water. The tide was low and our new Father inched us slowly in onto a paid-off T-boat. After we doubled up and secured, an alongside message was sent to FOSM declaring, QUOTE-AENEAS AGROUND AT PETROL PIER-UNQUOTE. LCdr Sharpe was to become, after retiring from the Royal Navy as Captain in years to come, editor of *Janes Fighting Ships*.

In the new year of 1967, it was announced that the boat was going to run in the Med' for about three months and among other stops, would do a jolly into Haifa, Israel. I became pretty intrigued by this trip as I thought about how briskly we came through there when bringing *Alliance* home from the Fezz. Gibraltar would come as the preceding exercise area with the fleet but beyond that, *Aeneas* was to penetrate further east on her own. Then, just prior to sailing, a "clanger" arrived onboard. A draft chit saying I was loaded on a "3's course" in *Stadacona*. I immediately became indecisive and felt that I should turn the course down and remain in *Aeneas* where I was so satisfied with the challenge. I was well-rooted as outside killick working with Fred and sailing with everybody aboard the boat. I also knew that passing the trade group 3 course in the RCN as a stoker, was a crucial and pivotal point in a stoker's career for under the revised trades structure, you could now transform into an ERA. My thoughts once more returned to George Faithfull in *Micmac*; how I missed the opportunity of going apprentice and more importantly, measuring up to the standards that Fred had taught me in being a "hands-on" repair maintainer, more so than a stoker. Had the draft come aboard after the boat had sailed, I couldn't have been spared and there'd be no black mark against me. I couldn't turn to Fred or Jumper for advice because of their unfamiliarity of the RCN trades structure and the divisional sensitivities of turning down

the course in another navy. Instead, and with their grace, I had to jump to First Lieutenant Ed Falstrem. He immediately countered with: "Take it Buster! It might be years before the opportunity ever comes up again." Well that was enough of that, further encouraged with the accompanying news was that I was to return to the boat and RN submarines when the eleven-month course was finished. If it weren't for Ed Falstrem and his sage advice and who probably wouldn't even remember the instance, my career would have taken a turn for the worst, had I turned down the course. I left *Aeneas* . . . and feeling abandoned, I would learn later . . . I would never see her again.



HMS/m *Aeneas* 1966 - Two weeks into a patrol
Donk Shop Killick Dave Standing joins the Outside Killick
. . . sitting on the tool box at the Diving Panel

CHAPTER TWELVE

Home again-Trade Group 3

The new year had arrived and I was to fly home aboard an RCAF Boeing 707 from Gatwick, near London. It was a far cry from flying backwards in a propeller-driven Yukon because this relatively new concept of flying in pussers' airframes had taken on a more sophisticated jet-liner role. Gone now, were the days of getting a "flip" on the White-Knuckle Lines. As Gatwick was a civilian airport, I couldn't fathom the idea of how or why an air force transport plane was flying in and out of there when traditionally, they always did so from air bases only. Learning that RCAF Langar in Nottingham and Marville in France had closed down, gave good reason to the fact . . . but all of these events were a signal of changing times in the Canadian Armed Services.

When I arrived at the airport, I was milling about with a lot of unfamiliar Canadian army and air force uniformed people. I was feeling very odd and out of place when suddenly, I spotted a blue-jean collar amid the crowd and to my increased delight, a cap tally that read: H.M. SUBMARINES. I had now met a P2 electrician by the name of "Tricky Dicky" Newman. Dicky belonged to an O-boat up in Faslane. Like me, he was heading to *Stadacona* also, to attend his TG 4 course. Immediately and unquestionably, our relationship began. We were both submariners, and we relished in the commonality. The trip to Halifax would last 3 days for after we would arrive in Trenton, Ontario on the flight, it was then time to catch a train at nearby Belleville that would get us to Montreal. The idea of being in Montreal on a Saturday and at the same time that the NHL's All-Star game was on became very tempting. But to take the time and go to the game, meant that we'd be marked adrift on the following Monday morning.

We decided to rumble on and board the train for "Slackers." Then we hit a snowstorm that delayed us as if we could have seen the game anyhow. We arrived at Stad' Main Gate, but late in the afternoon on the Tuesday.

We immediately noticed that the sentry was no longer a matelot dressed in belt and gaiters but instead, a commissionaire. What had happened in just a short time? Going back through that gate brought vivid memories. For the first time in five years, I did it again. "Permission to come aboard Sir?" The OOD glared at me with suspicion and sternly inquired with a barrage of queries: "Where did you come from? What are you doing with a blue jersey on? Why have you got all those pleats in your "bells"? What

kind of a branch badge is that? What kind of a tally bow is that? Who are you anyway?" I thought I looked pretty tidge', dressed in med' collar, "seven seas," two gold-wire badges, a two-starred propeller, my dolphin, and a butterfly bow with a tanner in the carefully tied knot.

Once Dicky and I identified ourselves, it was obvious the gangway staff, particularly the OOD, were lying in waiting for us and real anxious to "run us in the shit." He then curtly assured me, "Right, Leading Seaman Brown. As part of your "In" routine, you can be assured that when you do your kit muster, I shall insist on a report." Welcome home, I thought. After all that scurrying from YewKay, we were still marked adrift. What's this?? Surprisingly, there seemed to be a little compassion after all, and we weren't going to get trooped. It had been a long journey since leaving Gatwick and the train had been held up by a snowstorm. They let us pass untouched when Dicky and I parted our ways while he headed on down to the C&PO's Mess and I back to familiar territory.

This is 'A' Block??

I went into A Block to discover that there was something very different about the ole' house of slammin' doors' too. It dawned on me that I was now walking on a vinyl-tiled deck. . . no longer the dusty and cold concrete of years gone by. And then the biggest surprise. There were civvies scrubbin' out the heads, washplaces and main gangways. What else had changed? Whatever happened to "Pop" and his pool hall? Instead, it was now a huge TV room. There was one single television set situated on a high pedestal for all to see. There must have been two hundred chairs in the place. Now sailors ashore could be treated to other perks and privilege as times were changing. At lunch time, or at least skivin' away by warming the bell, you could go in there and see big, brawny and seasoned sailors glued to the exclusively produced television show for matelots called . . . "Sesame Street!" Meanwhile, down in the galley, only a little had changed. The scullery maids were looking a little pudgier while slivers of silver emerged from their hairnets. The same mass production process of lining up, the queue which ran some two hundred feet down the bulkhead from the main entrance door, and getting your meal card punched hadn't changed. What was still a bone of contention was the WRENS proceeding to the head of the line . . . even without a badge no less, and only been in the mob a dog-watch and fresh out of *Cornwallis*. By now you'd think that time and G.C.'s had their privilege. Well, they did in the ships but not the

case when by 1967 in the navy, women went first and still wore hats in the chapel.

“Requestmen and Defaulters to muster!”

After doing my “In” routine, I was whooshed into a one in four watch rotation that found me duty on the first weekend back in Canada. It also cost me a few extra dollars to get my kit squared away. The report went off to the gangway staff and somewhere within that organization, that dreaded OOD. I never heard a thing back so I suppose I managed to do something that made him feel a little better. At least I was to find out that blue jerseys were no longer part of the winter uniform.

The course began and after spending all of that time overseas as one of a few rare animals, there seemed to be no perks for getting leave. A rarity was an RCN submariner. Apart from the army and the air force who would get leave after returning home after a six-month stint in Europe or the middle east, it seemed that the pusser had no provision in place for looking after these few and unique underwater matelots who cropped up now and again. I wanted to push the point somehow and the only available chance was to slap in a request to get some deferred leave.

At “Commander’s table,” the Commander seemed a little irritated at my presence. He went on with his rationale, “Well Brown! Even though you’ve been out of the country for a few years, there’s nothing in QRCN that allows me to grant special leave. You are on course, and I understand that you were adrift in starting. Have you anything to say to that, Leading Seaman Brown?” “Yes sir!” I replied. “Can I get some deferred leave after I finish course?” More irritated, he brisked through my file and said, “According to your records and draft note, you are to return to England aboard *Aeneas* immediately after the course, so my reply to your request remains Negative! I’m sorry!” **“Requestman. . .right. . .turn. Dismissed!”** came this thundering order from the MAA, and therein was my answer. . .with an apology? That’s different!

Why was this guy so upset I remembered wondering, only to find out later that good ole’ Griff who had earlier returned to *Stad’* for his “Two’s course,” had been up as a defaulter a day before I was requestman. The Commander had noted that by the time I got up there, the plight and conduct of these rebellious displaced submariners was becoming repetitive and started to get to him.

Griff had been up for a third consecutive time for being adrift in the mornings and I was to learn that he pissed off the Commander when his turn came once again. In reviewing his case, the Commander precluded that Griff was getting too repetitious and something had to be done. “Able Seaman Griffin! In the course of one short month, I note that this is your third offence at being adrift. The first had you logged in at the main gate at 0930, the second at 0855, and now this time you are marked as coming aboard at 0825. What do you have to say for yourself?” Griff thought about this for a moment then decided on a reply in a last-ditch effort to soften the expected blow. “Well sir! At least I’m improving!” he exclaimed assuredly, and from that reply, a hasty retort from the Commander ensued. “Able Seaman Griffin! I find you guilty as charged. . . I award thirty days number 6 punishment, fourteen days 5’s and a fifty dollar fine!” More shouting from the MAA: **“On cap! Right turn! Double march! Report to the main gate!”**

And about this time, along with change in creature comforts, came shocking news. We were overwhelmed with this new word known as “Unification.” It was 25 April, 1967, and all of a sudden you couldn’t move. There were new killicks sprouting up everywhere. “Hellyer Hookies” were on the loose and one wondered if there was any A/B’s left out there to take charge of. What was the navy becoming? In the senior circles, little was known among us in the lower deck but it seemed that there was resistance to this change.

From “A’s” to “O’s”

Just as the last time a course had ended in MTE, once again the Chief walked into the classroom with news as to where everybody was getting drafted to. The anticipation on this day was very much what it was like five years before, but with an element of greater responsibility and a more mature enthusiasm. We had been issued with TG 3 tool boxes that not only made us accountable, but alarmed us to a very different approach to the navy and especially, the engineering branch.

I knew I was back to sea aboard *Aeneas* immediately but mysteriously, there came an intervention. “Leading Seaman Brown!” said the Chief. “Report to the S/M 1 Commander at the submarine squadron in building D 7 in the dockyard. He wants to see you!” Well I froze in my thoughts and began to think of the turmoil that graced the arrival in Halifax of *Ojibwa* and *Onondaga* and the birth of the First Canadian Submarine

Squadron. I wasn't too sure about what was going on but in typical form, and feeling well accomplished in my submarine career so far, I put on my "best bib and tucker" ensuring that nothing was left for criticism. I wanted to look exceptionally smart to present myself to the Commander and somehow, felt honoured that I was summoned. I had not met him yet, and the unfavourable drips and drabs about him weren't to discourage me, at least for the time being. He was an accomplished submarine commander who I was to respect and a human being I reminded myself, and my attitude toward any officer deemed with controversy was certainly relative to the type of person you were yourself and I would draw my own conclusions. Within my own right as a junior rate, I also felt accomplished in submarines and also a human being, but was soon to experience a degradation to those qualities by not being as respected with comments and assumptions that I certainly had no familiarity with.

When I arrived at building D7 not knowing a soul, I approached a killick wren who was squadron staff and inquisitive as to who I was, and why I was there. Then we both heard an intervening voice that said, "Are you Brown?" I turned to see standing down the gangway, a bareheaded Commander whose tunic was unbuttoned with a mug of coffee in one hand and his other in his trousers pocket. I faced him at a distance and came to attention. He nodded his head in the direction of an office to which he entered. As I neared the door opening, somewhat perplexed of his returning marks of respect, he was now seated, feet up on a desk brandishing the personalized coffee mug upon which was emblazoned, a single gold RCN submarine "dolphin." He then proceeded into a one-way discussion, words for which I can't easily remember. What I do recall was that what he had to say, quickly became the most humiliating experience that I was ever to suffer throughout my naval career. He seemed derogatory of any RCN matelot who had sailed in RN submarines, and I was not to be an exception. He was critical of me personally as being included of a brand of submariner who might have taken advantage of the navy. He was insulting to any of my proud accomplishments while serving in submarines and concluded with the questionable direction with his feet still up on the desk, that I was not returning to YewKay aboard *Aeneas* but instead, was to join the newly arrived *Onondaga* for O-class submarine experience and re-qualification in the submarine service. . . and that was the end of that. I became confused with the so-called divisional system. Just one hour before, I was under a divisional chain through a Chief Petty Officer. Now I was being told directly by a three-ringed Commander that I was at his disposal and report yourself aboard the *Onondaga*.

Trying to shrug it all off, I joined the boat without a draft chit. I now sidled in the same beliefs of almost every man in Canadian submarines this rebelliousness that had grown as a result I thought, was not good for morale, teamwork, and safety as the RCN embarked with questionable leadership from day one. Why was he like this and what drove him to be so unrecognising? What had made *Ojibwa* a hell ship? Why was everyone wanting out? Was life in Canadian submarines going to be as gruesome as it seemed to be heading?



The good side about this sudden event was that aboard *Onondaga*, were lots of old wingers. First and foremost were John Madison and Soapy Watson. We would sail together again for the first time since *Micmac*. As well, Soapy aboard *Andrew*, and Griff from times in Singapore. “Sir” Malcolm Stocking, the two-badged AB from *Cornwallis* joining block was there and still in his spectacular presence as the epitome of a submariner with a personality, pride and efficiency that to this day, eternally recalled by many as, “Mr. Submarines.” Fred Glover, Bob Evans, Rick Selka, Ken King, Johnnie Whitmore, Paul Renner, Cliff Killam from days in *Dolphin*, ‘Blockhouse and Roy Judson from *Ambush* in Singapore in naming a bunch more.

We sailed just two days later and this boat and her mission was nothing like I was ever accustomed to. Among the many mutated procedures as earlier accounted, we “snorkelled,” we “rigged out the bow planes,” and we flooded “negative to the mark.” This USN terminology made us all more resistant to change, not because of any dislike for the sem-I’s, but more because our experiences and knowledge was being forcefully transformed through an American influence aboard a British-built



SSK 73-HMCS/m Onondaga 1967

submarine that came as a result from superior decisions ashore. It all just didn't make sense. Personally, I was to find these "O" boats a cinch and where everything and its positioning was basically similar to the old A's, I managed to play the game and re-qualify in just three weeks. To this day however, I'll also never forget that final "walk-through," for it didn't demand answers to questions so much that it provided me with more of a pay attention "Cook's Tour" with the XO, the examiner.

'Nuff said about this new Canadian submarine business as I looked about the room for experience beyond that of the junior rates . . . where it seemed a little shallow here and there. Had it not been for that junior rank experience, we'd have been goners so it seemed. The mystery was starting to explain itself. Although short at the senior rates' level and inexperienced in a few of the wardroom offerings, the Captain . . . was in many an experienced opinion . . . priceless. He was hard-nosed, down to earth, rough and ready, and very tolerant to his own kind. He was experienced, smartly witty and humourous, intelligent and a master in submarine tactics. A man's man indeed. You felt good with him and he would never ridicule good potential. If you didn't show potential, you could deservedly stand by for heavy rolling. He was LCdr "Geoff" Meek, who among the First Block Draft of Canadian submariners as a Sub-Lieutenant in 1954 and former skipper in the Pompey Squadron's HMS/m *Artful*. In many minds in the weeks to follow, he was to hold us all together through his brevity. You had to tune in on his timely "wink and smile" when things might have gone wrong, which told the beholder of a scolding and a possible rap around the lugholes. The flicker in the message was: "Don't take it so serious lad! Jus' don't let it fukkin' happen again! Alright?" His witticism, confidence and cocky independence is aptly described in what had occurred in *Onondaga*'s recently completed work-up.

About caps and hats...

On a typically grey and dreary Scottish day, the serenity of the head of the Gare Loch predominated as the shadows of trees and hills spread across the water toward the boat. *Onondaga* was waiting for the "James Bond" to appear around the bend from the north and at their pleasure, Captain Sea Training (CST) and his staff would barrel around the corner as if Goldfinger, Dr No and Miss Money Penny were in a collective hot pursuit at forty knots. With time on their hands, the boat sat patiently waiting for the shit to hit the proverbial fan.

As the staff would eventually board, we would expect they would start off with a fire on board “the Bond” herself. Nothing to do with the submarine but instead, a typical Brit’ way of examining the boat’s initiative of putting out an alongside fire and saving the dishevelled occupants of a private yacht in the interest of the tax-paying public. In anticipation, the lookout, the OOW, and the skipper named Meek, stood on the bridge patiently waiting for things to happen and in the stillness of the air, the expected distant drone of the “James Bond’s” twin engines.

With a yawn and a couple of under the breath expletives describing the character and tardiness of the infamous sea-trainers, LCdr Meek slid from his perched position on the bridge platform and over to the voice-pipe that led to the control room below.

“Control room!” he summoned. “Control room” came the reply from the helmsman. “Control room. This is the Captain . . . Send up one nine-millimetre pistol with a loaded magazine.” “Send up one nine-millimetre pistol with a loaded magazine. Roger sir.” came the reply.

Within a few moments, permission was sought for LS Fred Glover, the fore-endey, to proceed to the bridge with the weapon and ammunition as directed by Father. Fred, on arrival at the bridge quickly handed the weapon and clip to the captain with the usual reminders that the safety catch was on and that the chamber was empty.

The captain then engaged the clip, removed the safety latch, and immediately began to fire off shots at the occasional sea gull that whizzed around and soared at speed near the boat. Much unlike a “Bisley marksman,” he fired repetitious and timely shots at these far-spaced targets and with growing frustration, was down to his last round and hadn’t downed a shite hawk yet. He then removed his peaked cap and held it away from himself, gazing at the anchor and oak leaves adorning the badge. He took aim and fired a hole right through it and replaced the cap upon his head that followed with a satisfied smirk of accomplishment.

Geoff Meek ebbed with cockiness when presented with occasions not equal to common sense or in one case, of visible sexual expression. It was explained by the XO one day while giving his account of a sign of esprit de corps that existed in the boat. All of the crew were wearing self-purchased navy-blue hats of the ball cap variety, which displayed uniformity to the onlooker and also an impression of cohesion. His comment to the captain was: “Sir! I am so pleased that the crew have by their own initiative, chosen to wear “blue hats.” I have thought about this considerably, and would like to recommend that officers follow suit in a show of support and motivation by wearing “brown hats.” The captain

glared at the XO and reacted emphatically, “Are you for real? I’m not gonna wear a fukkin’ brown hat!”

“One day . . . an admiral!”

There was another experienced officer aboard *Onondaga* who pushed to make it all work and who had tons of respect from everyone that surrounded him. He was now the Operations Officer in the name of Lt. Peter Cairns, who I had not ran into since Malta aboard *Orpheus* in 1965. He was pleasurable and modest, and sharply intelligent who always saw things on the lighter side through his confidence in submarines. Lt. Cairns, “Has the makin’s of an admiral one day!” . . .we would often affirm around the ‘tot table.’ Funny how lower-deckers know these things.

Back to warm waters

Finally, we sailed south for Maple Spring ‘68 exercises, and so that I was to feel like part of the crew, I was of course duty the last night in. That meant there’d be an operational charge before sailing and it promised to be a very long day. The charge went on at 0300 and by harbour stations at 0700, the watch came out to relieve us. We could look forward to what was left for breakfast and scrubbing’ out the mess by the time harbour stations had fallen out. Then it was diving stations to catch a trim and then play fires, failures, floods, and air bursts until the skipper was happy with everything. All over by twelve noon, everybody else had had their tot and dinner and then turned in, and of course our watch is back out in the engine room for the “twelve til’ two.”

Dress of the Day - for Trot Sentries

We got alongside at St. George’s in Bermadoo on the way to the Caribbean. Because we were standing calendar watches, of course, now I was duty first day in. Was I ever going to get ashore? There would be a long 12 hour “equalizing charge” that night and for the meantime, I was also going to cane the forenoon as trot sentry on the casing. Then came another lovely surprise. In all the time I had ever stood trot sentry in submarines, the ‘rig of the rag’ was typically, submarine jerseys and bell-

bottoms or if we were in warmer climes, blue shorts and white fronts. Not in the RCN however. I was quick to find out that the rig was not only full uniform with blue jean collar, but also the addition of belt and gaiters. That meant you had to scrounge around to try to find a pair of boots as well. Well, like a good matelot, there were ways that came to mind that might rid of this over-ceremonious requirement in very unceremonious surroundings. Parade boots were easy to deal with because nobody had any aboard anyway. The problem was wearing the webbing. There were only two complete sets of belts and gaiters on *Onondaga*'s gunner's store inventory. What ever shall we do if for some perplexing reason, there was no matching pair of gaiters? Wearing just one gaiter was out of the question.

As I went up the hatch to go on trot in "full uni" (negative lanyard), I was wearing black shoes. In my hand were two left-hand gaiters that by the time had reached the casing, suddenly and accidentally slipped from my grasp, bounced off the tanks and unfortunately, went over the side.

A short time later, Coxswain Dave Russell, a "birthright sold" Yorkshireman, lumbered onto the casing to see that all was well when immediately he said, "Brown! Yore out of the "dress of the day" for trot sentry. Where's yore belt and gaiters?" Confidently, I glared back at the swain's inquisitive eye and said, "Oh yeah 'swain! Didn't ya' hear? Can't seem to find any left-handed gaiters 'swain. Can't go on trot with only one gaiter, can I 'swain?" At that, Dave shot down below and quickly re-appeared with a white belt and the two right-handed gaiters and said, "Here Brown you schemin' fukkin' bilge-rat! Put these bawstards on." Well didn't I look a prize in full rig and two right-handed gaiters on top of a pair of scruffy old steamin' shoes.

Later in the day, two of the hands were ordered to dress in diving gear and carry out the big search. Any other day, the water was turquoise and crystal-clear with a white sandy bottom. On this day however, the left-hand gaiters just couldn't be located in the abnormally cloudy and low-visibility of the harbour at St. George's.

Highly flammable diesel fuel

Everyone or anyone who has ever been just slightly involved in submarines knew Bob Mizuik. He was a perpetual fixture through more than three decades. Without anyone realizing, it was almost like Bob was part of the submarine qualification package that if you didn't run across

him somewhere in your training time, you just didn't qualify in submarines.

During the springboard exercises, we were just about to stop snorting and go deep when the periscope OOW sighted a Sea King helo from *Bonaventure* ditch into the Caribbean. The aircrew got out and into their liferaft and moments later, we surfaced to rescue them. Along with the crew we retrieved their equipment and liferaft safety items.

A day later, after the aircrew had returned to *Bonnie*, a very curt message arrived onboard demanding return of the equipment. None was to be found, due to the fact that a flea market had been conducted in the fore ends after the rescue which featured items for sale such as helmets, escape knives, heliographs, shark repellent, life jackets, and even a life raft. That all went for the sale price of varying numbers of tots by the lads in the fore ends.

It was during that same patrol later that a green grenade became faulty and Bob carried out a misfire drill. He had retrieved the smoking grenade from the SSE and ran forward with it to discard it between and below the torpedo tubes. Suddenly the grenade in Bob's hands went off, filling the fore ends with smoke while the baseplate ricocheted off his knee. His body was now covered in the grenade's chemical that by design, purposely ignites when sea-water activated.

Later, he was medevac'ed by helo to *Bonaventure* sick bay where immediately, the medical staff felt that the first thing we should do with this airy submariner is give him a bath. They did. Now here was Bob sitting in the bathtub flailing away at these thousands of little fires upon his bod' while the M.A.'s screamed, "What have they got in that diesel oil?"

We got into a few ports during the exercises that year. Charlotte Amalie in the V.I.'s, was a memorable time where we drew alongside the old U.S.N. Ordnance jetty on the sem-I "gilly" guppies, *Sea Robin* and *Trutta*. At the head of the jetty was an open-air bar where everybody headin' ashore just had to stop in and work out who was who and where were we goin' over a 'cuba libra' or a 'Schlitz.' It became such a good watering hole that it reminded us all of a good place to drain down. . .so we dubbed it "Snort Drain 3." The legitimate and preferable "# s 1 and 2 snort drains" being the integral sea water drain system in the submarine used in preparation for running the engines while dived. Our Sem-I run ashore oppos were so taken with the name that we're told that when they got back down in their boats, they started to refer to their hot-piping exercises as "snortin'" instead of "snorkellin." Go figure!

Rocks and pebbles take on new roles

On day two of the visit, a bunch of us headed to the Morning Star Beach resort where the story went that the bathing clientele there were very approachable. We arrived and put on our swimsuits and between the lot of us, not much money could be mustered for a round of wets at the beach bar. At that bar from a distance, we noticed that these “approachables” weren’t good looking girls, but instead, a whole gaggle of men. A whole gaggle of men at a beach bar meant only one thing to a bunch of diesel-y smellin’ submariners, so plan B went into immediate action. We quickly stuffed the fronts of our trunks with handfuls of nice sized rocks, while Griff, being his irresistible self, decided instead to stuff ‘em down the back of his bathing suit. “What’s he up to now?” was the question to which he quickly declared, “I called for a damp...and followed through!”

Well it didn’t take long for these “men” to notice us as we strolled back and then forth on the beachfront just once. They beckoned with flailing arms as someone in the rear said, “Hard ‘a port guys! It’s dippin’ - in grippo time.” We lulled the rest of the day at others’ expense while Griff had a hell of a time trying to sit on his barstool comfortably.

The visit

The trip then continued and *Onondaga* went alongside USNAVSTA *Roosevelt Roads*. We were greeted by the Squadron Commander who came aboard. We wondered what was up when he had commandeered the C.O.’s cabin with the invitation to receive requestmen. Some of the boys found service in submarines had become very distasteful for many reasons and it was a welcomed opportunity to air their personal opinions to the man in over-all charge. Later that day as *Onondaga* backed out from her berth at *Roosey*’, our Johnny Baird, a killick stoker was standing on the jetty in full blues with his kit . . .and heading home. Whatever went on in that C.O.’s cabin that day is still a mystery. No one ever saw Johnny Baird again.

Things just weren’t going right somehow. Our tot times continued however there seemed to be something slipping away. We were boisterous, but confident. We were noisy, but confident. We were shit chuckin’ and still confident . . .all of the ingredients that assured good submarine sailors whether they were up on the roof or at 300 feet . . .one thing still prevailed that with our sanctity, we could still officially surround the rum fanny not

ever feeling paranoia and the threat of a senior someone encroaching on our privileged time . . . those precious moments feeling good about each other and our profession, one self- chosen.



*1968 - Tot time - Onondaga's after ends
l. to r. Paul Renner, Bob Evans, author, Billie Bradshaw, Griff,
Cliff Killam...background Knobby Walsh, Wayne Severin, John Butler*

All this somehow was beginning to erode and something about it all said that change in the navy was coming sooner than any of us would expect. The trip continued and the life, and the air around us was very much like those

familiar Singapore standards, except it was a little cleaner. Although the sea temperature was about ten degrees less than equatorial waters, air conditioning was always shut down to curb noise, and continuous high humidity prevailed with little relief. The ambient state of the boat when dived was about 105 degrees F at 100% humidity which usually ensues from where I can recall seeing a thermometer suspended between the exhaust groups that read 135. Some things had improved though. The nylon mess curtains once used to wipe yourself down on the old A-boats, now in O-boats, had progressed to a material that was far more absorbent. . .but just as hummy if not more. There were many more "railway" fans throughout the boat but everybody seemed to have them aimed in one

direction, with the add-on of, “Don’t move it!” When you were off watch and doing a snort, standing anywhere near the forward side of engine room bulkhead door found you in the midst of a huge flow of cooler, fresh air galloping from “S” tank in the ACS, and up into the engine room. A downer though was that although pirate gear was still acceptable, it meant that in steamin’ the donk shop, it had to include rolled-down sleeves because of the high-temperature distilled water rails and multitudes of exhaust bends that surrounded the engines. I suppose it’s best explained that unlike Vickers’ engines in the old A-boats, A.S.R.’s were indirectly cooled and when shut down, encased heat would exude from the engines’ mass and wildly surge through the submarine like an invisible wall of red-hot gas. The only relatively cooler spaces were the remote fore and after ends, as a result of those compartments being void of larger heat-producing machinery and consoles.

The birth of “The Dirty Dozen”

When we got back to Halifax in April, news came that they were looking for volunteers to join *Okanagan* in the closing stages of her build in Chatham dockyard and ensuing sea trials and work-ups in Faslane. I was to be back to YewKay within a week, and it would be several months before the boat would arrive in Halifax. There were twelve of us scraped up from *Ojibwa* and *Onondaga* and we quickly became known as “The Dirty Dozen” . . . whose adjective described more than just personal hygiene. I was detailed ‘in charge’ of the draft and the stories surrounding that lot are bawdy to great extent, while just too many voids are among them.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HMCS/m Okanagan "EX IMO MARI AD VICTORIUM" (From the depths of the sea to victory)

As "The Duz" joined the crew in Chatham, it seemed that collectively, this was the culmination and the last of RCN personnel to serve in boats in the YewKay. Canadian personnel were pulled out of every last nook and hidden cranny that *Niobe* and F.A.D.O. drafting had deemed them as an integral asset toward any benefit of the Royal Navy's submarine service. It was difficult to muster a complete crew of seasoned and qualified submariners from what was left after *Ojibwa* and *Onondaga* had returned home getting the lion's share of the people available. The truth was that there were insufficient numbers to man three submarines because of recent and unexpected attrition.



The coxswain was a chap by the name of Ross Webb...and it seemed that he was "a real bastard." He had previously sailed in several RN submarines and was one of the original drafts in the mid-fifties. However, his methods and ways were very much unlike what any of us had been used to with coxswains in submarines. Instead, he came across as if he were the MAA on the *Bonnie*, the Chief "whittler" from C.V.D., a parade G.I. from Whale Island and a Surgeon Commander. . . all rolled into one.

How heavy is a swivel vice?

The Chief ERA seemed to be of a similar cut insofar as his personality was concerned, however his method of "take-charge," was one which I had also never encountered before. The first job he ever gave me was on day one when I met him in the E.O.'s office. "So, you're Brown are ya?" He asked conclusively. "They tell me you were the outside killick aboard *Aeneas*. Well you got the job here too and I've got an outside job for ya' right now. Pick up that vice and follow me down the boat, al' right?" he assumingly declared in his very Belfast paddy accent. CPO1 Sam Jennings pointed to a swivel vice, a mechanical implement in the weight order of about 30lbs....that was evidently destined for installation on the donk shop

work bench in the boat's engine room. "Where's the boat Chief?" I inquired cheerfully as I could, immediately confused that I've been told I'm outside staff and not engine room. "Down the 'yard in #2 graving dock. It's about a mile's walk from here." Well after we arrived on the dockside, the only gangway aboard was via the fore casing which meant that I had to wrestle with this vice by humpin' it around the fin catwalk to get it to the after casing...to where the donk shop hatch was open. The catwalk had just enough room for one foot at a time, walking sideways. That was a struggle but nothing near as the ache and strain of trundling a mile with this thirty-pound deadweight at the low port. When I got to the hatch opening, a crane hook just happened to appear over my head...ready to hook on and lower it. The chief tiff then said with his gold tooth grin, "How's that for your first outside job Brown?"

The truth was of these two key individuals, as we were to find out in time, is that they were just as human and fun-loving as anyone else. It seemed though, that through Ross's insistence, they were not going to illustrate that *Okanagan* was to be a slack boat . . .just one that was going to be better than the two forerunners.

The Super 'O's

HMCS/m *Okanagan* was the most glamorous and up-to-date O-boat ever built in her time and was sadly, the last ever submarine (and vessel) to be built in Chatham dockyard's long history of submarine construction. She was to be a "Super O," or in some corners a "22," the term(s) applied to the improved Oberons that began with the building of *Onondaga*. A brief account of the development of the Canada's three Oberons begins with the laying down of the R.N.'s last "Oberon," HM Submarine *Onyx* in Chatham. By 1964, Canada was anxious to commence a construction program where at the time, the Royal Navy was as equally anxious in getting an improved Oberon class submarine together for its own purposes. As *Onyx* was laid down and to be built as a standard Oberon, she was quickly transferred to the RCN and would be re-named *Ojibwa*. A second HMS/m *Onyx* was then to be laid down at Cammell-Laird's in Birkenhead as a Super O, or "22 class" (side number designated SS 22). Following completion of *Ojibwa*, *Onondaga* and *Okanagan* were to be Chatham 'yard's first crack at building 22's while the Australian Navy paralleled with their six submarines construction program in Scottish Yards. Hence,

the RCN and Canada were to end up with one standard Oberon 09 class and two 22's, the latter more commonly, the "Super O's."

Upstairs . . . in a pub

After getting my IN-routine done, it was time to get ashore and look for digs. There were two pubs in downtown Chatham which also included Bed & Breakfast. "The King's Arms" was well known as it had already hosted a crowd from *Onondaga*, who of course had since commissioned and departed for Halifax. Quite a few of the guys were already holed up in there but because of other watchful eyes in determining what pub signs also displayed those three welcoming words, several of us got to stay at "The Two Sawyers" . . . just outside the dockyard gate. The gaffers of both pubs were both named Harry so when it became necessary to clarify what publican we were referring to, their nom de plumes became "Harry Two Sawyers" and "Harry King's Arms."

So up in the pub lived a bunch of us. C2LT Bob Churcher, Terry Wyss, an ex-RN'er, Bill Layden and Davie Brannen our cooks, and electricians Paul Renner, Sandy Sadler and Andy Lovasi, all bolstered with two stokers named Buster and Griff...from Singapore days. Griff and I lived in the same room sharing a double bed and that was sometimes pretty scary. Out in the main gangway of the pub's upstairs, was a communal head and washplace. It was important that in order to swing through the heads each and every morning, meant that timing and interval was so very important. We all came to surface at varying times to meet the availability but on one morning, Griff wasn't in too much of a hurry. It was his turn for his 4-minute scrape and de-scale when he said to me, "Buster! You go ahead and I'll go after you. The mob has started a 5BX program and I gotta do a little work-out with my bullworker before I dhobey up." I understood that the navy was turning around and trying desperately to get all the hands "back in shape" and by 1968, were issuing body self-conditioning instructions to help in this endeavour and in the course of events, have those interested in signing out for tools to help you get conditioned. Griff's was in the form of a bull-worker, a spring-loaded device that required the user to flex his upper body and arms in trying to extend and compress it until your arms felt like they were dropping off. So unsuspectingly, I grabbed my shaving gear and trotted off to the washplace. Then, I realized I had the wrong towel and headed back to the room to get the right one. The door was slightly ajar as I had left it but just as I was going to swing

into the room, there he was . . . havin' a fixer-upper from the night before from his duty-free jug issue while the bull-worker lay idle on the bed.

A lot of capers went on at "Harry Two Sawyers." There was a time when we got into a real heavy darts match with the lads from the nuke boat *Warspite*. Like proper Brits', about a dozen of them showed up at the pub all dressed in their gray flannels and "We Come Unclean" black blazer badges. Despite they being Muppets, they were also in refit and the opportunities to get a dhobey sesh and shower before heading ashore were pretty remote. Like us, we had just returned from the dockyard and there just wasn't a chance to get one in either. After a couple of rounds of darts in getting the teams established, some character decided that we should all take off our shoes and socks and chuck 'em in a pile in the middle of the lounge floor. Off they came and a pyramid of holey, hummy socks and oily soled shoes quickly arose from the deck with the owners all standing in a large circle, ties done up, and standing to attention...in bare feet. Then somebody declared loudly: "**Last one with a pair of shoes and socks on ...GETS THE ROUND IN!**" Turmoil and panic ensued as two dozen guys plunged into the pile for any shoe and any sock. *Warspite* got the round in, but we wondered who had the rottenest feet. Oh boy...did that chuck up!

Ship's Dances...

Ship's dances were one of the most popular events that ships' companies' welfare committees would elect to do at least once a year. It was probably the only opportunity that a total gathering would occur that included the wives and girlfriends and the entire ship's crew from the captain right down to the youngest O.D. It had to be shaped around the ship's/submarine's operating schedule and of course, not everybody would get to attend remembering that a full duty watch had to stay aboard and 'mind the old girl.' The dances always began with shy politeness and quiet courtesy but after a few tipples and the band really got going, everybody started getting up the nerve to dance with the chief's wife and the officers' ladies. Some interesting and entertaining events would start to develop: Talkin' shop, horoscope readin' from some old 3 badge killick with the jimmy, trappin' somebody else's girlfriend, spot prizes, elimination dances, and of course, door prizes.

“Double-deckers” aren’t big enough

To help in celebrating *Okanagan*’s commissioning and HM Dockyard, Chatham having constructed its last submarine, a ship’s dance was laid on in a spacious hall within the dockyard gates. Along with the entire crew with wives and girlfriends and the dockyard workers, many dignitaries attended that evening and along with the Captain and his ship’s company were the Flag Officer Medway, Canadian naval representatives, the Admiral of the dockyard, dockyard superintendents and foremen. It was to be a gala evening with the opportunity to have pictures taken, all of us in square rig and socializing with the admiral...an occasion that was extremely rare in those days, especially within the confines of the RN, let



*Hosted by the Builders, HM Dockyard Chatham,
gentlemen of submarine Okanagan pose with Vice Adm. Parker*

alone the RCN. Presentations and gifts were passed to the Captain that befitted the occasion. A scale model of the boat in a glassed enclosure, a ceremonial scrap book, a chrome-finished “Frawley” light, (the captain’s personal navigation aid for the chart table) a badge incorporating a Churchill crown and many other gifts that were suited for the poop deck. (the poop deck gets its name from the Roman word “puppies,” where

effigies of saints (puppets) were placed in that part of the ship when launching)

The night wore on where our ladies were splendid, presentations were made while being treated to a fine dance and plenty of finger foods. Later on and by the time the bars were shut and the band packed up, sorrowfully it was time to leave and head back to “Harry Two Sawyers.” Being of the type that when you’ve had such a memorable time, it becomes most important to appropriate a souvie’ that best helps one to remember the event...so high up on the dockyard social hall wall, was mounted a six foot in diameter, *Okanagan’s* ship’s badge that depicted *Ogopogo*...the Canadian version of the Loch Ness monster who better prefers to do his mythical and elusive diving and surfacing in Lake Okanagan in the “Rockies” of British Columbia. Well that came easy as a few of the lads boosted I up to unhook it and proceed out of the dance hall. With this “half-inch plywood” illustration of gallant heraldry upon my back, we all meandered through to the dockyard gate where just outside, the last double-decker bus of the night was about to depart. Everybody got aboard for the quick half-mile journey to the bus stop one street adjacent to “Harry Two Sawyers” when I realized that this lump of lumber wouldn’t fit through the bus platform. The conductor said, “I s’pose yer goin’ to haf’ ta get off and ‘oof it Jack...or leave it ‘ere!! Kawn’t see ‘ow yer gonna get it aboard, eh mate!” he mused. Well, all that did was make “I” persevere all the more. I remained on the bus platform as a paying rider and suspended the prize with energized determination, by holding it with two arms outside the back of the bus while the guys held on to me. When we arrived at the pub, we quickly suspended it from one of Harry’s high and bare walls in the public bar for all to see. When we left Chatham, the badge remained as a fond reminder of our stay to Harry and his wife Pat. One wonders that if the pub is still there several decades later, *Ogopogo* is sure to still be there too.

The Executive Officer fills in

Lt. “Harvey” Waddell was the commissioning XO in *Okanagan*. Harvey was an endeared and “faithful to the cause’ submariner, who during his single days, had the adventurous spirit and tenacity of any man in the submarine. His style was encouraging as a senior lieutenant whose pleasant air and constant smile in his eyes made us all feel very comfortable and a desire to please him. He was a submariner’s officer who

was very intelligent but like any of us, would bungle at the best and most inappropriate times.

About a month before the commissioning of *Okanagan*, Flag Officer Medway, Vice-Admiral Parker, had invited all commanding officers from ships in harbour to attend a formal evening dinner at the Admiral's residence in HMS *Pembroke*. As the captain was not available in Chatham, Harvey was to attend on his behalf. During the afternoon preceding the dinner, he decided to partake in some light social activity at the Dockyard Managers' Club in the dockyard. It was a long afternoon but he finally got away in time to get up to his inboard cabin in the wardroom and have a little kip before getting ready for the evening dinner. The coxswain, aware that Harvey had been having a tippie decided to stay within range in order to ensure that *Okanagan's* representative arrived on time and in good mind. With an hour to go, Ross went to the wardroom to give him a shake. Harvey of course was extremely tired from his afternoon's activities so Ross thought it best for him to sleep a little longer while he pressed his uni, got out a clean shirt, and spit shined his shoes. Then with little time left, he ushered the groggy XO into a shower, dressed him, and drove him to the Admiral's residence in his own car to arrive exactly on time.

At dinner, the Admiral, his several commanding officers and Harvey, all sat down to light conversation enjoying a sherry or two. In time, the stewards entered the dining room with starters that featured a large tray of hot soup all round. As napkins were spread and each of the diners quietly sipped at their soup, the conversation began to slant toward ships, surface encounters and other gray topics and Harvey's uncommon interest waned while he was left to himself. No doubt of wardroom circles that as he was the only Lieutenant among three ringed commanders and up, certainly contributed to his social isolation. In his ennui, his eyes became heavy and his mind drew dormant as his head drooped closer and closer to the bowl of steaming hot soup . . . and then in. That was it. Out of the soup came Harvey with bits of carrot and potato adorning his eye brows and nose accompanied by a faceful of dripping hot soup all over the starched table cloth and his lap now bare of the napkin that had earlier slipped to the floor. "A-a-a-a-a-h!" he cried, as the admiral quickly positioned his napkin to his lips looking bewildered as the surrounding diners' faces grew as pale as the tablecloth. Harvey, who wasn't a two hankey officer, foggily tried to determine his numerical degree of burn injury while dabbing his face with shirt cuffs and the table cloth. "Pu-lease excuse me admiral!" was his reaction, "I didn't get much sleep last night. Very busy down the boat these days, I'm sure you understand!"

We often wondered how Nigel dealt with Harvey over that one for Nigel certainly endeared Harvey. They were close friends and extremely good submariners that had a one, two punch especially in *Okanagan*.

“The standing charge”

It was closing time one Sunday afternoon at “Harry Two Sawyers,” and a whole gaggle of us were preparing to get on the train at Gillingham and head for “Smoke.” Five of the guys were to be in *Dolphin* the next morning to re-qualify in the Escape Tank, and because we were all “full of it” that afternoon, another nine of us thought we’d go along as far as London just for moral support.

Tug was a little tired and when we got on the train, we put him up on the luggage rack so he could have a power nap, be out of the way and without our disturbing him. We had a jug wrapped in newspaper from somebody’s NAAFI issue and by the time we got to Strood just two stations later . . .the jug had a south wind in it. . .warm and dry! The run was on, and the idea of nine joining five, so the latter wouldn’t get lonely, seemed to be a good reason for such a deployment. By the time we got to Victoria Station, we headed for the Mucky Duck (White Swan pub) in Bayswater Rd. After that boozier shut at 2300, it was time to move on . . .five tank re-quals for Waterloo station and the last train to Pompey. . .and the nine other gibbering fools back to Victoria station for Chatham.

We fell in on the roadway like the smartest of civilians . . .turned right, and marched down Bayswater to get to the Lancaster Gate tube to get us to our stations. All the while, we kept in step and whistled to the tune of “Colonel Bogey on Parade.” When we arrived in front of the tube station, we very smartly . . . “Dis... missed!” We hurried down to the platform to find that the next trains wouldn’t be along for a long while. What a boring thought, so quickly it was decided to throw on an A- boat, standing charge (starboard) as we needed to ‘keep the box up.’

Five stokers, the steward, and two fore endees fell in on the platform facing inboard and paced apart. They would be the 8 pistons. Next to #8 and facing for’d, Griff crouched down and coiled up. . .he would be the engine clutch. The two electricians stood aft of the pistons and the clutch and faced inboard. By interlocking three fistful arms, they would be the three open breaker switches as sited on an A-boat’s propulsion switchboard. One had to have his fly down in the event that chief electrician Charlie Hillier might need to shunt the field regulator when the

charge went on. That left Lloyd Blagdon and me to start the engine. . .me on the air start and Lloyd stuck in the centres, swingin' on the muffler valve. As we had assembled, numerous and curious on-lookers who were also waiting for a train, assembled in a circle with looks of amazement and wondering what this shower was up to.

Oblivious to the audience, orders were passed which saw Lloyd shutting the explosion cocks after the slow-time blow round . . .Griff engaging himself into the armature by laying on the platform. . .and Charlie going over his switchboard to ensure that all of his equipment was safe to operate. I hollered out, **“Stand...by...muffler!”** . . .then miming the spray valve and air start levers. Lloyd swung open on the muffler and when done, gave an assuring eye that it was opened wide.

“Shwoosh-puff-thunkcha-cha-thunk. . .boom, vroom, pow’ came the noises from 8 pistons . . . and the engine finally fired through witness of them, slow at first, then bobbing up and down as per the firing order. Each of the human pistons provided the accelerating din as this fine-tuned engine at last, achieved the wound-on demand of 400 RPM. Charlie made his breakers . . . shunted his field regulator, then sharply passed a “thumbs up’ to the engine platform that the load was on. “Chugga-chugga, chugga-chugga, chugga-chugga-chug!”

Suddenly, this uniformed cockney in a peaked cap came barrelling down the station platform, swinging his arms and hollering demands. He was the stationmaster who had no regard for engine room safety nor the upstart initiatives of these stalwart civvy-clad submariners. “Wot the bleedin’ hell d’you lot fink yore up to any ‘ow? Go on . . . ‘op it! Clear out tha’ lot aya! Get off my platform!”

Civilians just don’t understand the importance and the organizing it takes to get fourteen guys to put on a standing charge on a subway platform in London. London Transport would have been pleased to know that the inquisitive and confused crowd on the platform was being entertained. Had we instead, decided to do “a periscope attack on an aircraft carrier” routine, might have been easier for the stationmaster and the civvies to understand that we were just a bunch of submariners . . . waiting for the train.

Aldis lamps

By May, *Okanagan* was ready for sea trials which meant that we’d sail for the Guzz areas in the channel with civvies aboard and flying the “red duster. It was a time to do the boat’s first “at-sea” dive that was to be

followed by snorting trials. There was an air of energy and enthusiasm among the mix of complement consisting of the boffins, foremen, maties, and minimized crew. To now, everyone was pleased with the boat's initial performance as we had completed the basin dive, a measured mile, and a surface full-power run. It was then left to do the snort trials after a quick drop into Devonport dockyard for some harbour-acceptance trials.

Into the second evening of passage at about 1900, we were rounding the bottom of the Spithead at Pompey on a westerly course, had just



HMCS/m Okanagan-Makers' Trials in the English Channel May 1968

finished doing some Wright & Logan photos, and that would be it for the day. We were steaming an SOA of 10 kts and the donks' were running like sewing machines, indicated by the economical haze that floated effortlessly into the calm, warm air of this summer-like evening. The beautiful sunset that cast its dimming light across the flat sea became suddenly blocked by a huge shadow and it didn't take long to realize it was a 'carrier at anchor, waiting for entry into Pompey the following morning. It reminded me of the night we buoyed off Guzz because we weren't scheduled to go alongside until the following day. Like submarines, that's what "homeward bounders" does for you even in an aircraft carrier. She was quickly identified as *Eagle*, and as she sat there like a big fat behemoth

taking in the evening, she was probably oblivious of this little, poxy, insignificant, black shape about to pass under her stern.

Suddenly, things sprang into life as a huge signal light lit up her island. Immediately, word was passed to the captain below noting that a senior afloat pennant was at her mainmast. "*Eagle* is flashing sir!" Nigel hurried to the control room and picked up the tannoy. "What is she saying officer of the watch?" he appealed anxiously. The OOW replied, "She sez' "Good evening" sir!" In a panic, Nigel then turned to LCdr Al Kastener, the well-known PNO Electrical Officer of "the build" who was also in the control room. He said, "The signalman's on the bridge with the Aldis. What should I send back, Al?" Al scratched his head gently, looked at the deck for a brief pause and replied, "Thanks for the time and the weather report!" He did.

Our young "Smudge" Smith was the "bunting tosser" and as such, signalman have special priorities. His bunk was designated just outside the wardroom and close to the control room where he was supposedly to be, immediately available. Anytime the extraordinary and alarming pipe came through, "Signalman to the bridge!" . . . it was a mass emergency to the similarity of vehicles pulling over at the sound of sirens from ambulances and fire engines. Everybody would stand clear to allow our Smudge to get to the bridge quickly, and on his way up the tower, retrieve the portable Aldis signal lamp in the R.U. locker that was fitted there for quick access on the way up the tower to the bridge. Smudge, although relatively new to submarines, was not the type to rush too much and believed that haste made waste. Even when it came time to scrub out the W/T passage for rounds, he was rated at 4 t.p.h. (tiles per hour)

One night, we were in patrol routine in transit to another exercise area. At about 0300, the pipe came through requiring Smudge to get uptop in a hurry meaning he should have been there already. The steward, Tom Yeo, sleeping above him woke up instead. . . and shook him. "Hey Smudge! They woncha on the bridge, chop-chop!" Out of his pit he rolled in a daze. He put on his pants, jersey, boots, and then combed his hair believing that not like everybody else, it was unsanitary to turn in with your clothes on. Finally ready, he fumbled his way through the black-out curtains and into the darkness of the control room. The second OOW sighted him and said, "Ah-h-h Bunts. Hurry! They want you uptop!" Instead, Smudge kept going aft, everyone thinking he had to go into the W/T office for something. Then, instead of going left into the office, he turned right and dropped into #2 trap for a leak. After that, he went further aft, the small on-watch audience thinking that his aldis lamp must be in the motor room being

repaired or something. They found out, as he came forward a couple of minutes later, that he had only gone aft to wash his hands . . . the only one that ever did. Then he calmly said of the helmsman: "Permission for signalman on the bridge?" Everyone leered at him for being the only one other than the skipper who doesn't have to ask.

In months to follow, Smudge had sped up a little bit and we thought he'd seen the light. A visible confirmation of his conversion was his bandaged head. When looking up the conning tower for the sunlight one day, the boat rolled, the locker door opened, and the aldis lamp fell out and hit him right in the face.

Canada's answer to "Buckwheat"

Don "Whacker" Payne was a leading stoker who also came from Winnipeg, and by the time I had met him in *Dolphin* in 1963, I'm glad I hadn't met him in Winnipeg. He might have had me in juvenile court. Whacker went to submarine *Tiptoe* in the Pompey squadron at the same time as I joined *Andrew* in Singapore. I was not to run into him again until we finally linked up again in *Okanagan*.

Whacker was one of the zaniest characters in submarines. . . and without a doubt, there really was a lot of them. Whacker ranked way up there however, to the grade of "Canada's answer to the notorious submarine steward named "Buckwheat" Harris, who is later encountered in these pages.

The car that could. . .

In Chatham, Whacker had a car. . . a little, run down, 1958 Prefect. This car was different. It had no steering wheel. So, resourceful Whacker acquired a 12" 'crescent' wrench from engineering stores. By adjusting the wrench's jaws, he discovered that it would fit nicely upon the head of the car's steering column and with a 12" mechanical advantage, could handily steer the car with only one hand. He would often be seen flying around the dockyard running over stray moggies. He once made a "6 tot bet" that he could stuff as many as 15 guys into his car . . . and still drive it. He did. 3 guys in the trunk, 4 in the back seat, 3 across the rear floor, 4 in the front seat including Whacker . . . and one more on the roof. He drove the sagging

car about a quarter of a mile around the dockyard with his crescent wrench. When Whacker got his 6 tots, he shared them.

Give him room. . . “L” plate

A day or two after commissioning the boat, we were to sail to *Dolphin* to prepare for work-ups in Faslane. After fitting out completion at Bull’s Nose, No. 3 basin, the boat was now alongside the last quay leading from the dockyard into the River Medway and the Thames Estuary. It was a beautiful afternoon and many sad but proud dockyard workers stood on the jetty to watch the departure of the last submarine they would ever build. Earlier in the day, Whacker had scaled down to the duck’s-ass and attached an “L” plate on the stern section of casing. (In Britain, a red “L” on a white background serves as a warning to other car drivers that the operator is a “Learner,” and brand new at driving) Nigel the skipper, was not too pleased to find out after we had sailed, the mystery as to why the “dockies” were all amused and laughing so loudly on the quay.

The Chief “keeps his hand in”

At sea and alongside, Whacker was a hard-working stoker. So hard-working, that his steaming boots were worn through that you could see the steel toe-caps, a result of spending a lot of time rushing down and dragging his feet on hands and knees in the confined space behind the engines during flash-ups and shut-downs. As far as the Coxswain and Chief ERA were concerned, it was this laborious quality in any job in the submarine that served as the trade-off for some of his intolerable shenanigans. He was always carrying on, especially when times weren’t so joyous. Whacker had many games that he would play to keep boredom and monotony at bay in the engine room as well as the whole boat. A real schemer he was too, as he and Sam, the Chief ERA, was his target for getting’ even with.

We were alongside Faslane and the boat was doing a long equalizing battery charge. Whacker was on-watch in the engine room and was not looking forward to the long hours that lie ahead in getting the charge completed. There was no relief available until he saw Sam up forward slipping into #3 trap for a slash. When Sam backed out, Whacker whistled to catch his attention. He came to the bulkhead door and leaned through while Whacker shouted in his ear over the noise of the thundering donks.

“Hey Chief! Would ya’ do me a spell in the centers so I can go for a dump?” “Yeah. . .O.K. Whacker!” He replied, in his very Irish brogue. But don’t be long! I know you!” Whacker went forward. . .and never came back. He went ashore . . . leaving the Chief ERA stranded.

Two Germans in our midst

As a platform killick at sea, one of his jobs was in charge of the ballast pump. Characteristically, an O-boat’s pump position is fitted with a myriad of valves and gauges, a tannoy intercom, a large electrical starter box, flashing lights, a 3 foot lever, a pedal . . .and an operator’s stool. . .all this tucked into a tight corner and not impeding the main gangway through the engine room. Whacker had a leather helmet, goggles, gloves, and a scarf and came to self-appointed himself as “Vacka von Payne der Luftwaffe” . . .the Blue Max recipient “air ace” of WW1. Every time an order flashed that required the pump to run, he would go through his repertoire in order to move ballast water, actually believing within himself and convincing the onlooker, that he was piloting a Luftwaffe Fokker tri-plane. A motor started, gauges swung to life, lights came on, the altimeter registered, he shifted gears, swung on the steering wheel (valves) while guns went a blazing, his goggles donned, and scarf swirling as a result of the air rushing to the main engines. All this with the sound effects of dog-fights and mid-air explosions while confirmed reports of “kills” and fighter planes plummeting to earth came across the main intercom throughout the boat. Everybody including the captain, knew he was doing a heroic job.

Other times, while standing watch on the diving panel and in relative distance from the engine room, you could hear a distracting noise. Looking aft with a startle, close observation would reveal that a miniature periscope was being trained, just above the bottom lip of the engine room bulkhead door. Whacker had whittled a scaled, search periscope out of a broom handle. It was easy to imagine that he was on the other end of it while sprawled flat out on the donk-shop deck plates and he, hidden by the bulkhead frame.” Ve, insa undavassaseaboaten shall now entah Scapa Flow. . .to sink ze *Royal Oak!*”

“Ein kan’t zee. . .biddah, help ze professa!”

When he was ashore, his German heritage changed. He transformed into the unyielding, “Professa Vacka Von Payne,” chief scientist at the University of Munich. In portraying an individual of such intelligence, prestige, and importance, he would speak loudly in his broken German/English accent. To further convince his audiences, he would conservatively dress in a scruffy, leather-elbowed Harris Tweed jacket while sporting a colourful cravat . . .and a lens from a donk-shop flashlight that served as his monocle.

It was an early pub-closing, restricted Sunday evening in Helensbagels, and a bunch of us entered a hotel restaurant. We sat down to order our food. While waiting, the professor had the clientele as well as all the waitresses convinced that he had been assigned to a highly sensible and top-secret submarine project in Hawaii and that we, his accompanying but silent group were his assistants. He was doing very well and the surrounding people were engrossed with his explanations when suddenly, his monocle popped out and fell to the floor. He quickly stooped to his knees while alarmingly summoning his loyal assistants to join him in the search for the clear, almost invisible flashlight lens. We did . . .and out of concern and sympathy for the professor, diners from surrounding tables, and the waitresses . . . joined us on their hands and knees too.

“There’s a lotta dough in the bakery . . . and the restaurant business!”

Shortly after our arrival in Halifax a few months later, Whacker had opted to take release. He said that he was going to return to Winnipeg and settle there. I would very much miss my old friend Don, and promised that when I’d go back to Winnipeg on leave, I would certainly look him up. I did about a year later. Whacker was still the same. When I telephoned him, he said he had taken up a job at General Bakeries and working on the delivery trucks. When I asked him what sort of work, he replied in his ever-laughing way, “Doin’ maintenance of course. Everything below the axles!” By 1998, Whacker lived in Eureka Springs, Arkansas and he and his second wife had gone into a French restaurant business. He phoned me in Halifax (at 3:30 in the morning) while I was fast asleep. When he told me of the news, I asked him what his job was in the business. He replied in that familiar rat-a-tat giggle, “Wha’ d’ya think? Workin’ in the

back scrubbin' all the pots and pans of course!' God bless his jovial heart then...but by the year 2001, we had belatedly learned that Whacker had passed away of a sudden heart attack. What is the world like now, without our Whacker Payne?

Commissioning day, 22 June 1968

Commissioning day finally arrived and the boat was pristine due to the final tidying up and scrub-out by the dockyard cleaning ladies. These ladies were fascinating to watch for more reasons than just their appearance. They worked so hard and in very difficult and crowded conditions in order to get the submarine gleaming white and spotless after all the turmoil and activity to complete construction in time for the ceremonies. HMC ships *Cape Scott* and *Gatineau* had sailed from Halifax to be present for the event and oddly enough, the sail craft CNAV *Pickle* mysteriously appeared having done a one-way Trans-Atlantic passage to Belgium and now Chatham. After the commissioning, she was to return to Halifax aboard "*Great Scott*" upon her flight deck.

As luck would have it, the weather was not in our favour. Shortly after we officially boarded the boat for the first time, it began to pour with rain and continued to do so for a good two hours. It wasn't so bad for the rest of the crew, but as luck would have it, I caned the first ever duty watch as the first ever trot sentry on commissioning day and would rotate with Tug Wilson, who had the equal distinction as the first ever lower-deck trot sentry...that makes one ponder if there was any distinction for the two of us being detailed off for such an occasion. I was to find out many years later that Ross Webb wanted to ensure that no technical problems would emanate on this historic day and if there were, he had the right people aboard that could deal with them. Blush! Blush! thought Tug and I in those many years later for on that day, we gronked and gronked and cried "foul" on this rain-soaked day while the rest of the crew partied with commissioning cake and barrels of beer. "Never mind!" the duty watch thought. "They'll save some for us for later."

An hour had passed on trot when Tug came up top to relieve me. I went below, poured off a cup of coffee and sat down in this miniature cafeteria to have a cigarette while still dressed in full #1 uniform, white belt and gaiters, and my slicker. Moments later, I could hear voices and footsteps that indicated someone was coming down the adjacent accommodation space ladder. Suddenly, I'm confronted with a very senior Canadian Army

officer who was accompanied by his wife. As they stood at the bottom of the hatch shaking the rain water from themselves and folding their umbrellas, the officer gazed at me while not moving from my roost on a seat locker, slicker wide open with a cuppa and a fag going. "So, what branch do you belong to there, sailor?" he asked. "Engine room sir!" I replied. "Welcome aboard!" I said while making him feel so. He tittered a bit and then asked, "So what's your job?" I'm the outside killick sir!" I said when he looked at his wife in some form of disbelief. He then caught my eye again and asked, "So where do you go when the submarine dives?" I couldn't believe my ears as his wife then looked at him with a corny smile and said, "I think he means to say that he works in the engine room but he's not there now!" Finally, Lt. Mike Miller, the first ever Officer of the Day, poked his head through the bulkhead door and invited this confused and out of element couple to the wardroom where they belonged. Moments later, I heard a loud "pop", thinking, "Uh-oh!" "O-ring let go on an H.P. air line?" as a champagne cork came flying through the bulkhead door. I picked up the cork, put it in my pocket, scuppered my coffee, doused my fag and went back up to relieve Tug as more of the dignitaries came stepping aboard. "Lemme outta here. You got 'er Tug!"

So as the afternoon wore on, leave had been piped for the revellers and the tee-heein' dignitaries aboard finally got ashore all twitterin' from gin tonics and champagne. So that left all of the duty watch (except the trot sentries) to step ashore and square off the "Common room" on the jetty as it was called, where the beer and cake commissioning party was held. When we arrived, the sight was unbelievable. Unbelievable, not because of the mess everybody left behind, not because there was no cake left . . .who needed it? There wasn't a drop of beer left for the duty watch and this told a very new and different tale.

Trying to breathe in "the 60-foot lock"

We finally cleared Chatham and the estuary and sailed to Portsmouth. Whacker's "L" plate had since been removed. At Pompey, we were to prep for work-ups at the invitation of the *Dolphin* inboard staff who would "come down the boat" and offer their advice to get the boat right. Everything they advised on, just gave us more work to do. In addition to all the things they were "pickin' up," we would have to degauze the boat, do sonar tape training, spend some time in the Attack Teacher, and once again, re-qualify by doing the "Tank." Ten of us got into the "60-foot lock"

and were ordered to shut and clip the door behind us. After the chief instructor gave us a quick run-through on procedures, he started to flood up the lock. The space is no more than six feet in diameter with little deckhead, and as the water level quickly rose up our legs, the ambient pressure began to build and the air temperature and humidity in the steamy compartment increased dramatically. The instructor then quickly reviewed the procedure for free ascent and loudly ordered, **“For exercise. . .take a good. . .deep. . .breath!”** Suddenly, a huge, noisy, ugly, resounding, drawn out beer-fart resonated and bubbled around everybody in this hot, steamy, and squeaking-voice atmosphere. After plenty of a-a-ah’s, coughs, ughs, and gaggin’, everybody replied in loud unison, **“You gotta be fukkin’ jokin’!”** The chief instructor started to gag too, and then excitedly informed the tank-top officer, **“Emergency in the sixty-foot lock! Draining down and equalizing!”** We were drained down, opened up, and outta’ there in less than twenty seconds. “The Beast” had struck.

Rubber plug vs. docking down

Soon after the work-ups had begun, it became time to head into Rothesay for a little R & R but a big obstacle came in the way that ended getting resolved with just a little bit of know-how and a dose of common sense. As we secured to a buoy, we had been living with an internal leak on a depth gauge hull cock that needed repair. It meant that the only correct and safe way to repair it was by docking the submarine, or at a minimum, de-ballasting the boat so that the sea water entry point would be high enough out of the water. This was just too much to accept in order to just replace some rubber O rings. Lloyd Blagdon was our ship’s diver so he and I sat down to work out a plan. After all, heading back to Faslane and floating dock AFD 58 was not only expensive, but time consuming and labour intensive.

Disruptive too, to our work-up schedule and above all, an event that would otherwise displace a good run ashore in Rothesay. Lloyd was physically strong and in-exhaustible when it came to diving and without any hesitation he reasoned: “I’ll go over the side and hold a piece of rubber insertion right at the pepper pot inlet that supplies the hull cock. That oughta stop the flow!” I agreed, and with the aid of a pressure build-up into the forward torpedo compartment, this would curb any great amount of water ingress and allow me to haul out the cock and load it with four new O rings. We began, and with a 7 pound pressure build up, Lloyd on

the outside holding the insertion over the inlet, and a pre-determined series of “taps on the hull” signals, we had the cock refitted, the compartment equalized, and steamin’ ashore on a run in just over an hour.

Saturday, 29 JUNE, 1968

1130 - Completed Whiping, Flushing and
De-Berming.
1200 - Slipped and proceeded to sea.
Must make up 3 hours to
arrive Faslane in time.

A copy of a page from the Captain's Night Order Book handed to the author's wife by Nigel Frawley at the final de-commissioning of Okanagan 30 years later. The C.O.'s entries logged that we had sailed from Pompey 1200, 29 June 1968 and recounts of the activities into the following day 30th June, prior to arrival at Faslane for work-ups on 01 July. Note the elusive but informative postscript.

Sunday, 30 JUNE, 1968

2000 - Caught up and passed S.O.A.
2100 - Hit very thick fog off
Chicken Rocks in the Irish
Sea - Dog routine - 3 knots
for the rest of the night.
- Encountered much
shipping off Belfast and
Liverpool.
ALSO BIRTHDAY!
He's 27 and a fine leading seaman!

Tartan Tams

A week later while doing “noise runs” and “sonar performance signatures” in Loch Fyne, we had completed trials for the day and proceeded to the buoy at Inveraray at the top of the loch. Once we had doubled-up and secured, Ross piped leave. As per “the standard for a quick one-night run ashore,” a bunch of us jumped into uni-bags and washed at the rush to the wrists only. We smelled just great. Donk shop hand cleaner with a mix of Eau de Diesel is always sure to get some attention on a one-nighter. We jumped aboard the local PAS boat to ferry us ashore to the peace and quietness of this picturesque village . . . capacity, three “boozers.” We were to sample all three, starting with the lounge at the Inveraray Hotel and finally ending up in the pub called, The George. During this day in mid-summer, there was daylight until near midnight. It was now eleven, the glimmer of sundown still casting its light over the hills of the loch.

The publican had called “Time gentlemen please!” an hour before and was by now, desperately trying to get us to “**D-r-r-r-ink up gentlemen . . . please, please! The copper-r-rs ‘ll ‘ave ma licence!**” So along with his tedious and futile attempts to get rid of us, something about the pub’s several bar stools became increasingly appealing. The seat covers were of

a very colourful tartan and posed some kind of invitation. Imagination and initiative ran rampant. One of the guys plucked up one of these elasticised trophies from a stool and stuck it on his head. "Hey! What a great beret, and when I get back aboard, boy, what a steamin' hat!"

Now all garbed in tiddly new head dress, the lot of us finally poured ourselves out onto the still dusk-lit street of this quaint little hamlet and fell in on the roadway. It was to be much like we did in London, marching back to the tube station and the "Adventures of the Standing Charge." To the strains of Colonel Bogey, we whistled our way back to the jetty where the PAS boat stood waiting for her last run of the night to take us all back to the mooring. We were now poised as an elite band from "The Queen's Own 32 Inch Bell-Bottomed Scottish-Canadian Regiment," smartly garbed in blue-jean collars, lanyards, and Stewart tartan tams. But while in this still daylight late in the evening transit, we became obvious to the two local coppers who although hiding their smiles, provided personal escort back to the jetty while muttering, "Y'er no but thur-r-rteen wee asses. Ya' no shewd be dewin' this in the middle o' tha' night. It's 'leven o'clock ya' kno' and ye-r-r keepin' the townfolk awak'!"

Well, Harbour Stations came at 0630 the next morning and with the pipe came an un-routine add on. "**Harbour Stations . . . Harbour Stations! All compartments . . . make your reports! Bring all bar stool covers to the control room . . . NOW!**" To wake up and later discover that Nigel wasn't too pleased by getting told by the local constabulary who had boarded the PAS boat... "The publican at the George Inn is extr-r-remely upset sir-r-r! 'E insists that 'is bar-r-stool cover-rs be r-r-etur-r-ried at once or-rr we'r-re 'avin' ta lay char-r-ges sir-r!" The would-be steamin' hats were brought forward and surrendered to Ross Webb in the control room with nothing more said. We slipped from the buoy by 0700.

No surface contacts. Just trees

It was time for torpedo runs in Loch Long, the next loch over. Most remember the geographical vernacular; "The r-r-right hand edge of Ailsa Cr-r-raig bear-r-r-s. . . THAT!" and for every submarine that did a work-up in Scotland, the *James Bond*, Dunoon, Campbelltown, Rothesay, and Rona were familiar submarine household terms and Lochs Fyne and Long, of Inveraray and Arrochar, for sound range and "fish" trials were consistently weeks two and three of the work up. Nigel, the captain, was good at his work and was very skilled in periscope navigation and torpedo

attacks. Along with the aid of his navigational expertise, Lt. Mike Miller was constantly supporting him, assuring that our dived position was safe and smack centre in the middle of the narrow Loch Long. As we came to periscope depth, the forward periscope was raised and Nigel anxiously carried out a quick all-round look. "Mike!" he blurted in a startle. "Yes sir...a contact?" he responded. **"Yes! Trees. . .trees!"** declared Nigel.

"All" of the masts work better when they're desiccated

Still in Loch Long the next day, we ran with two-thirds of the crew. The task was centred on tube calibrations and discharging the test run Mk. 8 torpedo load. All that was needed from my end was the availability of H.P. air to the ring main for the purpose of torpedo firings. Predictably, it allowed that routine engineering maintenance could get done and for a change, it was a good time to take advantage of such a gift. As such, we, for a week, routinely headed back to the wall to take on another salvo for the following day. Griff had stayed inboard with the other third crew and as he came down the boat when we got alongside to reload for the following day, he approached me with an offering. "Hi Buster. I'm duty today! Got anythin' need doin'?"

I was still busy getting a few things done, and 'top of the shop' was getting the masts dried out [desiccated] because of the limited time to do so. As I was anxious to get inboard for a blow-down and de-scale and steam ashore, I quickly accepted his offer. I said to Griff, "I'm doin' a desiccate, and everything aft of the seaguard mast still has to be done."

Griff, being the pleasing sort and very experienced, hadn't worked this equipment for a while, and added to his jovial giddiness at times, presented a mild dilemma. But his pride overshadowed his assurance. When we turned to the next morning, doing sea checks for harbour stations and another torpedo run, Griff came by the diving panel where I asked him how he made out with the desiccating. He replied with a tossed look in his face, "I got the ECM and ALN masts done. . .but where in the hell are the fittin's on the snort mast?" To most, this question would seem a legitimate mystery. . .but ask any submariner if the huge volumes of moisture-laden air that come down the snort tube supplying the engines would leave sufficient moisture behind what a 2-psi air supply could dry out. But it's still not as bad as the E.O. caught in a smalley predicament when trying to please the captain: "Sir! Which periscope do you want desiccated after the forward one?"

Cleanest propellers in the submarine service

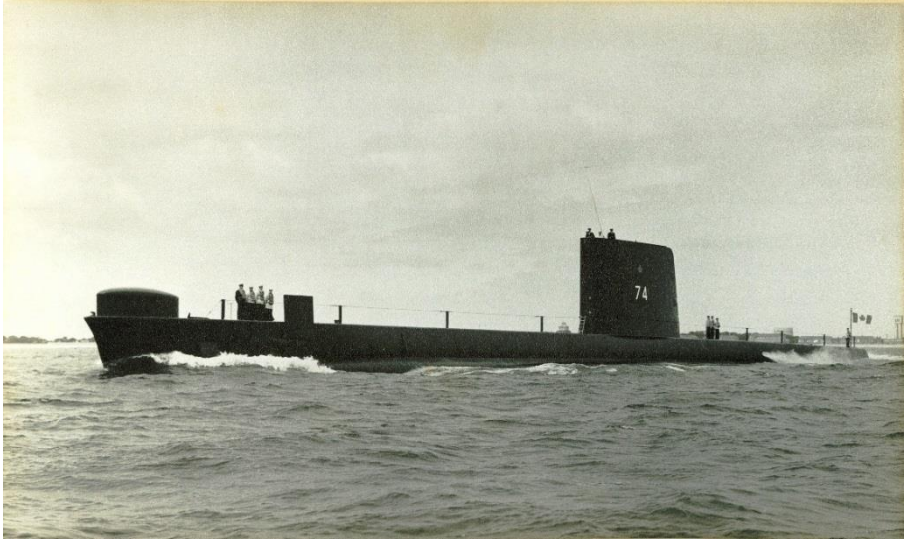
Griff, a dedicated submariner, had spent a lot of time in submarines and many of them other than the ones from Singapore days. When he was in the P-boat *Rorqual* in 1962, he spoke of when the boat was doing a “Submiss” exercise by laying on the bottom until the surface ships could locate her. *Rorqual* did so just upon the sand and gravel seabed off Weymouth in England and it was meant to lie quiet and everybody get turned in for over twenty hours. Well into the period, noises could be heard like a wire brush rubbing on the hull, followed by soft pounding that then came to an abrupt halt. Then the series of noises would resume, and once more stop. At the end of the bottoming, the ships up top had located the boat and it was now time to surface. Main motors were activated for a gentle lift from the seabed that resulted in blowing fuses on the propulsion switchboard. The fuses were replaced, and again they blew after a second attempt to propel. Q tank was then blown to lighten the boat but that didn’t help in any movement. Now in a desperate attempt, main ballast tanks were gradually blown when finally, the boat began to lift from the bottom.

Rorqual finally surfaced, revealing large volumes of sand and gravel in the escape tower recesses as well as every nook and cranny under the full length of the casing. As she lies still and quiet on the bottom for the twenty-hour duration, underwater currents and shifting tides had caused sand and gravel to begin to bury the boat. Later, as *Rorqual* went into an AFD floating dock at Pompey ‘yard, residue was found in all of her underwater fittings. Most notably due to constant shaft revolutions, the blades of both propellers had been burnished to a polished gold, abraded by the sand and gravel. Had the boat lie on the bottom for any longer, she might have become dangerously vulnerable in that any attempt to rescue the crew through the escape towers by “mating” with a rescue diving bell, might have been an impossibility.

“Just one more day of pun’ to go.”

Griff had all kinds of experiences and every time, he meant to do well. Even when he got run in the rattle, he was the kind that thought that as he was dedicated to the submarine service, and he really was. Getting run in the shit was all part of being a “sludge-mariner” and it all pointed toward attitude.

Still aboard *Rorqual*, he had caned six days stoppage of leave for yet another misdemeanour when the captain, LCdr “Sam” Tomlinson, RCN, had ushered him off in penance. Captains would scheme too in their effort to engineer punishment. Looking at the OPSCHED, and seeing that the boat was to go alongside in a jolly port, he saw to it that stoppage of leave would terminate on the morning that it was time to sail again and as such, them’s was the breaks.



*A typical “Wright & Logan” photograph.
One-week old Okanagan leaves Spithead for Work-Up in Faslane, Scotland,
28 June 1968*

The boat went alongside in Portland for three days and on the day before sailing, Griff still had 24 hours to do before getting his card back. Watching everybody steam ashore for the three days made him itch, and by 2000 that night when rounds were over and everything went quiet, he had had enough. He put on his uni-bag and decided to get ashore into a place that he wouldn’t be seen and certainly, no one of importance would get to. He chose the local British Legion. When he arrived at the club, there was very little activity and suiting Griff to a tee, he could have a quiet pint or two, head back to the boat nearby, and no one would notice his absence.

He went and sat at the bar, noting that there was some civvy seated next to him. Being of a friendly and generous nature, Griff tapped the potential pint partner on the shoulder with the pleasantry of offering him a drink. Well, LCdr Tomlinson was also having a quiet, subdued night out before sailing. After the boat left the next day, there was captain’s pun in the

wardroom at three hundred feet, and Griff got nailed for another thirty days.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Back to “Slackers”

We arrived in Halifax after a ten day “snort transit” in September. There wasn’t much to be excited about at Jetty 5 North. All the brass was there of course, and anxious wives who arrived in Halifax much earlier in the summer. For us single lot, we had little to look forward to and sensed that the workload was going to really pick up. One-in-three duty watches, filling in for the guys on leave and keeping up with defect repairs became the priorities. Living up at ‘A’ Block was going to be much different because nobody up there owned us including the infamous yobs in the Barrack Control Office.

We now had permanent digs in the submarine wing on 3 deck south, which meant fewer people to a cabin and more personal kit stowage was available. The other perks as the ‘swain put it, was that we wouldn’t have to supply duty watches to Stad’. . .evidently, we had enough on our own slates.

It wouldn’t be long before we would sail on our first patrol as part of the fledgling 1st Canadian Submarine Squadron, and in company with *Ojibwa*. *Ojibwa* was by now, commissioned over three years and soon destined into her first refit. Speculation arose, at least among us, about how Halifax dockyard was going to do it. It didn’t take long to realize that when the ‘maties came down aboard to do their work, there wasn’t much knowledge among them. Although they were eager to help and extremely polite in their timid presence, they had never worked in submarines. The reality had hit home. “Excuse me buddy! Could you tell me where the A.M.S. is?” or ‘Say, fella’! This valve sez’ “Telemotor” on the handwheel. Does that mean it’s sea water going to the main motor bearings or is it something to do with engine telegraphs?” There was a complete lack of knowledge about submarines and their workings and we quickly imagined about how well prepared the navy was in maintaining submarines after buying them. This made us bear down dramatically. There was a strong inner pride about our new boat and with it came a determination to keep her as right as the day we commissioned in Chatham. Suddenly, it was our sole obligation to do so and as such, the workload increased. We were on our own. So just how would *Ojibwa* make out, came with an obvious answer. Learn as you go. The good news is that she’d be high and dry out of the water and the boat’s crew would be available to show them what’s what. But watching *Ojibwa* being pulled from the new dockyard synchro-

lift onto dry land with a bulldozer and several months later, undock with but a “single” hull valve fitted on each system for holding sea water back was enough to make a “stoker” slap in to re-muster to “bandsman.” There was also another area that caused concern among a lot of us in all three submarines. The Senior Rates.

Apart from a minimal few, it was evident that in general, Chiefs and Petty Officers in Canadian submarines often seemed spaced from the killicks and below. There were some very strong individuals among them but that strength could only evolve from experience. The experience came from exposure, an ability to discard or absorb discomfort, and a lot of sea time. These can only ensue by entering the submarine service as a junior rate. In so doing and as well, you would have done all the mundane things for a very long time. Bilge diving, peelin’ spuds, pipe-chasing, tank crawls, humpin’ stores, lifting heads, scrubbin’ out, cleaning separators, and keeping watches on the same kit for what seemed like years. A complete and tedious challenge was required with three goals in mind. To be safe, to continually enable the submarine work to its maximum potential, and to have complete knowledge of your specific systems and equipment . . . all at the expense of ignoring personal hardship, fatigue, and discomfort that through time, no longer habituates itself as a distraction. It was that experience and the mere fact that you were continuously there as being a subservient that made you modestly proud, assertive, versatile, knowledgeable, and thus... experienced with very strong commitment. For those Chiefs and P.O.’s who entered submarines in such ranks meant that there was little affront from those mundane duties because of privilege of rank and although having experience, but from a shortage of some of the elements to what life in submarines and being a submariner demanded.

Home . . . away from Home

In the course of our first year, *Okanagan* had spent nine months away from Halifax and six of them found us working in the Bermuda operating areas. It got so repetitious to be alongside in St. George’s on the weekends, so frequently that many of us decided to join the Elks’ Club in Hamilton and the local St. George’s Policemen’s Club just up the hill from where the boat would tie up. Each and every trip we made from Bermadoo found us constantly working with U.S. and Canadian A/S air crews from Kindley Field as well as U.S. submarines out of Key West and Norfolk. And it was about this time while on one exercise in company with *Onondaga* that our

reputation as “break-down-free” and “minimal dockyard assistance” became hindered. *Onondaga* on the other hand, had gone through a whole slew of repetitious major defects to the unfortunate degree that her sailings were cancelled or that she had to return to port on several occasions to “get fixed.” She had earned a reputation for unreliability. This also was at a time when submarines were emblazoned with the traditional Canadian navy’s red maple leaf upon the sides of the fin that below, incorporated large white pennant numbers. *Ojibwa* (72), *Onondaga* (73) and *Okanagan* (74) were each of three visual identifiers, and for the purpose of this particular exercise, both boats would “surface to identify” periodically with a number of Canadian and U.S. a/s aircraft. The strategy would miff the opposition by insisting that there was only one submarine in the areas, however close or far apart her actual position was. In order to deviously “baffle the enemy,” we had re-configured 74 with the number 73. Results became disastrous for during that one-week exercise, *Okanagan* was to encounter one breakdown after another and the toll upon us in making repairs became a very unhappy burden. When we finally arrived outboard on *Onondaga* at St. George’s after the exercise, it took very little time to return to the increase of value of the side numbers in one of the two submarines.

Part 2. .the Shovel re-appears

So, while all of these events were taking place, way down under and on the other side of the world, the shovel was continuing in its adventures. Nearly ten years had passed since it was dirtied with mud, but was now still dirtied with oily and greasy hands as it made its way across and under the seas. The Aussies had it, lost it to the yanks, then through some mystery, the kippers got it back, took it to YewKay, which happens to be on the right-hand side of the Atlantic, which once more made it more accessible for the rightful owners . . . the Canadians. . . on the left-hand side. But before that could happen, engraving machines were back at work with entry #6:

09 Jan 1969

**“Nicked from the dinks of Platypus by the
pomms of spare crew and Trump. R.I.P.”**

Pomm is the term used by Aussies in referring to Brits' as do Canadians endear them as 'kippers.' Assuming spare crew was now involved, would indicate that HMS/m *Trump* (the floatin' fart) was a T-Class submarine attached to SM4 in Sydney, as SM6 was in Halifax. She was probably near out of a refit and was closely associated with the other I.W.'s. . .the squadron spare crew. The escapades and nicking continued after the shovel laid peacefully at rest for a year and a half until once again, in 1971, the shovel was graced with tally #7:

Jun 1971

"Nicked by the dinks of Platypus by the bulls of Oxley"

Then another navy got involved during a good will visit by some semi-submar-e-e-ners.

For a country that lives by the vow, "In God We Trust", the Aussies were now unsure who they could. Tally #8 was etched with:

21 Jul 1972

"Lifted from the Aussies, USS Salmon SS 573"

Beyond *Salmon's* theft and a re-emergence in Australia, the plight of the shovel stands as a mystery as no one has been found who can attest. It is theorized that it ambled its way to Pearl Harbor or in fact, crossed the Pacific to San Diego in *Salmon*. It is then assumed that an Aussie O-boat doing a state-side visit, or a stop in Pearl Harbor, nicked it back. It was then taken back 'down under' to *Platypus*, with no explanation as to who, when, or how. During that time however, the RN stepped back into contention. As a consequence, the next inscription read:

**"Stolen by the sods of HMS/m Odin from
Chiefs and P.O.'s mess, HMAS Platypus
Australia 1975."**

Now it re-appeared in *Dolphin*, assuming *Odin* returned to YewKay. Four years would 'shovel along', but although not recorded, two events took place. The 'other cold war' was stirred when finally, three ping-bos'ns from *Okanagan* showed up in *Dolphin*. Sonarmen Fred Schatz, Jake Allen, and George Sullivan were doing a dicky package sonar course and visited the Petty Officers' Mess for some international socializing and

a little shovel-stowage reconnaissance. In the commission of the ‘nick, the day arrived when it was time to leave *Dolphin* and return to Canada. Farewell ‘wets’ were appropriate at the mess, and so was some misappropriation. George Sullivan explained: “I had to put the shaft down my pant leg with the blade digging into my shit-locker. Didn’t that smart? Then I had to walk peg-legged through *Dolphin* Main Gate. I told the gate sentry that I had a stiff leg from sports or something and later, packed it away in my bag and put it in the left luggage at the Pompey Harbour train station.”

Then another theft saw the shovel return to *Dolphin*. It is known that HMS/m *Sea Lion* and a Chief Mech. named Yogi Barker were involved during this time. *Sea Lion* was destined to Halifax for a D.E.D where the shovel was certainly a number one requirement among the docking items. This prompted Canadians to pay closer attention to reputation but they didn’t. When *Sea Lion*’s D.E.D. completed some four months later, she headed home to *Dolphin*. . . with the shovel of course. A tally to record that event never got made either. Kippers never got anything done unless they had an FMG or dockyard work order. It was taken to the CPO’s mess and locked up tight behind the bar. The mess committee and participants were now quite proud of their security arrangements that were better than that to the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London. “How could anybody ever swipe the shovel?” they boasted loudly. Well, the other cold-war was to continue. Enter once more, Canada’s own HMCS/m *Okanagan* and an individual named Jim “Lucky” Gordon. This ploy was to be most scheming, devious, and outwitting deed ever accomplished by an individual in challenging such foolproof security. Lucky admitted several years later:

“The boat was alongside *Dolphin* and I think we were doing some acoustic training in the school. While there, I spent some ‘off time’ at the mess making it well-known that I was interested in the spade. A few of the mess attendees were taking the mick’ because the shovel was behind the manned bar, gated and locked up when the bar was shut. “No chance of nickin’ it, Canada!” they said with assured certainty.

Well over a period of the next three or four days, I cased for a possible access. During my visits to the mess, I took some casual undetected peaks at the construction of the bar gate and then finally, smuggled in some tools and stowed them from sight under a settee. The last night alongside, RN’er, “Flush” Laviolette, a mechanic in *Okanagan*, and I, went up to the mess. We stayed until “Time!” and as the duty mess prez’ went round checking all the windows secure, I was sitting at a settee along the back

wall of the mess where the windows behind me overlooked the galley roof. It was accessible by a fire escape ladder. When he reached behind me to lock the window, with a smirk, he took another shot at me about not being able to get the spade. But, as he moved on, I reached back and unlocked the window. He and the bar tender then invited me to observe the lock-up ceremony, snapping as many as three locks between me and the shovel. Later, on the sidewalk outside, they bid me “Goodnight, goodbye, and better luck next time ‘Canada’!”

Flush and I then headed down the boat. Flush, being from the enemy Royal Navy, worried me a little because you just can’t be sure where loyalties step in and he might have ‘blown the whistle.’ When he went below, I reversed my course ashore and disappeared into the shadows. I made my way to the back of the galley, up the ladder onto the roof, and then into the mess through the unlocked window. The mess was now a lot darker than I expected and I didn’t want to risk too much light. So, I whipped out my good ole’ reliable Zippo and went to work. I disconnected the gate, secured with several smalley nuts and bolts on the inside from the locking tee-bar on the top of the bar. The gate then rolled up and I climbed over. I unbolted the shovel and replaced it with an *Okanagan* “Pink Panther” decal. Then, mysteriously, I was struck with a gale force ‘south wind’ so I gave one of the beer-pumps a little flick. Well what to my wondering eyes should appear? A wee, golden stream of cellar temp’ beer. Proudly, I began to pour off a pint with a long haul off the top of the handle when I was now struck with pangs of conscience and guilt. The spade was fair dinkum but to pilfer a pint was not too right, so I left “the price” on the bar, and began to make my escape. I couldn’t properly reconnect the gate, so I tied it down with bar towels, finished my pint, and crawled out the window with you know what.

The next day, the buzz had it that “the job” wasn’t discovered ‘til opening time at noon, when the bartender couldn’t figure with the towels. By that time of day, it was four hours since we backed out of Haslar Creek and by then, well away to sea. I later learnt that the Mess President (a skimmer) was real threadbare . . . and wanted me charged for breaking in. Some of the mess-members finally calmed him down by explaining the “thieving traditions and travels” of the spade. When it arrived in Halifax aboard *Okanagan*, you know the rest.” he told me.

Although Lucky’s impressive and elusive accomplishment was done single-handedly, the next tally on the shovel read with modesty:

05 Jun 1979

"Captured by the sods of Okanagan from C&PO's mess HMS Dolphin-Returned to Stad"

Lucky continued: "We were now about to be overwhelmed. We were in Fizzer's, a month or so later when some junior rates joined the boat from Halifax. They came looking for me and proudly presented me with the duplicate. They had gone through *Dolphin* on a course, and just by chance, were present when someone delivered it to the mess, having nicked it from the sods in *Stadacona*. We had a mess dinner at sea to celebrate the occasion. We took a photo of "Pinky" in black tie with a glass of champagne, sitting under an emblematic 'crossed spades.' When *Okanagan* came home, there were now two shovels aboard for delivery to the mess."

By now it was getting real hectic. As the shovel(s) re-arrived in Halifax, they were returned to the mess at *Stadacona* by an anxious shower of submariners who were confident they'd be rewarded with copious amounts of free quaff. It had been eleven years since the original had left home because when *Sea Lion* briefly appeared, it never left the submarine jetty. The reward was only one beer each and it seemed that someone was irritated. The mess president became so fed up that he decided to shed of the responsibility of ownership and security of the gardening tool. He willed that the new custodians of the real shovel would be the CANSUBRONONE submarine Chiefs and Petty Officers and its' official home should now be in the mess down in the dockyard. He was satisfied that the duplicate shovel would capably serve as the sod-turning shovel on display and if it should disappear, there would be little fanfare. There wasn't much interest with the duplicate anyway, because nobody cared to keep records on diversionary jury rigs . . . nor were they worthy of being nicked. So as the inboard mess president (author) graciously accepted it officially, the submarine Chiefs and PO's became the new wardens and *Okanagan* was the present holder . . . for the time being. Off it went to sea and was to be mounted on the cable-run panelling in the boat's senior rates mess. Fear reigned however because now, the shovel was mobile and very vulnerable. To discourage theft, precautions were introduced. As an example, physically, stainless steel collars surrounded two mounting bolts to discard the possibilities of the undulating sever of hacksaws. Fearful word had it that the shovel was mounted in such a way that it was wired to the boat's main batteries . . . positive to one bolt, negative to the other, so that if anyone meddled, they would get zapped by 880 volts. While alongside Blockhouse, the duty PO sauntered into the mess to find a kipper

“tiffy electrician” standing on the messdeck table with an AVO meter in his mitts, checking for voltage across the two bolts.

Some time later and for the first time, individual personalities would now appear upon the shovel tallies. Like Flush Laviolette, George Galley was also on a swap-exchange from the RN and was aboard *Okanagan*. He wasn’t fooled by AVO meters and now had legal access, but as feared with Flush, what George didn’t swap were his loyalties. When he packed his bags to go on a course in *Dolphin*, he placed the shovel among his shaving kit and towel. The next tally was graced to read:

28 Jun 1980

**“Removed from HMCS/m Okanagan by George Galley.
Returned home to the C&PO’s mess HMS Dolphin.”**

Leaving the adventures of the shovel once more, the Part 3 conclusion follows anon. Meantime, in returning to a decade earlier, and about a very important topic.

Rum ‘n coke - Not in submarines thank you

Many have written about the tot understanding of the reality that the people who did so, were never really entitled to draw it . . . and they know who they are. The misnomer that a “two in one” tot (sou’wester) had a lesser effect on the consumer as would a “one in one” tot (nor’wester), is a typical example. Although the rum content was the same, the amount of water added gave rise to a problem. Equal parts of rum and water-maintained savoury to the taste, however when two parts of water were added to the ration, not only was the palate deprived, but this drugged solution brought on much grogginess. Not so with the perks and joy of a nor’wester. Nevertheless, in a more modern navy and from the lower decker’s point of view in reality, “the tot” was the single commodity sought that got things accomplished. Whether in terms of duty, transaction, celebration, as a medicine much more effective than Dramamine or for more often than enough, gratitude . . . pusser’s rum by its existence, shaped the sailor’s daily life. Rum in the navy made you feel good that was as equal to its warmth and glow. It was a feeling of uniqueness and pride. The officers weren’t entitled nor were the abes and the odes under twenty. That in itself placed you within a unique group within a fraternal society. Foreign navies admired and envied it. Nowhere, or in any other military

institution in the country, was there such a gratifying lawful ordinance than within the Royal, our's, and the other commonwealth of navies. It was recognition for our allegiance, mode of our societal acceptance, gratitude for our toil, privilege of place, seniority on the orlop, a token for withstanding arduousness demands set upon us. When all was said and done . . . an assuring reward for our country's need of our being and presence . . . it was healthful in its designed moderation . . . and it always tasted like "more." Rum and its necessity were habitual aboard ships and submarines that without those two and a half ounces every twenty-four hours, mind and body reacted strangely, you functioned hesitantly, the day would drag, appetites changed, your routine was in disorder. It was amazing too of self-discipline. How often each man, would either abstain for a day or at least have no more than his entitlement when work was to be done.

On the first day out heading on patrol, XO decided to pipe mismusters at 1600 as opposed to the normal "Up Spirits" at 1115. The chief tiff came stomping into the mess after hearing the pipe that announced the deferral and intrusion upon his daily habit. He loudly inquired, "Who can save me?" directed to the ear of any messmate who might have had a tot stowed somewhere from the last time out. The chief, like all of us, knew full well that any amount left over from being alongside for a spell, would long be gone and everybody's hidden bottle by now had a "south wind" in it. . . "warm and dry."

After going to the RN, unlike the RCN where rum was stored and issued from capped bottles, theirs was in stone jugs wrapped in wicker with a cork stopper. With the resource and cunning of matelots, "sucking the monkey" was a popular pastime. The "monkey" was the term assigned to the huge wooden rum barrel from which the rum was issued emblazoned with brass lettering to remind each matelot to "Drink to the Queen's health." In submarines however, apart from a monkey being too big to fit down the forehatch, rum was issued straight from the jugs. It didn't take long to realize that if a hypodermic needle was inserted through the cork, a modest volume could be obtained that when added to quantities extracted from surrounding jugs in the spirit locker, it wouldn't take long to amass a "40 pounder." This exercise went on for a considerable number of months in one particular submarine until the puzzled grocer, the coxswain complained to the shore victuallers that he was being seen off for content before the jugs were even delivered to the jetty and struck down.

As the Canadian Oberon Class submarines commissioned in YewKay, their crews came with many RN mess rum traditions that were a cross

between both navies. The more technical aspects and surrounding activities of the navy's lower deck daily deliverance of bubbly often gets ignored, so explanation is provided that related only to the submarine service.

“RUM RULES”

1. Domestic water is embarked in submarines as a priorital requirement
The Priorities are:

- a. for effective trim and ballasting purposes;
- b. to combine with glycol as A.S.R. engine cooling water as fitted in O-class submarines;
- c. to compensate for loss of battery distillate;
- d. for adding to pusser's rum;
- e. for cooking;
- f. for scrubbing out; and
- g. for washing.

Note: If stability, machinery, and electrical systems are well maintained and watch-kept I.A.W. appropriate handbooks, priorities a. thru c. above, are waived and priority d. becomes priority a. immediately.

2. Coca-Cola is to be carried in the tubes and can instead be sold to “T”/“UA” ratings and commissioned officers only. Coke shall not be produced as mix at tot time.

3. Whiffers, a wet, splashers, spillers, sippers, tasters, gulpers, and halfers are the ascending ranges of volume so granted by the donor to the accorded recipient. The least and insulting whiff is a smell of a tot, and anything over a half a tot is the superlative bribe as being a whole tot.

4. “See'er's”, “see it off,” or “in one” where at the pleasure of the donor, is the rate at which an offering is to be consumed. “Neaters” (north), “one in one” (nor'wester), and “two in one” (sou'wester) are the descending orders of pollution . . . er' dilution. A “sou'wester” is punishment for killicks and below who are bad boys or barrack stanchions. A “north” tot of rum is issued to the chuffs and puffs only, making it convenient to save for rainy and/or sunny days and other naval amusements.

5. The “rum bos'n” and “ticker-off'er” are from the longest off watch and are self-acclaimed volunteers. They are each offered “sippers” at the time of issue, for donating their time and efforts in measuring the exact amount of water, (very important) drawing the rum from the barricoe, bringing it to the mess, and ticking off names on the rum board on behalf of the Cox'n. If good mess representation and parlance is conducted at issue, the

coxswain, as a naval gentleman, is to chuck in “gulpers” in contribution to “the Queen’s” in his acknowledgement.

6. Tot time on the mess, will run for approximately 45 minutes in seeing that the watch “on” get their tots, the watch going “on” have their tots, and the idle watch “off” will have their day at enjoying the relaxation of the entire period on the following day.

7. “Queen’s,” or “Plusher’s” (French: plus) is the communal residue of the day’s issue in the rum fanny and passed about equally in clockwise rotation until a “south wind” is in the glass.(warm and dry. . .empty) Its makeup consists of a tot whose owner does not draw, “splashers” as chucked back from a donor who doesn’t finish his tot, or the volume displaced by the rum bos’n’s finger, or fingers, placed inside a “one in one” tot measure at issue. The circled gathering shall include the watch just “off,” next “on” watch, the brown card jobs and idlers, and one odd time visitor and pain in the ass from another mess. Each participant sips at the vessel, all eyes upon him, and at the strict direction of the purveying rum bos’n.

Note: Undisputedly the best “rum bos’ns” are stokers who are also good coppersmiths. They can ably pean the bottom of a half-gill tot measure concavely, or the rum fanny convexly. The former increases the “Queen’s,” for rightly deserved over-issue for the stokers’ mess.

8. The two-fingered index and pinkey spread of the right hand arranged parallel to the deck is visual language for a service that might be offered to a potential gratUITer and deemed as half a tot. A double-jerk gesture of a cupped hand toward the mouth in a noisy engine room is the signal of a relieving stoker to, “Go get your tot and quickly see the bastard off in one! I’m on watch next!”

9. Like a tea fanny, the rum fanny, in addition to mugs and glasses, are never to be sloshed out, in keeping with proven naval belief that purity and taste will be affected.

10. In certain submarines, bells are sounded over the tannoy at precisely 1115 daily, at sea. This is done to grasp the coxswain’s attention to “get the rum up.”

Note: The bells were purchased from a souvie’ shop in Arrochar, Scotland whose domestic purpose when tolled, signified that “dinner is served.” I, the buyer, was attracted to the large bovine horn that the three bells were suspended from in a cluster. It resembled a quality of proboscis that best describes a facial feature of mine . . .a large growth of skin resembling a trunk. As well, the bells had that “rummy” look about them and as soon as they arrived on the messdeck, they were alternatively re-

commissioned as “The Rum Bells.” They were suspended from a pipe run in the after ends and in proximity to a tannoy mike. As time progressed, the dingling din throughout the boat pre-empted the navy’s yeoman to have to set the clocks every day. Everybody knew it was precisely 1115 and so, set compartment clocks as well as their wristwatches. The bells were never muted at “ultra-quiet states” or “attack teams,” for not only were they integral to morale, they were considered as a contributing audible resource in confusing the enemy. When the captain in an alert frenzy proclaims: “Bearing of the target is . . . **THAT!**” the reply to his demand was drowned out with, “**Ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling.**”

On the 1st of April, 1971, ships and submarines had a “Rum Wake.” It was two years after the Royal Navy had jugged it in and very long after the R.A.N. took the initiative. The wake concluded with. . .

. . . a Sailor’s Prayer

*Take my hat and take my coat,
burn my ship or sink my boat.
Take my mick or take my cot,
but please dear Lord...please leave my tot.*

*You can have my leave and take my pay,
even throw my shoes and boots away.
Take my medals for which I fought,
ut please dear Lord...please leave my tot.*

*Take my friends and let them die,
and I won’t ask the reason why.
Take my kit and let it rot,
but please dear Lord...please leave my tot.*

*Take my life and let me die,
then take me to Heaven in the sky.
My last request won’t be a lot.
Just five more minutes, and one more tot.*

*“ . . . and if we have one tot, may we also have ten;
have a whole bloody keful.” said the matelot . . .*

“Amen!”

“We share . . .even our clothes”

Frederiksted, St. Croix - January 1969. A load of us took the opportunity of an invite to a private club that had a swimming pool that sat behind a grove overlooking a sand beach. It was about two miles up the coast on a gravel road from where the boat was tied up. “O’ Kan-agan” was on a very long breakwater type concrete jetty in Frederiksted that many priority merchantmen went alongside on.

It was after tot time and a bus was laid on to hump us to the swimming club. The boys were all snarled up with their tots. Some had on bathing suits, some didn’t. Others wore their nicks. Boxers were a style then and I liked the colourful patterned ones cuz’ ‘down south’, these thousand milers were convenient as they doubled for times like this. Besides, they got dhobeyed in the process of swimming for a spell.

There was a little poolside bar and of course, we blended that with our own supply and between thrashing about in the pool and roaming out onto the beach with not a soul to disturb us, the afternoon worn on as a “jolly.” It was a great break from the heat and humidity down the boat. By now, it was four or so and for some who might have had any sense, it seemed like a good time to get into the shade of the grove which was on the sea side of the pool premises. Behind the grove, you were out of sight. Some of the guys were beginning to mill with “wets” in hand as the bus wouldn’t arrive for another hour. Sandy Sadler had a giggle on too and when the bus came, thought he better look after Buster’s clobber, not really worried about where Buster was. In the pants’ pockets were his lolly, lighter, wallet, and flip-flops. Meanwhile, on the other side of the grove were three tired hairies having a little Egyptian P.T. They were garbed in their boxer shorts and between them, had one pair of Jesus boots. About six, they surfaced and suddenly realized that the lads and the bus had all shot through and to boot, there wasn’t a stitch of clothing to be found anywhere.

Jerry Conway, “Beasty” Estabrooks, and I decided that we’d better get a move on as it was soon going to be dark being February of the year. Down the gravel road we went, locked arm in arm feeling the pain of sharp gravel on our feet. Taking short shifts with only two sandals, the outboard guys with one each, suspended the middle guy. We took a few strides hopping along on one foot, then stopped, changed feet and swapped positions. The sunburns blazed with fury as each other’s arms pushed and jolted at each other’s backs. Later, a little car pulled up thinking. . . “At last . . .we’re saved!” The driver peered out of the window and in a sexy tone asked the obvious. “Where are you gentlemen going? Can I be of

help?” Well . . . any port in a storm, and this had the makings of a nor’easter.

He drove us into town to the foot of the jetty noting that there was nothing to be gained from this trio. As we got out of the car, he looked about for acknowledgement from the locals that he had “trapped some seafood.” He sped off and there we were standing on red-hot concrete and the jetty head looked like a mile away. ‘Way down the end, you could see the lads milling about still with wets in hand and to our surprise, the boat was now offshore at anchor. It didn’t take much more to understand that a freighter coming over the horizon was going onto our berth by the island’s priority, and so *Okanagan* was obliged to get off the wall, and out of the way.

Just onto the jetty was parked a U.S. research vessel modified from a wooden minesweeper. It was time to get some clothes and here might be a chance. The three hobbled aboard the gangway and were immediately met by a deckhand, who with a huge grin on his face said in a drawl . . . “Who are you guys and what’s your problem?” In unison we explained, “We’re off that boat out there and somebody stole our clothes . . . Got any?” With a chuckle, he said, “Well I’m not sure, but go down the engine room through that door. It’s the first hatch leadin’ down. Might be somethin’ down there dryin’ but don’t tell anybody I told ya’!” Off we trundled, and I can remember what those round, hot, oily, ladder rungs were like. A “genny” was running which meant somebody must be around, but looking for anyone wasn’t the priority. Hanging over a lagged exhaust line we spotted ovies all covered in paint. Lots of ‘em. We each donned a set and clambered out of the space slipping and sliding all over. We thought the centres in an O-boat was bad enough, but this took the “Friday Rounds cake.”

The Beast never thought twice about taking clothes. We were to have an XO named Dent Harrison and when at sea, would on a daily basis, crash out a T-shirt in the wardroom sink and hang it in the engine room to dry. The Beast would come out on watch and immediately notice that there was a clean, white T-shirt hanging above the port supercharger every day and after a little thought, decided to start wearing it while on watch, and carefully replacing it after his watch would end. After all, it was sodden of sweat with smears of carbon, so it needed hanging back up, to at least get dry.

Back on the research vessel, we got back uptop and onto the jetty again. We didn’t see a soul to say thanks to. Maybe that was just as well. We’d have to get the ovies back to them but for the time being, “Let’s head up

the jetty!” When we finally arrived, there were lots of comments. “Where’s Sandy? . . . Anybody see him?” . . . and there he was, with a big glow on his face and said, “I wuz’ ‘fraid zhumbuddy might take off wi’ yer cloz’ so I took ‘em wimme. Y’all owe me yer totsh tamorra!” Meanwhile, the boys were still hooleyin’ while they waited for the four-man zode’ to take us out to the boat that was laid off at anchor at about a thousand yards. All of a sudden, Sam Jennings the chief tiff, went hurtlin’ off the jetty and into the oggin . . . or did he dive in? We’ll never know. The tide was out and there was a pretty good ground swell. Not the place to be with a few ales down your neck. Immediately, Jerry Conway was off-ovies and in after Sam once again for we always remember that Jerry had done this with Sam before in R-R-R-R-Rothesay, Scotland as well as Bermadoo. Out of repetition of these rescues, nobody made a move. We were now very accustomed to Jerry and Sam flailing about in the oggin everywhere we went, and confident that Jerry would come to the fore as always. We helped them onto the jetty with a lot of difficulty as the ladder was covered with barnacles and mussels. “O-o-o-h-h-h, the poor feet!” We then convinced Sam to crash out among the beer boxes and we’d give him a shake when it was his turn to go back to the boat in the zode’.

After about a dozen runs, the lads all got back to the boat. It was now in the dark evening the freighter on the horizon earlier, was now doubled up alongside sharing the jetty with another on the adjacent berth. Floodlights lit the jetty and the space between the ships became cavernous and noisy, bustling with activity as the ships' stevedores unloaded cargo. The one that went into the berth where *Okanagan* lay was Chinese. Sam was still kipped out among the beer boxes and when he awoke, he tried to work out how the hell he got to Hong Kong harbour. In the mix of blinding light and darkness, he saw all these Chinamen with big straw hats rushing back and forth with huge sacks of rice over their shoulders.

After we got aboard, it was “hunger stations” and all the groceries were locked up including the coxswain’s store and the domestic fridge situated in the cafeteria. This was not to deter Lloyd Blagdon, as he heaved on the fridge door, parting the lock to find that chef had just a short time ago placed a large container of jello into the fridge for the next day’s duff. Lloyd picked up the container of cooling liquid and wrestled it to his lips taking copious gulps. As he lowered the unstable urn, he loudly declared, “Boy-oh-boy . . . that’s the best Freshie I ever tasted!”

A day in the life . . .

When at the outset of a long patrol, there was little to look forward to, let alone a chance to get alongside for a day or two. To even get a bog through the periscope might be a highlight for the day but then if you did, as you peer at high power at the uniformed hands at Sunday Divisions on the “uppers” on that “greyhound” . . . “Well at least we don’t have divisions today. I haven’t even got a unibag aboard!”

“My eyes just got sunburnt. ‘Guess I’ll go forward and have a yarn with the lads.” Only to find that at 0915 on that Sunday morning now at 300 ft., all the lights are out and everybody’s turned in. “Boy what perks! I mean when you have to, it’s the only place in the world that I know where you can get to work in just 9 seconds. I can drop from my pit and into my slack-laced steamers and head aft because I’ve always got my laggin’ on. Course, I can stop at the galley for a quick yarn with chef, and sample the corn dog or bubble and squeak. On the way aft, I’ll stop in hummy ole’ no. 3 trap for my mornin’ George. I wonder how many dives I done. I’ve had eight skippers and three engineers on here in nine years. Christ, I’ve been deeper than the average hand’s been across! Why, I’ve passed more lighthouses than the jimmy’s walked by lamp poles! ‘Wonder if that leak is holding at ‘two’ cross-connect. We’re going up, now. By the sound of it, the soil pipe’s really runnin’ aft. Guess I’ll sit here for a while ‘til they get the snort on. Somebody already got the outer tube vent. . .outer boob tent, as Johann Post used to call it. Sounds like the blow round’s done. Good time to get outta here otherwise I’ll get a backflash.”

By now, the noise in the donk shop is getting louder and louder . . . “Uh, oh, two thirds, no screamers! It’s gonna be a hot one!” I look at my watch and I’m on the platform at quarter to ten. “Who was the ‘nerk that started relieving the watch fifteen minutes sooner than he really had to? He sure got something going, because if you ever relieved just a minute past, you’re midship ballast like the rest of em’ up there.”

The shit-slingin’ starts . . . “Slack hammock again? This ‘ll cost you a tot.” . . . Or “I’m here ta’ relieve ya’!” with the reply, “Well, you’re too late mate! Anyway . . .how much load we got? When we goin’ deep? Did ya’ get the separator done? How’s the insulation on the port pedestal’? How come ya’ didn’t wet the tea? Right then . . .clear a gangway for the power watch. Take your clobber with ya’ and be back to relieve me for tot, and by the way . . .there’s no gangway through the control house yet, so sit well for’d of ‘77!”

Yes indeed, another watch to go with most of it in sign language. “China . . . dip the oily bilge’! Point to China . . . point to sounding rod. . . lift close-fingered hands apart vertically.

“If she’s over a hundred, sneak a little out!” . . . Show one finger and shake a fist twice for two zeros. . . hold index finger to lips, then point thumb forward, (so the control room doesn’t know, then point to port side with outstretched thumb to indicate over the side quietly so as not to affect the trim. “Let’s get a compressor rollin’ to the ring main!” Pound head (lightly) with two closed fists about three times, show one or two fingers for number of compressors . . . point aft for ring main. . . forward for panel distribution.

“Tug. . . keep an eye on cylinder temperature on starboard, five outboard!” Get Tug’s attention. . . point two fingers at own eyes. . . point to starboard engine. . . show five fingers and point outboard. Wiggle fingers upward in a rising motion to indicate high heat. “Motor room. . . we’re here! Readins’ please . . . quick as ya’ can!” From standing position, point to port forward direction then port aft, doing the same for starboard. At each pointing and with the same hand, show for example the signs for one hundred and eighteen degrees, eg: vertical index finger in a forward thrusting motion. . . repeat for the second digit, followed by the use of two hands for a reading of eight.

And by the time we arrived alongside, one would think that the work was all over ‘til the next trip. Well, not so! Now the real chores would begin that usually took 19 of 21 days alongside to get right. Leaks, drips, seeps, and weeps. Scored bearings, leaking glands, wire-drawn valve discs, mast maintenance, OMC checks, hydraulic leaks, O-rings replacement, engine calibrations, injector change, lifting heads, repairing doors and furniture. And so it went.

Meanwhile, back up north and helping out . . .

By now, Ross Webb was still as impassioned as anyone could imagine. He was always on to the stokers. Often, he would walk through the boat and look for people sculling. One morning alongside in Halifax, “Tony” Anthony and “Moe” Ferguson were both up in the after escape hatch. Ross walked into the after ends and heard noises above. He looked up into the hatch and loudly asked, “Anthony! What the fuk are you doin’?” “Fuk all ‘swain!” Tony replied. Ross then asked, “Ferguson . . . and what about you?” Moe replied, “I’m helpin’ him ‘swain.”

Smellin' exercises

Ross was very much into routine. Each and every morning he would turn out at 0600, regardless of what night watch he had. He was the only one who shaved every morning and one of the few that washed. If we all did, there'd be a large consumption of fresh water and the trim would get all screwed up. Well Ross being Ross, his post-scrape procedure was embraced with the splashing of abounding amounts of his after-shave lotion much like German U-boat submariners with "4711." In our case, it didn't take long to put a name rather than a number on it. "Evening in Digby . . . with the tide out," that came in from the local Canex at about \$3.00 per gallon. Ross's intent was to diffuse his daily application of effluvium throughout the boat and he was very successful. Well it's hard to describe the agglomerated hum that exudes and thrives in submarines. Onions, hydrogen, smelly bods, diesel fuel, epoxy paint, engine carbon, C.T.C., rotten feet, bilge water . . . all spiked with the gaseous pong that constantly wafts from the sewage tank inboard vent. Ross's voluminous splashes of snapper juice that would normally target the opposite sex, would blanket all that very efficiently. But to undertake a come-hither campaign the first thing every morning as wiggling noses awoke the rest of their anatomies, was a means for revolt by not getting "turned out." So, in extending his attack, he would put on his cap (badge of office), and amble through the boat and shake everybody. One morning, the "walking alarm clock" noised his way into the stokers' mess. He paused at attention facing an occupied, curtained, top bunk in the deep-six and prepared to whip it open. He did so with a "snap," and staring him right in the face was a big, bare, hairy arse. The arse merely stirred like a sleeping bear at Ross's vocal aggravation to wake its owner up when suddenly, it let go with a 14db's blast of pungent wind right in Ross's moosh. . . with derisory noises to boot. A counter-attack had once again, been magnificently engineered by the Beast.

"4711," for use in WW2 German U-boats: This rank liquid was put aboard in gallons and was intended for use by crews for the purpose of masking body odour after continuous weeks at sea with limited fresh water supply. During the French Occupation of Germany by Napoleon in the 18th century, among the many obstacles that accompanied the colonisation of the town of Cologne, was determining and identifying who all lived in which houses that were built in rows upon rows on the streets. Horsemen quickly decided to affix numbers to all of the homes, which no doubt suggests how the formality arose that just about everybody in the world

today has a number on their house. The home of the Faberge family, the makers of fine scents and fragrances, was on Glocken Strasse in Cologne and numbered 4711. By the time WW2 broke out in the many, many years ahead, still remained as the establishment where the Faberge's now spawned and bottled this hum-blasting, liquid redolence by the gallons and sold it to the Homeland navy for issue to its U-boats. The buzz had it that crews would opt to drink this improvised booze of revolting rankness, rather than splash it upon the body. Submarine comforts, be assured.

Kootenay. . . Shipmates had I

On the 23 October 1969, HMCS *Kootenay* was in company with eight other ships clearing the English Channel for Halifax. *Kootenay* was conducting a full-power trial and at 0821 that morning, suffered an explosion from the starboard gearbox. The explosion came as a result of the ignition of overheated gearing lube oil vapours creating an unweilding fireball that blew up through the engine room hatches and streaked fore and aft through her internal gangways and compartments above. The "Kootenay explosion" killed nine of the lads and seriously injured several others. Four were buried in YewKay, while four others were committed to



A sea-worn HMCS Kootenay - circa 1969

the sea. PO2 "Lew" Stringer died some days later aboard *Bonnie* who was in company. He was later interred in Halifax.

In 1972, decorations for bravery were created within the Canadian Honours system . . . The Cross of Valour, the Star of Courage and the Medal of Bravery. The incident in *Kootenay* resulted in the awarding of six conspicuous bravery awards. The Cross of Valour was awarded posthumously to the Chief ERA, “Ski” Partanen, and PO2 “Lew” Stringer. The Star of Courage was awarded to S/Lt C. Reiffenstein and to Officer Cadet and former ER apprentice “Clem” Bussiere. The Medal of Bravery was awarded to CPO2 “Bob” George and PO1 “Gerry” Gillingham. Those lost were: CPO1 Partanen, CPO2 “Bill” Boudreau, the main propulsion chief, PO2’s Stringer and “Eric” Harmon, three killicks, P. Bourret, G. Hutton and T. Crabbe, and Ordinary Seamen N. Galloway and M. Hardy.

On that tragic day in 1969, we in *Okanagan* had just come alongside



*Kootenay survivor Allen “Dinger” Bell with a strained smile,
now back of starboard’ aboard Okanagan*

Halifax from another patrol in the Bermuda areas. When hearing the news by HALGEN, I would reflect in teary-eyed sympathy for having the

privilege of having sailed with Bill Boudreau and Eric Harmon seven years earlier in *Micmac*. Bill was a P2 then with whom I steamed many boiler room watches. Dear old Eric was our three-badged killick of the mess who relieved H.O. “Willie” Williams who was just as authoritative and very much a shipmate, as was Willie. He was also my engine room killick of the watch steamin’ the Quiggin ‘vaps. It didn’t finish there. In time to follow, I would have the distinction of sailing with Clem Bussieres who was to be my engineer officer in *Skeena* who had become a very successful Lieutenant Commander. Then there was this man who appeared as a sucker for punishment.

Into submarines he would opt after an extensive time in hospital and after healing as best that the Lord could offer, he would join *Okanagan* within a year to two after the explosion. In but a few years to follow, he left the navy and entered into a civilian job, surrounded with munitions at the Bedford Magazine in Halifax. One still wonders! He was a hard-working and humourous stoker named Dave “Dinger” Bell, the sorrowful, but proud man who wore and sometimes with much difficulty, spoke of that terrible day while living with such horrible memories.

I would be in awe as he described how scaling the ladder in exiting *Kootenay*’s engine room to escape the inferno, folds of skin were hanging like melted plastic from his arms as his hands became equally burnt from holding onto the ladder rails. His scarred face, torso, and gravelly voice from burnt and distorted vocal cords said of the rest. God rest their souls . . . such good men. God help those who still live with the living memory.

Manned refit

In June of 1971, *Okanagan* went into her first major refit. By now and after learning from the refits of *Ojibwa* and *Onondaga*, the dockies had increased their knowledge of submarine workings considerably. However, I remember as I walked about the boat, there still existed a glisten and efficiency about her. But why did we have to tear her all apart just three short years from the time we feverishly put her all together for commissioning? Well that’s what they did in RN submarines, so I suppose we had to follow suit. However, on the other hand and as a lower deck crew, we looked forward to getting ashore for an eighteen-month spell for some well-deserved change of pace. It was a manned refit and as such, there was just no facility to put an additional sixty ratings up the hill in *Stad*’ for the duration. Instead we were to be victualled aboard the old, paid off deep-sea tug, *St. John* until a point when “space” became a factor. Enter

the much larger and recently de-commissioned *Cape Scott* whose aged presence and premises became our refit offices, hotel, and restaurant for the remainder of the refit.

Accept the fact that nearly all traditions in the RCN came from those observed and practised in the Royal Navy. Before the Crimean War, there was no such thing as a naval barracks. This meant that there was no continuous service for the lower deck and if a ship paid off into refit and there was a need to temporarily keep a ship's company together, it was "hulked," that is, lodged aboard any available old ship laid up in harbour, no matter how old or in what condition. With the introduction of continuous service, the system of depot ships came into being. When a ship's company paid off, the lower-deck ratings were sent to them until re-appointed to another sea-going ship. It was shortly before the birth of the RCN that these depot ships were superseded by barracks ashore, beginning with Portsmouth in 1895. This extends and may also account for the function of the more modern-day existence of RCN Depot, ashore in the WW2 *H.M.C.S. Peregrine* (CFB Windsor Park in Halifax) and *Stadacona*, which dealt with drafting matelots to and from sea-going ships.

Well the definition of hulk couldn't have been better defined than the idled and run-down states of the long-time sea-faring tug *St. John*, and the (built in Canada for the R.N. in WW2 as *H.M.S. Beachy Head*) *Cape Scott*. Within the thick layers of paint and rust, the cockies thrived in abundance. The lockers in "Great Scott" were battered, a shower or two worked, we had to try to maintain their cleanliness as inhabitants as well as pay equally divided attention but more important requirements of "our boat in refit." We were labelled "hulkers" and it's worthwhile to reflect on why sailors needed to have barracks at all if indeed the old salts always aimed that "sailors belonged on ships . . . and ships belonged at sea" . . . well, at least afloat in this case.

The weeks and long months that followed certainly came as a break in the routine. Sadly though, many of the original crew were starting to disperse. Typical of the navy, it was a society where some of the best friends in the world would depart and venture into other walks of life. Some would take release, others went back to gens', yet more got pier-head jumps to another submarine for such was the life in Canadian submarines. There were times that a fellow would come to work in the morning and find out he had the "forenoon trot," high up on the casing as the boat was docked down on the synchro-lift and certainly incapable of staying afloat, let alone even able to go to sea. Oh, what prolonged security! By 1000, he was relieved by somebody else who told him to

report to the inboard Coxswain's office only to find that he had been "pier-headed" to a boat that was sailing at 1600 on the same day. The good news was that you still had six hours to go so that you could go home and pack a quick change of nicks and socks and your shaving kit because you were heading out on a three-weeker.

But there was time for a little relaxation, especially during the dog days of refit when all the gear had been stripped out and now a lull in activity for a few weeks. We knew the dockyard workers were learning more and more about submarines but there were still many indicators that left suspicion about their methods of coordination.

A certain job order required that all trim system piping and associated flange work was to be removed from the boat, but before it could be tested and prepared before re-assembly, it had to be transported to Amherst NS where there was an "outside contract" for galvanizing. All pipes when disconnected, and there was many of them, were to have brass identification discs attached to them thereby indicating their joined assembly and pipe-mating sequence. When the pipes arrived at the plant in Amherst, the galvanizers quickly deduced that the brass discs attached by heavy gauge wire to each pipe end should be removed so that the information on them might not get distorted from galvanic action. Weeks later, the pipes arrived on the jetty in their shipping crates. Among the crates was a very much smaller one filled with brass identification discs. A four-week, 1000-piece jig saw puzzle was to begin the next day.

Well they were getting there we supposed, but an incident like that equated to the dexterity of a list of specifications that was one day, pinned upon a notice board in the submarine pipe shop. To some of the more intensive and dedicated pipe fitters, this was serious stuff and accepted by them as gospel.

From: Procurement Section-H.M.C. Dockyard, Halifax
Subject: Pipe Specifications-Shipboard

1. Pipe is to be fabricated with a long hole, surrounded by metal or plastic centred around the hole.
2. Pipe is to be hollow throughout the entire length - do not use holes of different length than the pipe.
3. The ID (Inside Diameter) of all pipe must not exceed the OD (Outside Diameter) – otherwise the hole will be on the outside.
4. Pipe is to be supplied with nothing in the hole, so that water, oil, steam or other agent can be put inside at a later date.

5. Carbon steel pipe should be supplied without rust; this can be more readily applied after installation.

NOTE: Suppliers ashore are now able to provide pre-rusted pipe with advanced notice. When available, it is highly recommended for installation, as it is time-effective.

6. All pipe greater than 500 ft. in length shall be clearly lettered "LONG PIPE" on each side and end. This will facilitate both dock and shipyard workers in knowing that the pipe is long.

7. Pipe over 2 miles in length must also be lettered "LONG PIPE" at half its length. This procedure will eliminate dock and shipyard workers having to walk the entire length of the pipe to determine how long it is.

8. All pipe greater than 6 ft. in diameter must be lettered "LARGE PIPE" in order to differentiate from small pipe.

9. Flanges are to be used on all pipe. Flanges are to have holes that will take bolts separate from the larger hole in the middle.

10. When submitting demand vouchers for 90 and 30 degree elbows, users are to specify left or right-hand configuration to prevent from going the wrong way.

11. Ensure specifications to the supplier include the requirement for level, uphill, or downhill pipe. When downhill pipe is used for going uphill, embodied agent will flow in the wrong direction.

12. All couplings should have either right or left-hand threads. Do not combine threads as couplings being screwed on one pipe will be unscrewed from the one adjacent.

13. Pipe shorter than 1/8" is uneconomical as it requires many joints. Such pipes are best described as washers.

14. Jointing in pipe for piping water must be water-tight. Pipe used in compressed air installation, need only to be airtight.

15. Pipe lengths may be welded or silver-soldered together while noting that this application is not recommended for plastic and vinyl tubing.

"We are Mechanical Fitters"

Refit had to have a means of holding regular meetings. Bits and lumps of submarine were scattered throughout the dockyard shops, and the people that had to witness and certify the tests needed a place to formulate the day's plan. Up on the hill on Barrington St., the Halifax landmarks were changing considerably with the construction of Scotia Square, high-rises, and the widening of the grand old thoroughfare a la Barrington.

Many old paper shops, tattoo parlours, private clubs, locker rooms, and houses of ill-repute were disappearing overnight. One establishment that veered from the wrecker's ball for a short time was the Mechanical Fitters' Club, north of Cornwallis St. and up from South Gate. Because of its continued success and large clientele, there was a reluctance by the city to disturb the club and it was deemed as the very last one to be demolished. So popular was the Fitters' Club that a sign was attached over the door from another submarine refit that read, "Ojibwa Ship's Office" . . . the place to draw up the work day's plan while over a beer or two. Highly regarded "Frank" Hansen, a retired P1 stoker, along with Dan Backewich from *Micmac* days, who was now a dockyard mechanical fitter, were "mine hosts." They always had a cheery smile and noted one day that a lot of the guys were starting to show up a little adrift for their meetings. The excuse was that the distance to travel by foot was often an obstacle so enter notorious "Iggy" Ritchie, the gruffed-voice, fast-speaking electrician from *Ojibwa*.

One day, looking out of the dockyard's South Gate, he noted that the office up on the hill was directly in a straight line, but the towering concrete CN railway embankment that divided the length of Barrington St. from the dockyard was an obstacle. Iggy reckoned that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, and that was pretty good for a "fusebox fusilier." Clearly and simply, there needed to be a way of scaling the embankment that would provide the shortcut.

Now during her first refit on the newly-constructed synchro-lift, *Ojibwa* was becoming physically overshadowed by the near completion of the synchro-shed, a structure intended to house and shelter a submarine during extended refit. The shed was to be of mammoth proportions near six-storeys high, and during the varying stages of construction, a 36 ft. telescopic ladder was erected to afford access to the aerial scaffolding. On this day, a few steeplejacks were up on the scaffolding busily doing their work, when Iggy decided to de-extend the ladder and smartly march it out of the nearby South Gate toward the concrete embankment. The puzzled commissionaires at the gate expected that this man was doing some extraordinary work beyond the dockyard confines so a challenge never emitted. At the bottom of the embankment, the ladder was stretched to its fullest, to see Iggy clambering and now arriving at the Fitters' Club in record time. It is not known how the steeplejacks, who were later seen swinging their arms and hollering for attention from someone below, ever did safely reach the ground when sometime later, they discovered that their ladder had disappeared. Such refit facilities were of course inherited, but

things were changing. The Ojibwa Ship's Office was finally demolished and the tempo of the refit was picking up dramatically. Tests and trials became in hot demand and the loss of expertise from the old gang meant lots of extra hours. Among newcomers in submarines, it was at first a little difficult to comprehend that we were starting to receive guys right out of submarine school with no sea experience although they had been to sea aboard the greyhounds. There was reluctance at first for it was a time of change and the type of new submariners that we had to adjust to were now a product of the RCN that had gone through the infant home-grown submarine school in *Stadacona* Fleet School for basic submarine training.

The second commission

So, by late spring in 1973, the refit finally drew to a close and the trials and set to work became hectic with long days and gruelling nights to meet deadlines. *Okanagan* had seen a vast change in her crew and by now, we had gone through several skippers. We sailed for work ups to the Yew Kay after a very busy time in order to get the boat ready for sea. We had completed both harbour and sea acceptance trials and had done a dive or two. To assure the captain, LCdr Jim "Dinger" Bell, that we were certified "Safe," and capable of dealing with some of the more basic ship safety drills, RN sea trainers had earlier visited us to certify the capability during a "Fast Cruise" at Bedford Basin on a buoy, or at anchor.

We were now cleared to proceed to Portsmouth in surface passage and were only authorized to do the occasional trim dive to circulate the sea water and potential change in S.G. that would otherwise have an effect on the submarines trim and displacement. We had a good bunch in the wardroom and it no doubt extended from the fact that Jim Bell was the skipper, Brian Fisher was the First Lt., and the ginger beer was a chap named Lt. Terry Jones. LCdr Bell knew he had a good and knowledgeable crew and where if there was a shortage, he knew there was an over-abundance of example and initiative aboard that would draw that very small redundancy into positiveness.

These officers were learned, seasoned, very practical and had a multitude of experience behind them. That experience not only provided each other with the confidence of being good submarine officers but more importantly, their assuredness extended into the minds of the other officers which allowed them to be able to think on their feet. For those that were junior and naturally deprived of experience, they were not to be distracted

and in a tizzy from scorn that agitated the potential for making mistakes. The bottom line was good leadership from the top and everybody outside the wardroom door and throughout the boat, rewardingly reacted at an equal level.

At Portsmouth, we would spend about ten days alongside in final preparation to commence work ups almost immediately on arrival at Faslane. Frequent visits from the inboard staff, the I.W.'s, convinced them that this crowd in *Okanagan* were not slouches, were well conversant with equipment and systems, and in RN standards, viewed as a very experienced crew. Because we had enjoyed a very efficient and well-overseen refit, and that this crew was well qualified as submariners, they gave us top billing and with great assertion stating, "It was almost a waste of time. You're on your own!"

There was another air of confidence displayed that while at Blockhouse, there was time to receive and socialize with the I.W.'s. By that association, soon saw that we were possessed of "working hard and playing hard." We sure did . . . while all the little things like oil tests, vibration runs, machinery repairs, stores acquisitions, etc. got looked after very nicely, a display of teamwork was all so evident when sound room ratings came to assist the stokers in painting out their compartments and doing a trick during a charge. As well, stokers at all-hands-in, would lend, rather than bear a hand in striking down fish, seamen's stores, and even painting the casing. There was time to gather and play as well. At first, the I.W.'s were rather staunch in their self-made opinions of us and kept their distance. Finally, after realizing of our genuine worth and capability, we became very accepted. They came to enjoy us equally, as did we they.

A couple of weeks later and well into the work-up in Scotland, we went to a buoy in Rothesay Bay for a weekend after disembarking the STS to the *James Bond*. Traditionally, during work ups, the crew had to remain in a tempo of high degree readiness so that they could alertly respond at the will of the sea trainers during the week to follow. In the eyes of skipper Dinger Bell, there was an option in maintaining that tempo. Expectations of the STS as well as all submarines in work ups were that the boat would go off to open waters on her own and drill for the entire weekend until on time on Monday morning at 0700, be in a convenient navigational position to recover the staff only to absorb another week of turmoil, very little sleep, and more mother-Britain abuse. The end result was that nothing changed from the time that they left until knackered more than ever on Monday morning, resume with the drill where only one side was rested.

Not this time as far as Dinger was concerned. Not only was he strong in his own confidence, he knew he had an efficient but very tired crew. It was a perfect opportunity to give his own a rest and blow off a little steam, himself included. A good run ashore was in order and Rothesay was the place to do it.

A 50 P look at a hotel room

At the buoy, the local pusser's P.A.S. boat was available to ferry us ashore on a limited schedule. Once ashore, you could opt to stay in a bed and breakfast, a hotel, some party's flat for those inclined, or be silly enough to head back aboard for the night on the last P.A.S. boat run.

All the officers except the OOD opted to stay ashore so they all booked in at the Phoenix Hotel. Needless to say, they were also in desperate need of a bath. It was a nice and moderate lodging that sat in the middle of this holiday town where down in the cellars, a little bar and disco would later serve as a good place to finish up at the end of the run ashore in the evening.

The cost per night was 3 pounds each and when Lt. "Bill" Hawes, the navy', checked in and being the last to do so, found his charges to be 3 pound and 50 pence. He wondered why, but thought it too trivial to ask of the receptionist.

As he arrived in his room, there was an obvious explanation. He had a beautiful view of the bay upon which was centred, *Okanagan* swingin' on the buoy. The others must have only had a view of the back alley or maybe none at all, and now Bill began to enjoy his mint room with a view.

The first call was to have a bath so in typical British fashion, he trotted down the hall to the communal heads and washplace to have his dip. He immediately noted that he was the last to do so among this mankey group. There were five dirty rings around the bathtub that looked like fanbelts. Typical of most British hotels, towels weren't supplied, so Bill had to dig out his mankey old towel that he had brought up from the boat for the off chance he might get it dhobeyed ashore.

This routine went on for the three nights that they stayed at the hotel until finally, very early on Monday morning, it was time to check out, return to the boat, slip from the buoy, recover the STS and resume work ups. Like any matelot, officers included, in order to check out from hotels needs to be a very simple and quick operation when you're on a run ashore just in case you were a slack hammock and didn't turn out in time and miss

being wherever you had to be. Rule 1 provides that you never completely unpack your bag and put things away in closets and drawers. Rule 2 is that at the last minute before leaving the room for the last time, you do a quick shuftee of every drawer and closet to make sure you never left anything behind.

Bill, in conducting the requirements provided by rule 2, then had a horrible shock when he opened the closet door and found that it wasn't a closet. Staring him in the face was a full three- piece bathroom and shower complete with fluffy white towels, bars of soap and shampoo everywhere, and even a nail brush that this wayward submarine officer could have used to great advantage. "Ah-ha! in his now settled unearthing . . . the extra 50P!"

The cleaning maids must have concluded that the three-day inhabitant of this room was a very dirty person by habit and also lended toward their conclusion that all submariners never washed at all. . .not even ashore. When he got down the boat and told of his tale, E.O. Lt. Terry Jones dubbed the term as, "The 50P look at a hotel room." Meanwhile in the donk shop, the clankies were craning their necks forward through the bulkhead door, tee-heein' and pointing fingers over the supercharged din of engines "Bert and Ernie," as we got underway and on with the work up.

Ambassadors . . .Bill joins Brian

Later on, some other events occurred. One evening while alongside Faslane, Brian Fisher and Bill Hawes went for a chinky-nosh in beautiful down town Helensbagels. They went into the restaurant and there was some difficulty presented by a mild language barrier between the two diners and the very hospitable and receptive waiter. They managed to get across that a bottle of wine was in order to begin with. The selection of a starter was to be as difficult and with picturesque descriptions of chickens flapping wings, doing "cluck-clucks" and drawing oval shapes on napkins, they managed to persuade the waiter's assumption that egg rolls would go down well before a main course. Moments later along with the choice wine, smalley plates arrived for two upon which were carefully presented for each of the diners, a fried egg tucked inside a bread roll. Like chop suey is in the U.S.A, egg rolls in Britain and in this case Scotland, are so un-Chinese and it becomes difficult for oriental waiters to understand the need for this foreign fare in a MacFong-Chow-Helensbagels a la Hoo-Haw type dining establishment.

Another time, to get away from the submarine environment in the west of Scotland, the zany pair caught a train to the posher east end of the country for a run ashore and stayed in an Edinburgh hotel for a weekend. They didn't go to Edinburgh to sightsee.

When they checked in, the hotel porter led them into their room. As he placed the bags down, he went over to a darkened window and blasted the room with sunshine as he quickly drew the curtains open. "And the-r-r-e y'ar-r gentlemen! A fine vie-e-w of Edinbur-r-r-r-gh Cassal!" he said in his very Scottish accent. Brian quickly went over to the window and had a butcher's. He then grasped the curtains and hauled them shut as the room returned to its dimness while exclaiming with a titter: "We didn't come here to look at fukkin' castles! Thanks anyway, Jock."

During the stay, they were having a dinner-time sesh' in a hotel bar with another bunch from the boat that also thought that Edinburgh was a good destination. By this time, the barman was well aware of who they were and where they were from, and how they were spending their weekend in Edinburgh. At their displeasure, the bar was shut down precisely at 1400 in accordance with', and in complete compliance of the Scottish drinking laws. It was Brian's round and they were enjoying the clientele and atmosphere so much that they wanted to stay.

Many perks exist in Britain's hotels and guesthouses that have a private bar. If you're a resident, one's privilege and pleasure to continue tipping can be extended at request to the barman . . . as was generally the case at Harry Two-Sawyers in Chatham. In order to qualify of the perk, you must demonstrate that you are a resident. In this case, Brian quickly flashed a room key. It was the key to his cabin at the base in Faslane. The barman being suspicious and equally as cunning, noted the number on the key ring. Then with a perfectly deadpan face he inquired, "Excuse me sur-r-r, but d'yar-r-really live in the men's r-r-o-o-m?"

. . .and so it went.

George Sullivan recalls more during this memorable work-up. "I remember steaming up to Faslane through the lochs and Gordie, Ray Middleton, and I fallen in with the casing party telling Flew' the casing officer, about all the bonnie-wee-hen Scottish girls peering down at us from the hills above. He was girl crazy and was looking everywhere. We then said "Look! Are you blind? They're all right over there." as we

pointed to the casing party. “They’ve got submarine jersies on!” He still didn’t get it until we started “b-a-a-hing” at each other.

And then one night, most of the crew were in “the Grapes” in Rothesay, and I was half in the bag and I kept asking Dinger if we were doing okay in the work-up. I guess I asked once too often because he snapped at me that if we weren’t, he would soon let us know. Being half pissed I snapped back. I was sure he would and that it was too bad that he didn’t let us know when we were doing well now and then with an occasional “Well Done,” I being a Master Seaman at that time, figured I would hear about it the next day but nothing was ever said. From that day on, he hardly spoke to me, but he did start saying “Well done lads!” from that point on.”

The work up trudged on wearily. Long hard hours with little sleep and going alongside or to a buoy every weekend, compensated for some well-earned equanimity. STS was secretly pleased with our progress both in the three-week safety phase and now at the close of the equally long operational window, as we returned to the western approaches from the Irish Sea. The secret progressively eroded through STS’s accelerating mannerisms and decelerating demands. Everybody was getting’ cocky and anxious. . .to get on our jolly to Liverpool, and then sail home. We were being forecasted as the best work up performance ever staged by any submarine that had done so in Faslane including the RAN and RN SSK’s and even the “muppets” in their SSBN bombers and fast attack SSN’s. Then disaster struck!

The tanker and a submarine

The underwater collision of HMCS/m *Okanagan* with RFA *Grey Rover* in 1973, was a significant event in Canadian submarine history. From the 60’s to the 90’s, there had been near misses and bottomings as well as weapon hits, Julie bomb scares, and sonar domes banging into fins, that drew moments of anxiety in the minds of all submariners. Loud echoes of “Sonavabitch, that was close!” when witness to the superficial scars in black paintwork became the sporadic norm. But there was nothing quite like the day that a tanker ran over a submarine that had the boat been a few feet shallower and the same distance forward, the result could have been fatal. The present-day dismembered crew often look back to the time it happened, but not in a way as most would expect as a bad memory. Instead, they reflect on the event as a bonding experience, a fraternal relationship, and an expression of confidence in how they reacted in such a serious

situation. Some may have felt indifferent, but all of us gratefully realized how lucky we were. To this day, the still uneasy reflections are often discussed by them, but among matelots, the humourous ones prevail more favourably. In just the following year, we were well into exercises off Puerto Rico when a message arrived onboard declaring that *Onondaga* had completed refit and was on this day, sailing for Yewkay and workups in Scotland. In the mess, we decided to send her a message recognizing her good work in getting out of Halifax and indeed underway, which in itself was a major accomplishment. The message read: QUOTE FROM THE CHIEFS AND PETTY OFFICERS OKANAGAN TO THE CHIEFS AND PETTY OFFICERS ONONDAGA - GOOD LUCK - GOOD SAILING - YOUR REFIT IS OVER - WHEN YOU GET TO FASLANE, LOOK OUT FOR GREY ROVER UNQUOTE

Another amusing aspect emerges from submariners apart, who, in a show of prowess and with a lot of help from the clouds in the passage of time, their approbation of being a “roughly-toughy submariner” was aggrandized by acclaiming their presence in the encounter as well. “Young fella! You shoulda’ seen us!” A quarter century later, the numbers of people aboard had grown to about nine hundred. . .from the crew of just sixty-six.

Fate came during the very last serial of WUP’s at 0743, 28 July 1973 with just 17 minutes left before surfacing and heading back to Faslane. After picking up our inboard stores, we would then be heading for Liverpool . . .then home. It had been a gruelling 24 hours where STS had been throwing everything at us. Almost everyone had been on their pins for one evolution or another existing on a power nap or two, as the staff corralled their information and let us have it again. WUP’s was scheduled to end at 0800 that day, surface, stick the cotters in, and then over the tannoy, revel in the “attaboys” from Captain, Sea Training, “Tubby” Squires.

MS George Sullivan: (Sound Room)

“What I remember of the big CANAVFINMOD is that it all seemed to happen in slow time. In the sound room was “Buddy” Thomas the UC1, “Lucky” Gordon on 187 Attacker, and me on 719 Scanner. I’m pretty sure Vic Carter was on the planes, and guys like “Pigpen” Cameron, Tony Ohara, and “Dummer” Harris were on 197 Watcher, Echo Sounders, UW telephone, and the tape recorder.

We were all worn out, as this was the final evolution . . .the work-up finale. I was told afterwards that the underwater look (UWL) was not

normally left till last as it required everyone to be on their toes. In our case, the inboard squadron engineer, had gone over to Faslane before we got there and had inferred to STS that *Okanagan*'s crew were a bunch of jacky bastards who more or less thought they were the "wonder crew" and they sailed in the "Showboat" and their shite didn't stink. (in looking back, it was probably true because we were. . . and it didn't!)

The UWL was scheduled last . . .right from day one, and was going to be the most awkward work-up programme STS could present. "Ta show these colonial baaastards wot was wot!" The night before, we were late coming down from the Cumbries to the mouth of the Clyde as we were supposed to make an opposed submerged transit with A/C everywhere. This slowed our progress so in order that we rendezvous with *Grey Rover* on time in the early morning, we surfaced and put up some extra lights to make us look like a fishing boat. Then we illuminated and got nailed by a Sea King helo about 0200. The approach was not the standard for a UWL, ie: fall in directly astern of the target, get him tracking for course and speed on the TCC, go down to 90 feet, then work your way up and under.

Because we were late, Captain Sea Training (CST) had us make a right-angle approach on the beam of the ship, go down to 90 feet at the last minute and then turn into and under the ship. I remember the ST CPO UC1 rate saying that in all his years, it was the first time he had seen it done that way and he was a little concerned about it."

Lt. Bill Hawes (Navigator):

"The serial task was to do underwater photography on RFA *Grey Rover*, a 7,509-ton auxiliary tanker. We had done a "look" on her earlier in the work-up so we weren't new at it. We were heading north after doing an overnight, counter clockwise, circumnavigation of the Isle of Arran. GR, aware that the work-up was almost over, knew that we would be heading north and back to Faslane. She was steering southeast around the NE corner of 'Arran to proceed slowly off our starboard side and down the middle of the trench. This was a deep patch that roughly lay NW/SE off the east side of 'Arran. This way we wouldn't end up miles away from the entrance to the Clyde and thus delay our arrival in Faslane. She knew that we were doing a "look" and that made it easy for us to get underneath and give us plenty of room. She also expected that we had a low battery after being hammered by all kinds of nasty things from the sea trainers all night."

MS George Sullivan:

“The whole attack team was like a bunch of zombies because we were so knackered, we were all struggling just to stay awake on the sets. It was almost like a dream. . .that feeling you get when you are drifting off to sleep. . . but of course, that was soon to change.”

Lt. Bill Hawes:

“GR going slow to help us out, was probably the reason we got into trouble in the first place. I believe C.O. “Dinger” Bell, probably overestimated her speed during the approach. We had to do two things . . . first, to get behind and then underneath her. There is a tricky manoeuvre that destroyers do from time to time. They join from ahead and take station while doing a 180-degree turn. It’s difficult to judge as to when to “put on wheel,” so as to make a major turn and end up on the right station at the right speed. It looks fantastic when it’s done right but it can be very embarrassing if it isn’t. Like I say, a tricky manoeuvre in a destroyer on the roof, but submarines hardly ever need to station keep and never ever have I seen one try to join from ahead.

The second requirement was the UWL itself. Standard procedure is to get 500 yards astern of target at periscope depth (PD), get her corpin and tack nailed down precisely, and then speed up to close the gap. You then go deep just underneath, so that the top of attack periscope will be just 5 or 6 feet away from her keel. We had done it before but I think this time, knowing Dinger’s flamboyancy, I would guess that he was trying to do both procedures rolled into one. If he had pulled it off, the Brits’ would still be talking about it today. Alas, they still talk about it today but not for the reasons that Dinger and all of us would have hoped for. He was to join from ahead at PD combined with a diving turn into station right underneath, and then proceed normally into the UWL.

I was on the LOP with little Reggie Daigle, who was standing on his “box.” There was lots of talent in the control room. Cdr (SM1) J.C. Wood and Captain “Tubby” Squires, who was taking up precious real estate kipped out on the diving panel stool. Brian Fisher was the First Lieutenant and Terry Jones was the EO on the trim. The ST CPO UC1 was half asleep in the corner of the sound room.”

LS Tony O'Hara: (sound room)

“We were holding *Grey Rover* on 187 and 719 making either 120 or 140 rpm, which didn’t mean much as GR had a variable-pitch propeller. She was coming toward about 30 degrees on the starboard bow. We picked

her up on 197 and at about this time, we started the turn to starboard to come astern.”

Lt. Hawes:

“During the approach we stopped getting “normal setups,” so exactly where GR was in the last few minutes wasn’t apparent to us on the LOP. The CEP operator was smart enough to figure out where she was as although Dinger wasn’t always calling out the bearings, he knew from the repeat what bearing he was looking at and managed to put a mark of what the visual bearing was even though it wasn’t being called out. He was also plotting the sonar bearings of her screw noise. It was later said that it was obvious that there was going to be a prang as the sonar and visual bearings were moving in different directions . . . but hindsight is 20/20. None of that talent onboard said anything before it happened and as Dinger was the only one at a periscope, it was all up to him. I certainly didn’t know we were going to get hit until a split second before it happened.

During the approach, Dinger was doing lots of looks. So, when he ordered “Down forward,” he just wanted the periscope to go “to the boards” . . . not all the way down. During the final stages of the approach, I believe that he became aware that GR was proceeding much more slowly than we/he had estimated. Due to the speed over-estimation, we ended up turning to starboard and toward, sooner than we should have. Dinger was well aware of this during the turn as he stopped main motors a couple of times during the approach. I thought this was unusual, but I still didn’t twig as to why he was wanting to slow. As realized later, GR was not drawing quickly enough to the right as expected and that we were approaching her at right angles. The distance “off track” was closing as we approached her track. Unfortunately, we had turned too soon and it wasn’t “distance off past track” we were closing. . . it was “distance off future track.”

Ls Tony O'Hara:

“Her screw noise should have started moving down our starboard side as we passed but instead, moved to dead ahead, and stayed there. There was some frantic looking at the plot by XO, Brian Fisher. I reported that the bearing was not moving and the noise level on 197 was at max. The skipper ordered “Up forward,” and the periscope was no sooner up when he ordered, “Full dive on the planes, “Flood Q,” and “Down forward.” I can’t remember if he got a chance to order, “Standby for collision” or not, but I do remember the periscope handles were just at the “boards” when we were hit.

GR struck but at first, her pressure surge rolled us to starboard better than thirty degrees. Then her propeller started tearing into the fin sounding like a stick in a fan. We were at 150 feet and soon on our way to bottom. On the way down, skipper then ordered Q, blow main ballast, and we hit the roof. Later, the echo sounder trace recorded us around 150 feet. I'll bet we ploughed up some mud.

Someone tried to open the conning tower hatch and it would only move a few inches because of debris on top of it. I think several people may have tried. Peter Flewelling then had a crack at it with Terry Jones, the trimming officer at the lower lid suggesting; "Would it help if I sent up some pusser's black tape?" That statement just eased the tension and anxiety in the whole control room."

MS George Sullivan:

"Dinger ordered, "Raise forward." One last look before we turn!" I saw his hand trying to rotate the periscope handle to low power and it was already in low power. I was on the 719 and had a clear view as this occurred. His face was sweaty and ashen and had a look of utter shock and disbelief as he stepped back from the periscope because during the last two looks, he thought he was in high power putting GR at a further range. Then it was a 5 or 10 second wait until we hit that seemed to take forever along with the question on all of our minds. . .what was going to happen? I watched the relative bearing on Attacker/Scanner move to the opposite beams as the boat went under GR at right angles. Normally, at this point, Attacker should have shown the propeller noise directly astern, and Scanner (fin), directly ahead. Combined, it created the rising feeling of apprehension and that things were going terribly wrong."

Lt. Hawes:

I can recall JED Bell's exact words immediately before it happened and what the main motors were doing at the time. I thought there was no doubt about it but years later, I have heard people say that he had ordered the usual, "Full ahead together. . . Flood Q . . . 180 feet . . . Midships . . . Down all masts," etc. This was definitely not the case. He gave some non-standard orders and the telegraphs and motors were at "Stop" when it all happened. Just seconds before, Dinger ordered, "**Down forward**" . . .**all the way down. . .Flood Q . . . Flood D's . . . Flood everything . . . Fuck!**"

The author (First panel watchkeeper):

"I opened Q and D Kingstons and inboard vents, and the 'planes went to full dive. The mast watchkeeper "Tug" Wilson, then attempted to lower

the search periscope and check all masts down. The rams on the attack periscope bucked back and forth across what must have been a good ten-inch arc, clanging in echo against the full length of the mast tube intermittently sliding to its full bottom stroke. The search periscope (camera shipped), jammed at two-thirds raised. GR's surge began to heel us over and as the boat began to right herself, the fin shuddered continuously and tore apart in a loud rhythm like a giant rat chewin' celery. Seconds later, the skipper shot forward to the accommodation space hatch position and ordered through the tannoy. **"Blow main ballast. . .Blow Q . . .Blow everything. . .Surface!"** . . .and so, I did, in a whirl of haste like I never did, a thousand times before.

As debris was suspected above the tower upper lid, surfacing officer Peter Flewelling stepped smartly forward to the accommodation space hatch in order to gain access to the bridge. . .if it was still there. I told Tug to go with him as it was certainly not a standard surfacing and his presence would decidedly help in the unknown situation that they were about to be confronted with when they'd arrive up top. Moments later in the control room, XO Brian Fisher got up into the tower and with 'up-above' assistance from Flew', Tug finally got the upper lid open. Above him in the sunlit dawn, the bridge. . . was gone."

Lt. Hawes:

"Within a few seconds we were hit hard on the port side of the fin. We at first rolled over to starboard from the pressure surge and then this godawful noise kept tearing into the fin that jived with her shaft revolutions, as over half the length of the "floatin' refinery" scrapped us. I'll never forget that noise that went on for so long and as I looked at the port side of the control room, I fully expected water to start gushing in. Fortunately, it didn't, and then it stopped as GR passed, her single wheel taking a last swipe at the fin as she went. I recall shaking violently for several minutes. I tried to use a parallel rule on the chart to get our exact lat/long for a "Subsunk" message but my hands were shaking so badly that I think Reggie had to hold my hands steady so I could get the position. Reggie toppled from his box."

MS George Sullivan:

"The ST CPO UC1 rate was in the sound room. As we hit, he muttered "Christ . . . not again!" We find out later that it was the third time he had been involved in an underwater collision, the first two with soviet vessels while in 'nuke' boats. Captain "Tubby" Squires, was sittin' on the panel

stool tipped out and when we hit, he jumped straight up and drove his bonce into one of the HP air master valves above him. It took him a few seconds to totally wake up and rub his head from the 'crack' when he realized what had happened. He turned to Terry Jones, the diving officer and beckoned in a strong voice, "Are you pumping?" To which Terry replied calmly, "No Sir! We are not flooding." Then, what I remember more than anything was the clamour of GR's propeller chewin' up the fin and the noise of the water flooding into D tanks. . . or was it flooding into the boat?"

Lt. Hawes:

"It was strangely quiet after she passed. I'm not sure when it was realized that all the masts except the ALN were jammed. There was a brief moment of panic on my part, when in preparing for surfacing, water started pissin' in all over Vic Carter. I thought we had sprung a leak in the pressure hull but instead was a full bore of water coming from the voice pipe. In opening the lower voice pipe cock in prep' for surfacing, the length of voice pipe extending to the bridge had sheared and was wide open to sea. We shut the lower voice pipe cock and I started to breathe again, but stayed shakin'. The next problem was during the surfacing. Both periscopes were cancelled out and the conning tower hatch couldn't be opened because of all the shrapnel on top of it. We were blind. When the order to start the LP Blower was given, whoever it was down in the AMS rammed the starter through the resistors too quickly and blew the fuses. We had to do the "blow-round" via HP to LP and since we couldn't get out through the tower hatch, access to the casing was through the accommodation space hatch. . . much closer to the waterline. We used some pile of air ensuring that we had enough buoyancy to open a hatch that we couldn't see and was low to the water. The first bit of humour that I recall out of all this was several minutes later. After someone had finally gotten the conning tower hatch open. I recall a radio lady, the attack PR standing underneath the hatch. Something was wrong. There was sunlight shining on his face. Brian Fisher, from somewhere near the OOW panel said to him, "Is there any damage to the fin?" The radio lady looked up and with the sunlight shining on his face said to Fisher in a very calm serious voice, "Sir, there is no fin!" Shortly after, Terry Jones the engineer replied to a call for assistance by Peter Flewelling at the top of the tower. "Would it help if I passed up a roll of pusser's black tape?" I laughed. It was good to be able to see that life would go on and that humour was still very important."

MS George Sullivan:

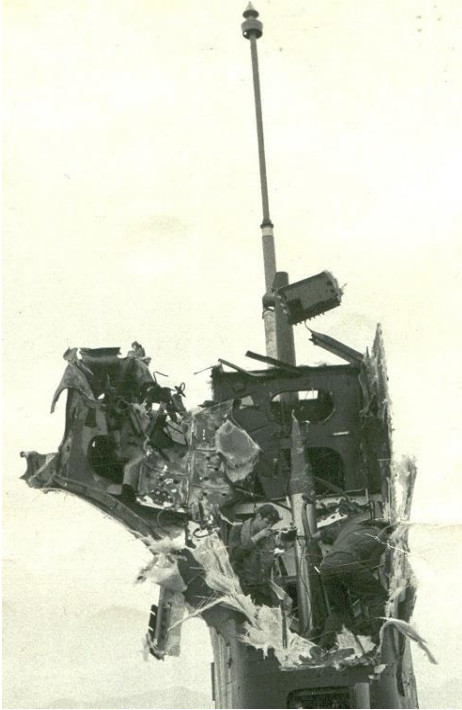
"I don't remember too much of the surfacing procedure other than we couldn't get the upper lid open and Tug and Flew' went up through the accommodation space hatch. I was the scratcher and Ray Middleton was my "dickey", but we were on the surface for a good fifteen minutes before we went up. Earlier, as I rushed forward to get my scratcher gear ready, Dinger pushed by me and turned into the wardroom. He fired his stopwatch across the bunhouse where it smashed into beaucoup pieces. Then, Commander Wood said to him, "It's okay Jim. . . it's okay!" I remember thinking. . . "I/C stopwatches, Navvy's yeoman ain't gonna like that!"

After getting the gear, I stood by with Ray at the accommodation space hatch until we were ordered up on the casing. He went up first and I passed him the gear. There was "in-vogue" expression for surprise that I often used and Ray sensed that I might use it again. He said, "Sully! Don't say "fukarat" when you see this!" So, when I stuck my head above the accommodation space hatch and saw half the fin hangin' over the starboard side. . .well, that's exactly what I said.

The aftermath. . .

After we got back to full buoyancy, muddled minds resulted from both, emotions and the physical irregularities of structural damage and confusion could frequently abound. Exasperated, demoralized, and with an element of embarrassment, it was now the painstaking task to head into Faslane. We would have to exhibit our demise to submarine crews alongside and "staffs" ashore, they, no longer acknowledging that HMCS/m *Okanagan* was nearing the end of one of the most successful work-ups a submarine had ever accomplished. Just two hours had gone by since the collision and every man aboard felt uncertainty. What went wrong? Why did it happen? What did a submarine and her crew that performed so well in WUPS do to have to suffer this? How close did we come to sinking? Messages were flying back and forth, people on the casing and bridge were surrounded in disarray as were some minds, and for the rest of us below, tried to find strength with the horns of dilemma, however disguised with apathy or insensibility. And with having to live with a memory that shall never go away, each man in the crew inherited some form of influence or constant reminder of that bittersweet day in the Clyde approaches. After all that and in anticipation of an otherwise reason to celebrate the end of the work-up, the chefs had laid on steak, eggs, and

all the trimmings for breakfast. We still had steak but of the flavour and “to waste” by many, that none shall ever forget. While enduring remorse, an inquiry began immediately in order to review the proceedings that led to this near disaster. Concurrently, another pressing activity radiated. The ominous task of assessing the damage. The forward portion of the fin



Transit to Faslane

*Lt. Peter Flewelling and Outside Killick
'Tug' survey the immediate damage while
finding somewhere to stand.*



Alongside Faslane
Outside Wrecker (author)

(including the bridge and all of the electrical cabling) was torn away and hanging over the side. The monocular hood of the attack periscope had been sheered away, while the more robust binocular search periscope remained jammed in the fully raised

position. The impact would surely result in severe distortion of several of the mast hull and intermediate support bearings. Finally, and as a gruesome reminder, the state of the damage to the fin embodied a tell-tale image of just what went on after the first surge from *Grey Rover's* approach. As the boat rolled back into the tanker's churning screw, the numbers of shaft revolutions had undulated into the fin that now resembled the teeth of a giant hacksaw.

Home-port Halifax seemed so far away and the opportunities of ever getting back across the pond were feared as an impossibility. Our dearly beloved mangled and mutilated *Okanagan*, lay alongside in far-off Scotland, with a huge question mark hovering over her battered mass.

What should be done now? Some of the more-informed opined, "Devonport dockyard to dock down and get the datum back!" Others said, "We'll need to construct a brand-new fibre glass fin from the bottom up!" And from a cynical few came, "She'll never dive again!" But indeed, there was someone who was thinking on his feet . . . who decided that a temporary fin repair constructed with mild steel would get us home on the roof. Enter the ingenious jury-rig design of Jerry Broad, an RN construction officer who said with an air of confidence: "This should get you back across the Atlantic. . .no more, no less!"

The decision was made. . .re-construction of the fin commenced with Mr. Broad and his inboard staff. As the Outside Wrecker, I would oversee the attempt as ninety percent of the damage was on my slop chit.

"Hooley time"

MS George Sullivan:

"Most of the Ops crew would have to remain in the areas in case they were required for the inquiry. Sauchiehall St. in Glasgow became Lyme St. in Liverpool as our well-earned jolly up the Mersey River for some R & R had fizzled away. But before a run into Glasgow, *Grey Rover* invited a gaggle of us over to their messes sometime after we got escorted alongside between two frigates. When we got aboard, "Farley" Mowat stole the ship's wheel which had to be returned. As a consolation, we were more successful when we snurped' their kisby ring and stand, and her tally board which we eventually managed to take back to Halifax.

As we snarled ashore in varying states, Gordie Hamilton and I felt a little furry, scaley, and thick in the mouth. Peering at the serenity and coolness of the loch, we decided to jump in the harbour. It felt, "Oh so good and refreshing!" Well it didn't take long for the MOD police to show up with their man-eating Doberman security dogs and order us out of the harbour. While we sat dripping wet on the jetty deciding what they were going to do with us, like a friendly and very humane submariner that I am, I decided to have a yarn with one of the mutts. We shook paws and then I scratched his ears, tickled his throat, and did all sorts of other nice doggy things. Then Gordie, in his new found alertness, loudly and nervously warned, "They'll attack you! They'll attack you!" while the copper in his familiarity, opined, "You're not supposed to be able to do that!" Assuredly I retorted with a "Fa-a-ck off, fa-a-ack off! They know I'm a good guy!" They never did attack me."

The “navvy” turns saboteur

Lt. Bill Hawes:

“After the prang, I had a couple of days off so I decided to head back to Rothesay. Since the early part of the work-up, it had seemed like such a nice friendly place to re-visit. Once you got the hang of the hotels there, it’s an O.K. place. I took a taxi to Helensbagel, got on the “wee-blue” train to Glasgow, and then one down to a town across from Rothesay to get the ferry. As it seemed to take some time to get there, I thought I should return in plenty of time on Sunday in order to get back aboard for Monday morning. I forget where I booked a room but it wasn’t at the Phoenix. I was too mortified to show my face back there from my “50P look at the hotel room.” Later, I ended up having a few drinks at The Grapes and wiled the rest of the day away.

The next morning, I recall seeing the newspapers with articles about the boat’s prang. Then a couple of poxy Jocks at a nearby table suspected that I was Canadian from hearing my accent when I was ordering my wets. A conversation developed. They didn’t know that I was from the boat, but they were aware of the incident. One mentioned that he’d heard about a Canadian submarine “having a spot of trouble” the previous day. He then passed his regrets about this tragedy having happened to a vessel from the same country from which I hailed. He said, “I sure wouldn’t want to have been the navigator on that boat!” “Well guess what?” I responded. “You’re lookin’ at him!”

Eyes widened while they very diplomatically reversed course about it being a tragedy. Then after I explained that we were trying to do a rendezvous of sorts, they then concluded that it really was “spot-on” navigation. Well they thought I needed some cheering up after the trauma of it all by introducing me to a Scot tradition of a “pint and a half,” a pint of beer washed back with a large whiskey. That led to another and another as I was to find they were shipyard workers from Govan shipyards on the south side of the Clyde. They were spending the weekend in Rothesay but more definitively, in The Grapes. They had their own boat which they secured at a little town on the way down from Glasgow.

Well after many wets the pubs all shut, so we decided to go aboard their boat until they opened again. The boat was moored out in the harbour so we rowed over in their dinghy. After all that whiskey, the evolution was more like a Chinese fire drill. We finally got alongside to find out that there was somebody else aboard. Only two could come ashore, as their boat had quite a bad leak and somebody needed to stay aboard to keep pumping out.

. .manually of course. It was a pretty old scow but it seemed to be well stocked with the stuff you need in order to continue with what we had been doing in The Grapes.

I was still wrestling with the hassle of getting back to Faslane by reversing my route with ferries, trains, and taxis. This didn't seem too worry them at all but when I insisted, "I must go!" they offered to take me back up to the Gare Loch in their boat. By this time, I wasn't thinking too straight and it all seemed like a great idea. I agreed that if they were going my way I might as well hitch a ride and besides, they probably thought that a fourth body could help out with the pumpin' out the bilges.

I noticed that once we got underway, the water started coming in even faster and rigorous and continued pumping was now required. So that's the way it was all the way back. One steerin', one pumpin' and the other two emptyin' bottles of whiskey. I had given very little thought of where they would drop me off at the base thinking somewhere before it. I mean you just can't have some broken down old scow laden with drunken poxy Jocks and a Canuck enter a top-secret submarine base filled with ballistic missile nuclear submarines, could you? Well I kept wondering what jetty they had in mind. The government wharf in 'Bagels would be a good place and wouldn't put them too far out of their way. But no . . . we roared past all that the Town of Helensburgh offered and next thing you know, we were headin' up through the Rhu Narrows. I thought it was very kind that they'd go so far out of their way but now, I kept wondering where they were going to drop me off. They must know some good spot just past the narrows I thought. Not a bit of it because with engine at full power, we headed right up the Gare Loch and right for the base. I should have tried to stop them but after all that whiskey it just seemed like a seafaring thing to do. And really, who would mind, I thought. They were just doing a favour for a fellow sailor down on his luck.

As we approached the base, it was now pitch dark, but much more than normal, there seemed to be a fair amount of boat traffic roaming about. But there was no stopping us. We were committed in going alongside a Top-Secret operational submarine base. I recall some search light being beamed at us, but still we kept on. Finally, the skipper asked what jetty I would like to be dropped off at. I said the one near *Okanagan* would be very convenient. We pulled up alongside a ladder on one of the jetties not too far from where the boat was tied up. I then bid them adieu and objectively devoted all my attention and skill to navigating up the ladder. It seemed like a long climb as I was unsteady on my feet after all the cheering-up we had given ourselves to get over the impact of the collision.

I was just near the top of the ladder when my new-found friends cast off, making their turn for heading south out of the Gare Loch. There was loud singing and frolicking. At the top of the ladder, there were several folks there to greet me and help me up. Very kind of them, I thought, but then I saw that they were all carrying weapons. Whoops! What kind of mess had I got myself into? Were they like the U.S. Marines who shoot first and ask questions later, or was I to be captured, tortured, and interrogated to find out how many other saboteurs had been landed? What was the mission? Where had we planted the limpet mines?

I remember being escorted into a room somewhere and being asked some questions. I later found out that the base had scheduled an Operation Awkward that night and security had been heightened. Oh, woe is me, what a mess! Will I be hanged for contravention of the Official Secrets Act? Will they even try me or will they just have the SBS dispose of me such that I'll never be heard from or seen again? I had visions of the headless body of RN diver Cdr "Buster" Crabbe who had been found in Portsmouth Harbour after the Russians had discovered him trying to do an illicit underwater look on their visiting *Sverdlov* cruiser. Except this time, the headless body would be mine.

Much to my surprise, I wasn't detained very long. I think I eloquently explained why I had just come ashore from an unauthorized vessel in an unauthorized area. The next thing I knew, I was being escorted out of the secure area of the base and into the normal security area. Shortly after we were within sight of the inboard digs, my escorts let go of me. And after a short weaving walk, I finally made it back to my cabin, a little shaken but none the worse for wear.

After the brain-fog had cleared the next day, I can only assume that when they saw just how pissed I was, they probably concluded that no enemy agent would have consumed several bottles of whiskey before embarking on a mission to sabotage a secret nuclear weapon facility. I also think that as I was from *Okanagan*, they must have accepted that the survivors were sort of entitled to perform a little and take a few liberties after the trauma of the prang. Whatever their reasons were, I was off the hook and to my knowledge, the incident was never reported.

And about my new wingers, the Scot shipyard workers and the sinking boat? I think they made it out of the Gare Loch without getting shot at. Their old scow would have been no match for the Merlin engine, *James Bond* or any guard boats. The interrogators might have informed the guard boat crews that if these guys were as pissed as I was, then there was absolutely "No Threat" of sabotage. They would only have had to come

within 25 yards to confirm that strong whiffs of gallons of divine local whiskey and loud drinking sounds were not the normal traits of terrorists bent on engaging with British national security.

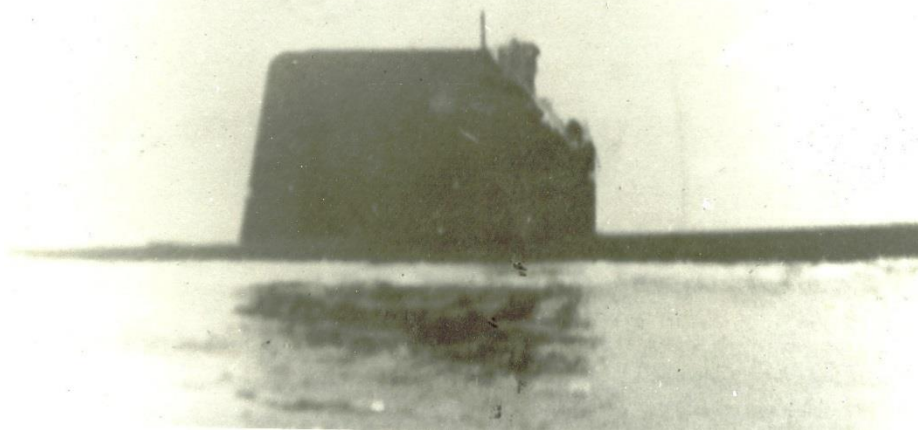
Some weeks later, I drove down to a little town where they said they kept their boat. It was a weekend and all three of my new chums were there. They told me that after they got back from Faslane, they had to haul her ashore to fix the leak that had grown worse. Well, didn't a party start again as we reminisced about dropping a friend off in the Gare Loch."

Let's go home

Alas, by working around the clock for ten full days, it was perceptible that we had physically reclaimed ourselves into some semblance of an O class submarine. The OOW and the look-out had somewhere to stand once more and keep a watch in Passage Routine to Halifax on the surface. Mr. Broad's statement of the open guarantees which lie ahead, cast doubt among us that if we should run into heavy seas on the 9-10-day passage, what just might happen? And as it was, the transit was done on top of this ocean that I have never seen so serene. There was not to be a ripple for the entire voyage as the North Atlantic mirrored under the clear blue and warm skies, our arriving off Chebucto Head and the approaches to Halifax just seven days later, a time when we all agreed that St. Elmo himself, his duty done, ascended from *Okanagan* . . . and returned to the heavens. And all during that trip across, the Mr. Broad analogy constantly played on our minds. Well he was to be 50% right. The temporary fin repair got us back across the Atlantic with his "no less" . . .but he was to be completely mistaken with his "no more!" Sometime well after arrival, *Okanagan* underwent an extensive survey to determine what needed to be done to get her permanently patched up. Ultimately, the repair had been so effective that it would withstand the stresses presented by the sea in a dived submarine. It was therefore determined that the boat would continue running until further notice when a new fin could be made available and then fitted. It came with a price however, because of un-retrievable alignment of the upper mast bearings, repeated deep scoring would result on the stainless-steel retractable tubes. It is better described that *Okanagan* would run much like an automobile that had been restored from a severe collision and just never felt the same again. She was "bent," and would want to naturally steer to port while each and every time we surfaced, great gushes of rust-laden, chocolate-y sea water would cascade into the control

room from the conning tower. The turmoil had come and passed and now that we were home, it would be difficult to forget the event and Bill Hawes had best summed it up in this way:

“One thing about why I am so sure of Dinger’s last word: From that day, I have since been conditioned to relate the word “Fuck” with that of impending disaster. Some months later when we were down in the Carribean, XO Brian Fisher was given the chance to do an attack. For most of the approach he was doing normal setups. i.e. “Bearing is “That!” “Range is “That!” etc. However, after waiting for about four minutes between ‘looks’, and as he next ordered, “Raise the for’d periscope,” instead of a normal setup spiel, he took one look through the periscope, slammed up the handles and yelled **“Fuck!!!!”** I cringed and said to myself, “Christ! Here we go again!” I started to shake as I knew we were about to be hit again. Then I looked at Fisher and after a few moments of silence, he announced that the target had zigged away. Is that all? Why



*A poor but very revealing image after surfacing
photo taken from quarterdeck of Grey Rover*

didn't he say so? My heart cannot take that kind of excitement and now I know why there is a laid down protocol for what one should say after looking through the periscope. “Fuck” is not one of the recommended words. If any of the support staff had had the misfortune to be there during the *Grey Rover* incident, they can appreciate the supreme panic that word, and how it was emphasized, can cause. Nevertheless, we must maintain our humour. I was the navigator that day and as a matter of fact, I like to

think I did a good job. “Spot-on” navigation. Yes, that’s true. We really did make our R/V with RFA *Grey Rover*. **Same time, same place, same depth!!”**

Down south - yet again

By early January the following year, tests and trials were completed. and during the maintenance period that was just completed, along with our makeshift fin, an endeared piece of equipment also came aboard. It was an old Wee-Mac pump that I tripped over one day on the shelves in Dockyard Return Stores. I was speechless as thoughts of the Tribals and cold boiler flash-ups came flooding back to me. It came from long-gone *Micmac*. By seeing this piece of antiquated equipment, I just had to do something. . . because of its significance as well as its reliability. Surely it could be used in a submarine and this piece of sure-fire kit would certainly serve as a much-needed electrically-driven hydraulic transfer pump as a replacement for very inefficient hand-operated one fitted in *Okanagan*. Wonders never ceased that if you needed to internally transfer a large volume of hydraulic oil while at sea, you could never do it with a hand driven pump that knocked out through a fine-mesh filter, a mere gallon in five minutes with fifty or so tiring strokes. But in order to get it into the boat and operational, meant having to cut some very sharp corners because of the time-consuming process needed to get NDHQ approval for any alterations and modifications . . . like three to four years or so. So, with that kind of a challenge, we went to work with the aid of a carton of cigarettes, a few rounds of beer to the boys at FMG and an ERA named “Willy” McMullin. Together, Willy and his modest gang got the pump installed in the space of two days and when we did our home-made trial. . .much delighted that we were now transferring oil at a rate of 5 gallons per minute. Nobody needed to know. Not a soul would find out about this self-initiative for several years to come while the stokers basked at the automation behind this very unofficial, unknown of and un-recorded piece of gear that was the envy of the boys next door in *Ojibwa* and *Onondaga*.

We sailed and headed back down south on Maple Spring exercises. Runs ashore had been limited to the odd weekend in Roosey Roads with a two-night stop in Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas in the V.I.’s. The next “show the flag” visit after ten days dived, found us in Santo Domingo Dominica. While there, we discovered we had a major “stopper” on our hands in that we had developed a sea water leak in a mast motor hull gland. Dear ole’ Tug and I went to work around the clock until the job was done.

Two full days later we emerged, and a trip up to the Canadian interest, Falconbridge Mines was in order. About 30 of us were invited to the area that was about 60 kms. inland from Santo Domingo up into “the elevations” where a community of Canadian families lived that were all part of the strip-mining interest. After a sophisticated tour of this island industry, they gave us a whale of a time in the local community hall with food and refreshment. By the time we boarded the bus to take us all back to Santo Domingo it was drawing very late in the afternoon.

The transport vehicle was a rickety old yellow school bus when after about twenty minutes, we had persuaded the driver to stop at all of the cantinas on the way during what was to evolve into a long, bumpy, hot, parched, and hills after hills uncomfortable journey. During about six stops, we had shortened our stays because we had exhausted each of the cantina supplies of beer. All paid for, we would re-board the bus and head for the next one. There was a time that the driver said we still had another ten minutes before the next cantina when one of our passengers just couldn’t wait for the next mens’ room. Lerch wobbled aft to the emergency exit door and rolled down the window. Down fly and away he whizzed while the driver of the car following directly behind sensed that: “Although a sunny day, where was the rain coming from?” . . .so he switched on his windshield wipers.

Later, our Joe Steubner, who was always sporting a lit cigar, had with him this day, an ugly and frightful rubber Hallowe’en mask that completely covered his head from the neck up. The opening at the mouth was sufficient to carry his cigar and at one point when the bus driver finally gave in to the demands that we all needed to have a leak, he pulled over to let us all out. We all stood at the ditch side of the bus which gave a little bit of privacy, but not Joe. “What is that ugly green-headed creature doing smoking a cigar and pissin’ right on the centre-line of the highway as loads of traffic whizzed by each side of him?”

That mask would appear in many other places too, remembering that on a certain Saturday afternoon at The Horse and Buggy cocktail lounge in Hamilton Bermuda some months later, there sat poised behind a table at the entrance, this same green-headed creature, charging a dollar a head cover charge, while happily puffin’ away on a cigar that hung from the mouth.

By the time we had arrived back in Santo Domingo, it was dark and near everybody was passed out in their seats. The entry to the city consists of many steep hills and it was musically amusing to hear that each time we went uphill, the clatter and smashing of empty beer bottles on the floor of

the bus rolled and clanked aft and then when the bus took repetitious bow down angles on the other side of the hills, they all came back to start all over again. How can a guy get any sleep with all that racket going on?

We sailed the following day and we were to surface transit back to the Puerto Rican areas. While on the transit, gave Tug and I a great opportunity to do a suction depression test of the associated induction trunking that we had dissembled during the leak repair. Tight as a cup as it turned out and the next day, we found ourselves alongside *Preserver* at Roosey Rds. and taking on fuel. This had to be a first for a Canadian tanker as much apprehension prevailed with our side concerned of the tender construction of submarine fuel tanks declaring, **“Max. pressure 15 psi ass‘oles!”** and the mesmerized tanker-wankers insisting, **“Shit in yer hats! We can’t do a fukkin’ gravity feed!”**

Then very suddenly, a draft chit came aboard. It meant that PO2 Brown was heading to a W.O.Q.C. training in Esquimalt B.C., referred to among matelots as “The Knife and Fork” course. I was to immediately fly back to Halifax to get my kit and leave the very next morning by pusser’s air from Greenwood N.S. The course would start just two days later.

Sergeant Brown



Since unification of the CAF in 1968 and now by 1974, combined administrative procedures had been thrust upon the Navy and Air Force with army-oriented dominance. From a lower-deck standpoint, that was reasonably accepted because it had little effect upon the navy and even less so in the submarine service. Apart from transforming into distinctive soldier-like green uniforms that we very seldom needed to wear, the art and business of “going to sea” remained just about the same. One assuring and bright event did occur with however in that “twin dolphins” had emerged as our new means of showing just “Who We Still Are” as Canadian matelots. Meantime, down in the boat or up at the inboard mess, we still referred to the Chief, Leadin’ hand, P.O., AB, Commander this and Lieutenant that, except that on paper, we were cannibalized into, majors, two-ringed captains, sergeant majors, corporals and privates. . .in a newly transformed navy, headed by a former Vice-Admiral now dressed and

addressed in Ottawa's HQ circles as a Lieutenant-General. Along with the pongo influence, the former Naval Leadership Course, that for the navy's sole purpose was designed to yield strong leaders in a unique naval way among the chiefs and petty officers, had mistakenly come to an end. The now so-called Sea Element of the Canadian Forces overwhelmed as the smallest population of the three services had lost out entirely. Such leadership training had been forcefully absorbed into the regimental system and once having reviewed the 7-week course content, very little if any of the subjects had anything to with the needs and resources of Canada's once proud and very unique RCN.

The Warrant Officers' Qualifying Course had transcended upon the naval minorities and I was to learn that in one hell of a hurry as I arrived in H.M.C. Dockyard in Esquimalt for the course in February. The only naval connection there was to the course was where it was held. . .nothing more. As I landed on the parade square for our first inspection as the parade fell in on the markers, I was quickly dressed down by a gruff old Regimental Sergeant Major from the Horse Artillery who just happened to be the CWO in charge of the school. **"Sergeant Brown!"** he bellowed loudly in being heard as far away as across the harbour in Naden Barracks, "Your hat is covered in grease and there is cardboard coming out of the peak. You need a haircut. Your shoes are covered in oil and grease. Where are your boots? Your trousers are shiny. You smell of oil. . .**and you've got fukkin' egg yolk on your tie!"**

Well after that trembling introduction, I went away to analyse all of those observations without the help of a portable tape recorder because it was tattooed into my brain. I had been referred to as Sergeant Brown. Feeling like the follow-on should be . . . "of The Royal Mounted." My once-endearred title of "Pee Oh" had instantly disappeared and the 6-year old transition of unification had finally caught up to me. This once proud submarine stoker from the Royal Canadian Navy had been involuntarily immersed into the sea element of the Canadian Forces, a mere Sergeant with greasy and shiny clothes and egg yolk on his tie. The next day, I was cleaned up and as neat as a pin but as I had had a slack hammock that morning, I only just made it in time to fall in on the parade square. But I was confident that when the Sergeant Major inspected me this time, there would be nothing but improvement and no comments at a thousand db's. Along he came, uttering insults and singling out different shortages in everybody else's uni-bags. Then he stood directly in front of me while his eyes went up and down, around and around, and up and down once more. "I got him!" I mused. Then he drew near me, very near me, and went

“Sniff-sniff, h-m-m!” like he was drawing a 10-inch vacuum to get a whiff of diesel fuel. I had made sure there was none there. He then took two paces back, two-three, ending with a thundering slam to the ground of his right foot. At the top of his raspy lungs, he declared very publicly for the sake of the Naden’s across the harbour, **“Sergeant Brown. . . This time you got fukkin’ toothpaste on your lapel!”**

Seven weeks were to pass very quickly. It was an indoctrination into how these Canadian Forces functioned since unification and brought a reality of the changes we were going through . . . some for better, and some for the very worse. I savoured at the opportunity of learning how to make speeches, study management, and become versed in handling men through the chain of command, span of control and logical assignment. The theory of it all seemed to make sense if given a perfect world, but it drew an anxiety into using those procedures when I was to return to *Okanagan*. There was a signal that times were changing and I began to realize that I was about to go over the hump in my career. I was promoted to Petty Officer 1st Class.

After the course, I was anxious to get home. I did, but when I returned to Halifax, it would be an exact reverse copy of how I was quickly ushered from Puerto Rico to Esquimalt via Halifax for a single night at home. This time, I learned that I was to have another single night at home because by the next morning, I was on my way to Greenwood N.S. by car in order to jump on an air force Argus that was heading for Bermuda. By the time the course was half-way through, *Okanagan* had by then returned to Halifax from the Caribbean, did a maintenance period and was now back down operating in the Bermudoo’ areas. Where we had sailed south in January and the boat’s return on this trip from Bermuda would be in July, I had the beauty of getting to sleep at home, with my wife, for a whole two nights, the second one surfacing at five in the morning in order to get to Greenwood on time.

Tug Wilson. . .Mr. Fix-up

By September, we sailed for major exercises in the Yewkay, a visit into Liverpool, and then down to Gibraltar. When running a major exercise with several RN SSK’s, we were about 100 miles off “The Rock” and developed a leak on the port engine manifold cooling water jacket. Engine fresh water is glycol inhibited and the rate of the leak was considerable. Tug was out on watch and decided that something could be done by saving

the precious glycol mixture from running to bilge. He fashioned a pig's ear directly below the external leak and directed it back to the engine fresh water tank via a flexible hose. This saved the day, but the work was about to begin. Messages started flying all over the world and the bottom-line was that *Okanagan* needed a section of exhaust manifold. With Tug's innovative "Banzai Pipe-Line" rigged, we managed to complete the exercises and finally went alongside Gibraltar no earlier than the rest of the boats. Waiting on the jetty along with a gaggle of senior officers and a crane driver was this huge wooden crate from S.P.D.C. Eaglescliffe, the spare parts distribution centre in YewKay. Within it, we found a manifold section. Immediately we commenced work down in the boat, tearing down all the interference items including the supercharger air cooler, the inboard air induction manifold, other top gear, and finally the defective manifold of "Ernie" . . . the port donk. By the next morning, Saturday, we had toiled through the night on two shifts and were now ready to fit the new manifold. It wasn't until the next afternoon at around 1600, that we had the engine rolling on a battery charge without any leaks in preparation for sailing at 0700 Monday, the next morning. We were exhausted to say the least, but pleased that we managed to get the job done.

Up to the Queen's Hotel we went and without even checking into our rooms, decided that wets all-round were in order first. Well that's the way it stayed until late into the night that we finally headed out for the run ashore on 'the strip', in almost every bar. We finally got back at around four in the morning. . .and got our heads down. What seemed like only five minutes, suddenly there was panic at the door with loud knocks and yelling. It was the gaffer of the hotel. He said that there was a phone call from the submarine and they were looking for four lost stokers named Wilson, MacEachern, Park, and Brown. I looked at my watch and it was 0815. "Aw shit! Here we go again."

Quick as a flash, we were turned out and within three minutes, standing in the foyer...hung over, bleary eyed, and full of headache. All the while however, in this sudden instant stupidity of my brain, I sensed that there just had to be some salvation. We had worked our tails off, and where the rest of the crew got ashore for the entire weekend, there just had to be some compassion to all of this regardless of our shortage. Being adrift in any navy, anywhere, that when the ship, and in this case the boat, was "Under Sailing Orders" was by far one of the most serious offences among Queen's Regulations short of murder.

We ambled down to the dockyard and strode through the gate, aware that just in another five minutes, we'd be approaching the jetty at QHM

tower where the entire flotilla of eleven exercising submarines were secured. Well by looking at the wrist-watch and the position of the morning sun, it was clear that nobody was going to be there waiting for this abysmal shower of four wayward “clankies.” The Dutch tear-drop hull *Tiger-Hai*...and RN boats *Onyx*, *Rorqual*, *Onslaught*, *Cachalot*, *Otter*, *Opportune*, and several others were last night, chugging away doing their “normal charges” along with *Okanagan* where an onlooker from the ‘top of the rock’ would witness plumes of diesel exhaust smoke in varying hues of colour indicative of engine wear or more likely, attention to maintenance, wafting skyward into the still air of the harbour. Now it was obvious that when we rounded the corner of the jetty, from the bridge of the lonely *Okanagan*, we could see among the jimmy, navvy, the lookout and the signalman impatiently waiting at Harbour Stations, none other than the captain.

LCdr Ray Hunt was looking down from the rail and sighted us. He mildly inquired, “Good morning gentlemen. Good run ashore? Are we ready to go then?” We cast our glances directly up at him and noticed that he had a smile. “Damn right sir. What’s the rush anyway?” we countered, along with reciprocal smiles and an unsure sense of disbelief. “You got the engines running. Now it’s time to get back to work!” Not another word was said as we got down aboard. Later in the day and although *Okanagan* was late in diving and COMEX, messages from both Flag Officer (Mediterranean) and F.O.S.M. himself arrived aboard announcing their pleasure and providing BZ’s for a job well done in the space of just two and a half days.

Nezzie

Almost ten years were to have passed while the boat had seen as many changes in C.O.’s. From Nigel Frawley through Geoff Meek, Dinger Bell, Ray Hunt, and among others, one of the most amusing and talented was a man named Keith Nesbitt. Nezzie the jazz pianist, the author, the tactician, the fun-lover, and the well-respected gentleman that he was, had only one love greater than submarines. . . and that was submariners. He wrote and said: “Undoubtedly, my two years of driving *Okanagan* were the most enjoyable and the most satisfying. That was a job in which I felt most comfortable, doing something I was best qualified to do. Everything after that (including my time as Squadron Commander) was much less rewarding. And in a couple of subsequent positions - especially one at

NDHQ - I felt quite unsuited and unsure of myself. My second-best time was as Engineering Officer of *Ojibwa*. I was no engineer, but I loved the challenge. . .and the characters with whom I worked were really superb.”

He continued.....**Friday, the Fabulous Fourth of February, 1977**

“On that day, which epitomized life in *Okanagan* there were several colourful events: We conducted four live firings of torpedoes against Canadian and Dutch destroyers. In order to locate one stray unit at the end of its run, we played destroyer squadron Commander and manoeuvred five vessels (HNLMS *Friesland*, *Fraser*, *Saguenay*, *Bluethroat* and ourselves) in line abreast. No mean trick for us. We found the torpedo. Later that day, while transferring movies in choppy seas, LS Stevie Foster and several flicks were washed off the casing. We were lucky not to lose him. Our reporting of the loss of the movies mentioned that the guy carrying them had, fortunately, been recovered.... which merited a bollocking from SM1. To top off an eventful day, we went into St. Thomas at 2:00 AM in pitch darkness and parked alongside without the assistance of even one linehandler. Regrettably, in my journal there are no details of the subsequent run shore.”

And writing a journal he did as he was a very meticulous and innovative man. While spending much of his time away from his periscope, Nezzie went to work while his imagination overwhelmed the speed of his pen in creating the Dolphin Code. The Dolphin Code was a method of encrypted communications designed to enable submarines, submariners, ship captains, helicopter pilots, and anti-submarine aircraft to speak to each other in areas of submarine operations or in many cases, social and domestic activities surrounding people of the “Trade.” It came as a follow on from the popular but in-precise, surface ship simile known as the “Falcon Code” that sprang up out of some XO’s cabin in an aimless greyhound somewhere, and sometime in the 1960’s. The original published format has in its introduction the following:

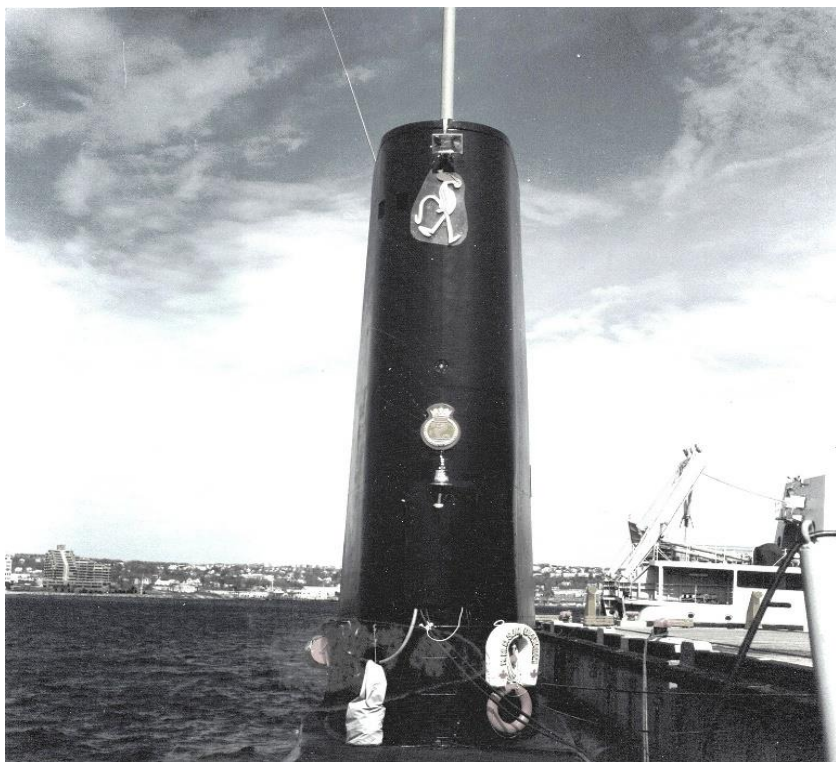
“FIRST CANADIAN SUBMARINE SQUADRON’S (IN)FAMOUS DOLPHIN CODE” A SOUVENIR OF ASSOCIATION WITH TRAVELLERS IN TUBULAR STEEL WHO DID IT BETTER

July 1976
Introduced by OKANAGAN

Courtesy and Imagination of K.G. Nesbit and Company

. . .and as that captain left the submarine in 1977, he handed me a personalized copy as a keepsake.

Nezzie played many gimmicks in order to “kill” the foe. Aboard, we among a few who spoke French and two others named Bob Bramwell and Arnie Arneson who spoke in Spanish and Icelandic respectively. Together with a plethora of language and noise making devices like an electric razor resonating in a pipe tobacco tin, Nezzie continued to baffle his surface, sub-surface, and aerial aggressors over the 185 U/W Telephone from any depth below the layers. It was at this time when the boat adopted the



*The Pink Panther (Panthera Rosetta) graces the fin
Jetty 8 in Halifax*

Spanish vernacular “Panthera Rosetta” whose animated figure of the “Pink Panther” was illustrated on the front of the fin in hailing the real “Pinky” effigy what holed up in the wardroom below. Adding to the trace of the travels of Panthera’ were pink-coloured paw marks that would often mysteriously appear in the oddest places upon the flat black paint of the

casing and superstructure. Pinky's birth aboard submarines emerged from a likeness and quality of an individual whose physical size, facial features and characteristic attitude were a mirror of the animated feline of the long running Inspector Clouseau movie episodes. That individual was a stoker, who then in 1970 came into submarines aboard *Onondaga*. His name was Jim Brannen and because of those attributes, something had to be done in order to symbolize of his demeanour among his messmates. Gilles Poirier, aided by the goading and chuckle of one Chester McDonald, penned Jim with the title. Gilles then was to acquire a stuffed toy effigy of the stalwart cat that was quickly adorned with badges and chevrons for all to see and be reminded. Panther tracks were soon to be seen throughout *Onondaga*. Pink of course where even an electrician in the course of changing out a light bulb or a fluorescent tube, that when a shade was removed to do so..... panther's foot prints would appear as often as you might see them in other curious places as well. As time went on and *Onondaga* would enter refit, people would come and people would go as they usually do, and so did Pinky along with the outgoing XO named Nesbitt who was to assume command of *Okanagan*. A change of scenery had come with it instead of making home hanging on the side of the after escape tower in his last boat.

We'll never forget Nezz' for the reasons that he created a spirit among us. We had gone alongside in Savannah Ga. And here was the Nezz' on the bridge in a Georgia State football jersey complete with a Confederate flag flying from the bridge. He did again when returning alongside in Halifax as an illustration a feat of accomplishment on patrol, much like flying the Jolly Roger.

In forming a pattern of thriving spirit, we dubbed the engines "Bert" and "Ernie" while *Onondaga* followed with "Kermit" and "Miss Piggy." *Ojibwa* would not be left out by referring to her port and starboard mains' as "Rock" and "Roll" . . .and these were some of the milder examples of the fun side of submarining. In exhibiting the rivalry, the three boats had other names given them from *Ojibwa*. The "Show Boat," the "No Boat," and the "Go Boat" in typifying respectively of *Okanagan*'s fine internal appearance, of *Onondaga*'s proneness to frequent breakdowns, and *Ojibwa* whose men declared of herself, of hard and long running at sea. Well that was certainly debatable from us lot aboard the most pristine submarine in any man's navy.

“A Charge Ticket have I!”

By 1977 and into the following year, the numbers of *Okanagan*'s commissioning crew were rapidly disappearing. Apart from being assigned as an instructor in the submarine school for a brief four months, I was to return to the boat but many other events had developed. I had been invested into the Order of Military Merit at the hand of Keith Nesbitt and awarded the Silver Jubilee medal to boot. Armed now with the Knife & Fork Course under my belt and a Trade Group 4 course, I began to pursue the ultimacy in the engineering branch, the Charge Certificate. I supposed that by now, I had had enough exposure to decision-making and taking charge of machinery spaces and the people within them, the truth was that I had already been the Chief ERA, but without portfolio. I had to complete the On-the-Job Training package and then sit the “oral board,” conducted by the Fleet School Engineering Commander and his panel. It was gruelling, for it had taken 11 months of constant application while still having to pay close attention to responsibilities aboard the boat in the dockyard extended refit that we entered that year. Engineer Officer, Lt. Sherm Embree was to be the ramrod of my learning curve. His knowledge and background of engineering theory and the physics of ship stability was almost supernatural and his thoroughness and insistency that I was to “get it right” so often led me to become frustrated through that long, tiring, and overburdened period. . . but I remained determined. Sherm was very much a true “officer and a gentleman” and his presence as the E.O. of the submarine was one of high respect from Captain right down to the cook. The dockyard foremen would cringe as trials reports and test results would appear on his inboard office desk, but that didn't fizz his otherwise sinking popularity among the dockyard foremen, only because he was right and they knew it.

Once armed with a charge ticket, the time had arrived where the harbour and sea trials periods would manifest. Long hours and perseverance were required by all of us, especially the engineering branch. There was just no room for the feeble at heart and will and after a long struggle, *Okanagan* was finally ready for her third work up from Faslane. We sailed to cross the pond once more, but this time there were many voids among the crew. No longer was Tug aboard, and how I missed his drive, candour, technical ability. . .and friendship. Sherm Embree too went ashore and had been escalated as the Squadron Technical Officer while nearly half of the crew were brand new. The captain was Jim Ferguson, a former west coast

submariner who had spent considerable time as a Lieutenant and still was as the new C.O.

We had arrived at Blockhouse to be deluged by the R.N.'s inboard staff who would so-called, "help us and the submarine get ready for the inevitable" when we would later arrive at Faslane. It was like work-ups for work-ups where the lists of things to do required that there should be 48 hours in a day in getting it all done. At this rate, my physical stamina was starting to take its toll in that my back was acting up considerably more than it had in the past. Fourteen years had passed since that fall in the fore ends of *Aeneas*, and now the jig was up. On the day we sailed from *Dolphin* for Faslane, we were immediately in heavy seas well outside of Spithead. I was in the after ends where the after escape tower twill trunk was still rigged and secured to the deck with chain falls. Suddenly, the whole after end of the boat whiplashed, sending me flying, back- first against the lowered tower. I had done it this time and had no choice but to get turned in. I became useless and writhed in pain at every move. It took the help of two of the guys to hoist me up into my bunk and there I would uselessly remain for what seemed like an eternity. Each time the boat rolled, I was in complete pain and any sleep I would try to get became an impossibility because of this involuntary alarm clock that was now built into me. By the time we arrived in Faslane, I was craned out of the boat in a Robinson stretcher just like a battery cell and then carted off to *Neptune* Sick Bay. I would lay there stricken for the next seventeen days until the inboard Surgeon Commander directed that I be flown home. My time in *Okanagan* was to soon draw to a close and after seeing the doctors, I was to go under the knife for a spinal fusion. The price was ninety days in a Stryker bed but after all of those years of suffering and hope that I would mend and didn't, it was worth it. After the operation, I was to wear a corset for six months and when almost a year from the day of the operation, I was once again, "Fit Sea." I had done it, and it was the best I'd felt since that grim day aboard *Aeneas*. "Lemme back at it!" I joyfully hollered. I still belonged to *Okanagan* at this point and after returning to the boat, it was a short time later that I became the Squadron Chief ERA.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Back to Gens'

In 1981, I became jarred with a reality that was to be a major diversion in my career. Nearly nineteen years had gone by since I stepped aboard *Tally-Ho* in *Dolphin* and by now, self-relegated and happily acceptant that I was a “lifer” in submarines. But there had been a nearly forgotten dimension to the navy in which I would reluctantly re-engage as an active participant. Comfortable and confident as a submariner, the Squadron Chief Tiff, the mess prez’, and getting’ home every night for a change, contributed to my well-earned immunity so I thought. But then one morning at 0905. . .0805 Eastern’, the phone rang in the Squadron Engineer’s Office. It was the Career Manager calling from Ottawa to inform the boss that I was required to return to general service. Along with hue and cry, he was confronted by a shortage of Chief ERAs aboard the skimmers who had “reached their 25” and he assessed that because the submarine squadron had a comfortable total of seven Chief ERAs, three of us were expendable. The Naval Engineering Manual had, among many other generic operational and administrative regulations, a passage that described the responsibilities of a charge certificate. “. . .qualifies the holder in taking charge of propulsion systems in **ships** or submarines.” “So, where’s the argument?” challenged the “career mangler” aloofly while drafting up the posting message. The emotional battle had begun but it wasn’t to last. Much exchange developed but, in every plea, the only other alternative was to take voluntary release. Well, I just wasn’t ready for that, was I?

Skeena “Go Forth”

(well, no broadside messing anymore)

Bewildered, I was to relieve as Chief ERA in *Skeena*. I did so with much apprehension, while encouraging myself in fully appreciating that we weren’t a big navy, nor had we a mammoth flotilla of submarines. And with that, it was a time to realize that with trade qualification and seniority in rank, the choice of opportunities was very slim and you just couldn’t pick and choose. Because of this unexpected and painful transition, I figured that the navy needed to at least give me some exposure and hands-on experience for the level of supervision that I was to assume. I needed

to get to sea on a greyhound and do a little “double-banking,” but there came an untimely obstacle by way of a major defect which was to invariably cripple the fleet for nearly six months. It was common to sixteen destroyers in the form of varying penetrations from metallurgical cracks in the superheater headers of all 32 main boilers.

I was to visit with the Senior Staff Officer, Cdr Gudgeon, Ship System Readiness (SSO SSR) and he somehow arranged for me to get to sea. Apart



from those ships refitting, all but two of the generic class had returned to “home ports” on both coasts and were under flash-up restriction. That left the west coast’s *Qu’Appelle* alongside Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and *Nipigon* at Kiel in Germany. They were to each raise steam and proceed home only after a comparative analysis had been completed on the east coast aboard Annapolis. Along with *Qu’Appelle* and *Nipigon*, these

three ships were relatively youthful among the entire class of DDE/DDH’s where as it turned out, crack penetrations were not to be as severe, but nevertheless defective.

Being on the east coast and nearing Christmas of that year, I opted for *Nipigon* in the midst of a six-month stint with the NATO squadron. I flew overseas to Hamburg and took a train to Kiel. When I got aboard ship, I was to find that the only bunk available was a top one in the stokers’ mess. That would suit me just fine when considering the overhead space and the size of the accompanying locker that was a treat in itself in comparison to submarines. There was an advantage too. Although I was to mess with the killicks and below, it was an opportunity to extract as much information I could from the stokers themselves. These were water tenders, the ‘vaps watchkeepers, engine room hands, boiler operators, fire-punchers, as well as the upper deck stoker, who when I thought about my past, he was certainly a guy to talk to, to get back in the swing. These were the machinery space watchkeepers who spent most of their time in “the pit,” not to be confused with “their pits.” They had much experience in the fundamentals of their jobs and these were the lads that I would initially stick to. . . like shit to a blanket. . .listening, watching! Following them while doing machinery rounds, reacting to machinery emergencies and then, asking the questions that mattered. If I were to gain any knowledge at all in order to “endorse” my submarine engineering Certificates . . .this was the place to start. The operation and maintenance of main machinery systems and all the rest of what I had not been exposed to for years would then come in a very quick course of time. It had to.

So, I had been away from the surface fleet for a very long time and it presented many challenges that no one else in the navy, except a similar and limited outcast of fellow-submariners, ever had to go through. Most significant was that I was unavoidably deprived of knowing any “skimmers” that comprised the majority of the navy, who were just as unaware and uncertain of me. I was to embark in what felt like another world in the business of going to sea and this was going to take a lot of adjustment on my part.

Once *Nipigon* had received orders that she was considered safe enough to raise steam and get the hell home, I jumped into high gear. Down to the boiler room I went to observe the flash-up. When we got away from Keil,



HMCS Nipigon (DDH 266)

we headed for the English Channel via the canal, my last time through it aboard *Aeneas*, fondly reminiscent of “Bos’n” Greig and the story of the flowers. Once we hit open waters, the ship began to roll heavily. This was all novel to me and at supper’s end that evening, I poured a coffee, lit a fag, and sauntered back aft to watch the ship’s wake from the VDS deck. Everybody

thought I was nuts but what everybody didn’t realize was that watching the ocean run astern. . .in fresh air. . . and on the upper deck, was something that I had not been able to do at sea for many years. It was a re-discovered passion that I had unconsciously forgotten.

By the time *Nipigon* had arrived in Halifax, I felt that I had had a good fling at double-banking in the ‘spaces’, and now felt much better in taking



over *Skeena*. With that exposure, I had quickly realized that a “closed feed system” in a steam-driven DDH was as complex and inter-changeable as the multi-fuel systems in a submarine. During the trip across the pond, I set out to sketch the entire system by physically chasing pipe runs and valve positionings. Just one session had gone by so quickly that when a certain killick stoker came on watch in the engine room, he

hollered at me and asked, “Fuk me chief! You still down here??” I looked

at my watch. It was nearly 0800. I had been in the engine room from 1800 the previous evening. . .the time that the killick came on during his last watch.

HMCS *Skeena* was the east coast French Language Unit (FLU), and my limited experience in learning French as I grew up in Winnipeg, only allowed me to offer random “Bonjours,” “Mercis,” and “Non, monsieur” when it was really needed. The EO was a fine gentleman with loads of experience in Y-100 machinery. His name was Clem Bussieres, the former apprentice and a survivor of the *Kootenay* explosion and was now a CFR Lieutenant Commander. He had a very ailing back problem similar to what I had slowly recovered from. So, I summed it all up on the fingers of one hand. Fresh out of boats, busted boilers, they all spoke French, and the Engineer was “Unfit Sea.” What did I ever do to deserve all of this? However, it didn’t take long in realizing how well off I really was. I was surrounded with resource. I had excellent people who had sailed in the ship for years and unlike the rationalized and reduced numbers in submarines. . . plenty of them. They were as conversant with boilers, closed feed systems, ‘vaps, and main turbines as I was with ASR’s, periscopes, OMC’s and ram servo units. They were also the salt of the sea, hard working, and very proud of their ship, and now mine, whose flag halyards would often fly a caricature of an amphibious creature. “La Grenouille,” en anglais “Frog Power.” They respected me as I very quickly grew to respect them. I soon realized that it was a matter of direction and organization and in short time, work relationships and social camaraderie came to the fore like I’d never left submarines. It became a joy to sail in *Skeena*. My numbness and alienation to things grey and the type of warfare I was accustomed to, didn’t help me much at first. What was a real fine change too was that for the first time since *Crescent* in 1958, I was no longer broadside messing but was now noshin’ my scran in a cafeteria.

Breathing...easier in submarines

In my first trip to sea, we had gone to deep shelter stations in a gas fallout scenario. I was in the main switchboard compartment with some thirty odd guys, when the pipe was made. . . “Gas! Gas! Gas!” At which time, everyone is to instantly don respirators to minimize the opportunities of breathing the dreaded lergy. I fumbled through a newly-issued and unfamiliar respirator bag and finally got this most uncomfortable mask onto my moosh. Unlike everybody else, my extra-large nose was hard up

against the inner workings of the mask and as I violently drew taut on the head straps, I found it very difficult to breathe and started into a mild frenzy. Everyone around me in muffled tones like they were talking into tin cans cried, “Y’hokay chief? Bree’d alright?” Finally, I tore the mask off and lumps of hair came with the buckles and straps. Roger Aubut, the main prop’ chief said, “Chief. . . chris. . . you didn’ take da plug out of da canister, mon dieu!” There, embedded on the intake of the canister was this very easy to remove protection plug. I pulled it off, refitted the mask over my sore head and bruised nose, and easily resumed breathing with the mask now donned in working order. Roger then said in his tinny, muffled tone, “What da’ ‘ell do you do in da submarine for da gas attack, kawliiss?” I looked at him in pain through misty lenses and replied with as much tin and muffle, “We go down to six hundred feet and turn on the fukkin’ movie!”

Many other basic shipboard mistakes happened that were just as foolish and embarrassing in the weeks to follow, but I was beginning to enjoy this new life. No matter the sea state, I persisted in taking my coffee out onto the quarterdeck every night after supper, and had clean working dress on every day. This was a new joy to behold. It was so much fun that I suggested to the skipper that we ought to paint the ship black and that everybody ought to start wearing pirate rig. There was more carrying on from the upper deck too. We were coming alongside in Halifax and a novice officer was driving, up on the bridge. It was evident down below that he was a little shaky by the number of movements we were getting at the engine console. I found out later, that the foc’sle party had had a run at this difficulty when panicky and mis-directed orders started flying from pilotage. “Quick. Somebody get a heaving line over!” The buffer appeared in throwing back a confused expression on his face and responded with, “I’m Chief Petty Officer Somebody, sir! Which side? Halifax or Dartmouth?”

“She’s all yours chief!”

But then there were some good things that began to overwhelm my shortages. Because of experience in submarines, I had had exposure to all aspects of marine systems. That versatility sure made me adaptable and because I was surrounded with plenty of manpower, it was a job in directing traffic. Without an engineer officer, *Skeena* had to dock down in Dartmouth Slips. It became a challenge to get her trimmed 21 inches by

the stern for entry onto the slipway and because of my familiarity from several dockings as an outside wrecker in submarines, *Skeena* successfully “sued on” through the inter-action of dock master Jerry Prouse and the ship’s representative to the C.O without an E.O. . . . the Chief ERA.

“The RAS. . . No break-away, thank you!”

While we were running in the op areas off Puerto Rico, we had gone alongside a tanker for a re-fuelling at sea. Under such conditions, the ship requires that of her greatest of watertight integrity and navigational ability that special sea duty men are closed up at varying positions throughout the ship. Correspondingly, main machinery and systems are also brought to



HMCS Skeena (DDH 207)

maximum capability so as to meet “close quarter” demands of station-keeping with steady propulsion and precision steering while underway. Prescribed emergency procedures and Alternative means of system control must cater to events if they should ever go awry.

Now comfortably alongside *Preserver*, “hooked up” and fuelling, I was at my special sea dutyman position in the engine room. Closed up at the

main console and behind the throttle watchkeepers, I was also in hailing distance to the “communications number” whose duty was to man the bridge/tiller flats telephone. Suddenly he beckoned to me to come nearer in overcoming the howl of running machinery. He barked into my ear relating that there might be a problem with the steering gear in the tiller flats. He offered me the headphones so that I could speak to the stoker back aft who had made the report. Somewhere between the low-quality static-filled audibility of the headphones, machinery noise, the very, very broken French-Canadian accent of the stoker in the tiller flats, and repetitious “Say agains!” I was to eventually meal out that one of the two steering motors was not functioning.

In the back of my mind, we were now down to one steering motor and procedures are that if there is any degradation to main steering when fuelling at sea, the ship must immediately disconnect and “break away” from the tanker. Such a remedial process means that the opportunity to later come back in to complete the fuelling becomes questionable based on the queue and demands of other ships in company or as was often the case, the tanker being previously committed, may have to break-off and proceed to another area. In any of these cases, *Skeena* would then be less of the capacity of fuel required and certainly impede our capability and the extra demands placed on the ship’s company overall. All of these factors necessitate time and man-hours. However, in the front of my mind, I immediately analyzed that the engineer officer would be positioned at the “fuel dump” on the upper deck and he would not be available to relieve me in order to physically investigate the report. I needed to see the problem before notifying the bridge of our situation. I assigned main prop. chief Roger Aubut, as overall in charge and rambled my way back to the tiller flats. When I arrived, the ray of a flashlight quickly revealed that the starboard motor drive coupling had slackened off and although the electrical drive motor was operating correctly, the steering motor was idle. Confirming that the port motor was correct, I sped back to the engine room with a plan in mind.

Just by reporting to a robotic OOW by telephone to the bridge that we were down to one steering motor, was sufficient that he would order a ‘break-away’ thereby having to face the setbacks. I needed to steer away from the possibility by demanding to speak directly with the captain. The OOW, with some reluctance, finally agreed to my insistence with he now having to endure his void in my direct link to the captain.

The captain came to the phone with his unsurprising and supportive, “Yes chief!” In response I clearly declared over the machinery noise once

again, "Chief Brown down the engine room sir. The EO is in the fuel dump. I would like you to know that we are steering on only **one** motor, the port one. The starboard motor is **not** operating!" There was a brief pause from Cdr Boucher where he then returned to the phone with the inquiry, "What are the chances of the port one failing as well chief?" Quickly I responded with an assuring, "One in a million sir!" Then as soon as those words reached his senses, he replied, "Thanks chief! Carry on steaming!" Roger your carry-on steaming sir," I affirmed. "Would you pass on to the Officer of the Watch please sir?" I then asked. And as he was to hand the phone back to the comms number, "Sure will chief! Thanks."

A Jimmy named Bear

A short time later, the new XO arrived. LCdr "Bear" Brown joined the ship, and it didn't take long for him to start calling me "Dad," and have a little play on wit every time we met in the gangway. In *Skeena*, "Red Sea" rig for the wardroom included a very long and colourful French-Canadian folklore cummerbund. Each night, "Bear" would do his rounds of messdecks and flats and quite often his routine repertoire would be underway when I was doing my machinery space rounds. I felt that although us chiefs didn't have the distinction of wearing Red Sea rig for evening dress at sea, at least we should be accorded the privilege of wearing a cummerbund with work dress.

One night, "Son," the XO, came trundling along the dim red darkness of the Burma road and being a big man, was all round-shouldered and bent over so he wouldn't thump his head. With him, the rounds party. . .the on-watch deck PO and the bos'n's mate. "Still for rounds!" cried the PO, as I exited the boiler room lobby into the flat with my pusser's counterpane nicely wrapped and trailing from my waist. "Good evenin' Chief. . .nice cummerbund!" marvelled the Bear. "Oh, by the way! I sure like the idea of taping deck cloth down on the deck for the stokers to wipe their feet on when they come out of the spaces! Well done!" I looked at Bear with a little dismay and I was ready for him. 'Beggin' your pardon, sir! But that stuff's on the deck so that people can wipe their feet, **before** they go down there!"

A return to Bermadoo

Going back to “gens” was a revisitation in many ways. While in *Micmac*, only once did we ever go into Bermuda and secure at the Ordnance Island in St. George's. In submarines, we always berthed there because of its closer access to the operating areas. But unlike boats, ships normally went into HMS *Malabar* at Ireland Island on the western tip.

Once referred to as “the Royal Dockyard,” *Malabar* was a very active naval base especially during World War 2. It was constructed in 1856 with 3-foot walls and 100-foot towers. Such magnificent structures on a small island like Bermadoo might have seemed grandiose. . .but for the errors of British naval architects of the time. They had inadvertently switched the plans with those of a British Embassy in Khartoum. Bermuda ended up with a palatial naval facility and Khartoum got a warehouse.

There was something else most striking about Ireland Island and that was because many Canadian ships made points of doing so. . .the concrete breakwater that enclosed the berths alongside. The age of the concrete structure was illustrated by the several hull-shaped patches of new concrete that had been poured over the years, they in their varying shades of aging cement. The best description of what ship and when, comes from a former C2ER named Walter Emery who said: “I can assure you that more than one ship had a go at that wall at Ireland Island. I have no doubt that *Nootka* did hit it, along with *Huron*, *Micmac*, and probably the rest of the Canadian Fleet. It was affectionately called “The Wall That Canada Rebuilt” because of all the patches in it.”

So aboard *Skeena*, we entered the once busy dockyard, now rusted and crumbling and clustered with debris, but still serving as a place to ‘tie up’. Nothing much had happened from the last time I was there almost twenty years before except for more rust and crumbled stones. What still remained was the “Gag and Spew,” the little wee building on the jetty that served as the old “RCN’s wet canteen” with a back door that opened out onto ‘the pisshouse’ (don’t take a step forward). No longer was there the RN’s BIWI Squadron running from there and the likes of HMS *Malabar* as it stood today, remained one of the best kept secrets in the Royal Navy. What a draft! Anytime we went alongside, you might see the odd kipper, he too wobbling about who was part of a complement of twenty or so. There was never any affiliation, they looking forward to a day or two after we all left and they’d return to their discreet and comfortable lives on a tropical island that by the 1980’s, seldom bustled in Royal Naval activities.

“The city. . .that never sleeps!”

On that same trip and battling through all the intake-clogging “shark shit” of the no-land boundary Sargasso Sea and the return back up north, “Bear” struck a bad patch. It began when he was up on the bridge after completing a R.A.S. During heavy winds, he lost his beloved hard-hat with the cartoon decal bears on the sides that were now in “the deep six.” We then headed into New York City for the annual “Christmas rabbit-run”. While he and some of his officer buddies were hitting the bazaars on East 42nd St. He got pick-pocketed. In a few days to follow, we invited him into 3 mess for sarnies and sludge, and his well-earned recognition as a fine XO. As a token, we bought him a trucker’s wallet with a dollar bill in it, complete with a bound-to chain for personal security.

“It was Hawk Dawson’s home run!!”

This is not to say that “Bear” was the only one that got took in the Big Apple. P1ER “Tiger” LaPlante had been ashore the first day and found a little shop on E. 38th. He bought at a bargain price, a very attractive “boom box” to take home as a rabbit. Well immediately I asked him where to go to get one for myself when “Dusty” Miller in earshot, asked if I’d get him one as well. I thought that by buying two I might get a tidy little discount. I accepted his request sharply, but then he also decided that he’d like to get a “walkman stereo” for his young daughter too. It was pouring with rain that Saturday, and when it pours in New York, I was to find out that you just can’t get a taxi anywhere. . .even on a Saturday. Never to be discouraged, I headed ashore in my civvy berbs’ anyway. We were tied up on the Hudson’ at 52nd St. and being able to count, it was going to be a fair old jaunt. After ducking in and out of doorways and dashing across near empty streets, I found the place.

The gaffer had two left. . .and because I was going to get a walkman too, there was indeed a tidy little discount. Off I went thinking that the best place to be today is back aboard warm and dry, and safely into the confines of the ship. Again, I darted in and out of doorways still not being able to hail a cab. Any that were on the streets were “occupied.” By the time I reached the Avenue of The Americas about half way back to the ship, I spotted a watering hole. I fled across the street sheltering my two shopping bags. . .one for me and one for Dusty. I entered the Blarney Stone, a typical downtown New York bar. I was met with the faint odour of wash room

disinfectant mixed in with cigar smoke. It was near empty, dim-lit, and filled with countless neon beer ad' signs. There was a long bar with a few stools and way down at the end was a TV set. Baseball's Montreal Expos were playing the Houston Astros. What a great place to stop, have a wet, and pass a little time until the rain might stop. I became intrigued with the game while beside me, stood an old diehard "Dodger" fan, evidenced by still sporting a "B" on his ball cap. We got talking about the ball game when "Hawk" Dawson of the Expos came up to bat. He popped one over the centre field seats and I went into adulation. I was thrilled and proud that Montreal was beatin' up on our neighbours. So involved I was that while the commercial came on, I nipped into the heads for a leak. When I returned, I felt a mild shot of electricity whip through me. There was only one shopping bag beside my stool. . .and beside it, a puddle of rain water that had shedded from somebody who had been standing nearby and no longer there. "Shit! I've been had! . . . Did anybody see a guy walk out of here with a shopping bag?" I asked in a frenzy aimed at the bartender, the Dodger fan, or anybody else that might say "Yes, I did!" Nobody seemed to be aroused when the barman leaned over to me and said in his Bronx accent, "Hey pal. . .this is New York!" Then it also struck me. Which bag did the sonofabitch take? I groped into the lone bag to see a boom-box and a Walkman. Mine was gone. I left the bar back into the still-pouring streets that had no cabs. By the time I got back aboard drenched right through, I reported to "3 lounge" and everybody started to roll up. I pulled the bag from under my coat. "Here Dusty. Ya' dipped in!" I handed the bag to by now, a few-wets-too-many-Dusty, who simply responded with "Cheers!" as he returned to his seat and his drink without even looking into the bag or even worse. . .buying me a wet. "Well there's gratitude for you!"

"Hey pal. . .this is New York!"

Paul Monette was a lively, cocky, and comical P1 in the branch and those qualities were an emission from his savvy, confidence, and experience. Paul had a real penchant for ridicule and practical joke-making, where he always came out on top. He was a great run-ashore oppo and always ready for wit and amusement, usually as a product of his own doing. While walking down a very busy 7th Ave., he would brush his hand against your rear wallet pocket giving a horrible sensation that you just had it "picked." He would egg you on with the poker players and card sharks at the street corners whose "Monty" card game play table was fashioned

from a disposable-if-need be, card-board box. He would giggle and smile by encouraging you with, "Go on! That's the pile! You got the right one." as your ten-dollar bill was zipped away and into the shark's pocket and he amble away smartly and disappear into the crowds many of whom were now tripping over the discarded playing table.

The next day was a beautiful one and thoughts about my boom-box getting nicked was still up my nose. I went to Paul and seeing as we were sailing the next day, a quiet run was in order. He agreed, and so we went to the USO ticket office at Times Square. We got tickets at a bargain price to see the stage play "One," at the Savoy Theatre. Curtain was an hour away so we decided to go for a beer to kill some time. Still of the hope that I might get a smell as to where that goddam boom-box went, we went back to the Blarney Stone that happened to be just around the corner from the Savoy. As we went in the bartender was glad to see me back. I said, "Anything show up by chance?" in the distant unbelievable belief that a thief might have gotten a guilty conscience and returned the goods. I'm really stupid sometimes. Anyway, as our two beers arrived on the bar, I passed a ten-dollar bill to the bartender. He became very involved in our 3-way conversation and moments later, as we were about to leave, he inquired, "Hey. Was that a 'ten' or a 'twenty' you gave me?" I dwelled, a little dumbfounded, and then blurted out with mild but reciprocating vengeance, "A 'twenty'." "Here's your change," he said. As we went out onto the street, I turned and in a strong tone said, "Hey pal. . . this is New York!"

The ship with no "Blue Peter"

Well, the run finally ended on that memorable but infamous trip into the Big Apple. On Monday morning, we were to sail early as usual but for some unknown reason, we couldn't find the head whittler, the Supply bob. At any other time that if a ship was under sailing orders, the opportunities that she would remain alongside until the last man got aboard were very rare. Once an adrift slack-ass, and in this case an officer, gets back to his ship in either the next port or air-lifted by helicopter is a serious matter. Not on this day however because if the captain were to be back in 1777, he would have to fly the "blue peter" from the yardarm. It not only signalled a recall to the ship but on such an occasion, also warns "providers and chandlers to settle accounts" before sailing. Meanwhile back aboard *Skeena* in 1982, the fuel, water, wharfage fees, tugs, laundry, and the

groceries as well, meant big bucks required by the local chandlers and port authorities all nervously poised on the jetty. “Where’s our fuckin’ money??” The cash for the settlements was soundly locked up in the supply officer’s safe in his cabin and only he had access with the combination. He was nowhere to be found until three hours later as he fell out of a Checker cab. The bills were hastily paid but because of the wardroom mystique, we’ll never know what happened, or did we need to after we finally casted off five hours adrift.

A very brand-new Coxswain

We then returned to Halifax, and about this time, a new Coxswain had arrived on board. He had only just been promoted to CPO1, had minimal sea time, and from the modest-in-size Radar Technician branch, had little experience in watch and quarter bills and handling large groups of people. . . such as an entire ship’s company. By now, I had been Chief ERA in three postings and where he and I were the only C1’s aboard, he would move into our two-man cabin in #5 mess. As we introduced ourselves to each other, I immediately committed myself. “You have my full support outside that door...” I assured him while nodding toward the closed exit. “. . . but in here, there’s two bunks and two fans. Mine’s the bottom one and don’t move ‘em!” He agreed to his stature and position as a rookie C1, and I hoped that with his lack of knowledge and experience as the Coxswain, he would seek the sage and effective advice of the many department head C2’s that were aboard. He never did, and quickly earned the reputation of being a man who often blundered by making uninformed and inaccurate decisions, got minimal support from his peers. And as an infant and unseasoned C1, he also insisted that the rank should immediately carry the perks that go with it. Under normal procedure, no one would ever dispute that, provided you had at least effectively “earned your spurs” and respect as a C1 first. So entered Paul Monette, who twigged him and would make life for the coxswain a mite difficult. “We shall do what the coxswain orders!” declared Paul openly and loudly to his messmates in the cafeteria, as a new rule meant reserved seating space for the Coxswain and Chief ERA for watching the nightly movie. . . right up front at the cafeteria’s lead table. I wasn’t really fizzed with the new home-made decision as the opportunities of seeing a movie through its entirety was rare from being frequently called down to the machinery spaces. In submarines, if somebody ever got called out for a few minutes, the movie would be

stopped until he returned. Not so in the skimmers. They just didn't have that courtesy and compassion for each other. So in his cat and mouse antics, Paul saw to it that the movie screen would be shifted to the other end of the cafeteria and the projector positioned on the reserved table. . .right where the Coxswain and Chief ERA would sit. The war was on and it was comical of Paul's daring.

Right uniform...wrong toll booth

Phil Lamontagne was the Chief Gunner in *Skeena*. Phil was always concerned about the welfare of the troops including three young P2's that on one Friday afternoon, were up in the mess at Windsor Park having an end of the week wash-up, shall we say. As the afternoon wore on, Phil had noticed that they were having a little bit more than driving a car would allow for. Phil, as bold as he was, decided to intrude on the discussion by emphasizing, "You young guy are 'aving a bit too much to drink an' I doan want you to be caught by da' cop for being drunk at da' wheel. I will take you 'ome to Dartmout' in my car. . .no sweat! Beside. . .I'm a chief an da' Chief will look after 'tings!" he affirmed.

The P2's agreed. Shortly thereafter, the group of four headed for Phil's car in the parking lot, where during all this time, there was no shortage of babbling conversation and story swapping, especially Phil who was usually on One-Way Transmit. Into the car they went and the banter continued as they drove off. As the carload approached the main gate, the yapping continued as Phil rolled down the window with his right-hand index finger shaking back and forth in the "lesson to be learnt" mode. The commissionaire expected to get a quick "Hello!" but instead, had a quarter flipped at him. Phil was so engrossed with his passengers as he honourably paid the bridge toll much, much distance before reaching the Dartmouth side of the harbour.

West bound. . . to NATO??

The next year had come and it was *Skeena's* turn at another NATO. Sailing from Halifax, we were to relieve *Margaree* at anchor near the entry to Kiel, Germany for stores and equipment transfers. But before we would gallop across the pond to do so, we were routed to Quebec City for the opening of the new Reserve Headquarters known as COND (Commanding

Officer-Naval Divisions) It seemed so counter-productive to be heading west when “not-in-too-good-shape” *Margaree* was anxiously waiting for us to appear so that she could get home after being six months away from home.

Immediately following the RV with *Margaree*, we sailed to Den Helder, home of the Dutch navy, and as we did so, a mass of chiefs and petty officers assembled for a luncheon in the mess ashore in the dockyard. I got to meet an awful lot of people from all of the countries represented in the NATO Squadron, but as the event wore on, I just had to sidle up to a submarine chief engineer from the Dutch boat *Potvis*. I had remembered that boat visiting Halifax many years beforehand and recall of her uniqueness as a one-of-a-kind, triple-hulled submersible. Here was my chance to get aboard her and see what it was really like. The boat by now in 1983 was soon destined for the breaker’s yard, and the chief was obviously proud of her. So from the loud and exuberant crowd in front of us, we slowly inched ourselves out of the building to make strides down the roadway that lead to the submarine jetties. After we boarded *Potvis*, I felt more comfortable and quite at home among the crew and the questions, answers and chasing of pipes, hull valves, pumps, and engine systems began. It was an opportunity I shall never forget and after it was all over, Chief Rudy and I sailed into the Appelcorn cider and a run-ashore into Amsterdam that night. . .both of us smellin’ of apples and diesel fuel of course.

Hot bulkhead gland

A few days later, we sailed for Kiel and it was during the transit up the canal, that I got a phone call in my bunk from the engine room during the middle watch. It was Paul Monette, the EOOW, who suggested, “Chief! Get your ass down the engine room toute suite!” So gracious and polite was his way of summoning your presence. Sooner than call the bridge or the engineer officer instead, it was always Paul’s way of getting situations into perspective before hitting the panic button. We had been steaming at steady and economical shaft revolutions at about 146 R.P.M. and the port shaft bulkhead gland was becoming increasingly warmer. Now down on the deck plates and having shaken the sleep out, I slipped below into the lower flat to get a close look at the revolving shaft. I soon discovered everything about the bottom portion of the bulkhead gland was quite normal, however the thermometer read-out positioned at the top of the

shaft gland was excessively high. "Paul!" I hollered over the howl of the gear cases. "Tell the bridge the chief ERA wants to speed up. . . Tell 'em about ten more revs." Paul with a grin from ear to ear looked at me in joking disbelief. "Okay chief!" He signalled with a thumbs up. "I'll be right back." Moments later, the rev counter bells echoed the order to speed up. On went the revs and immediately, an increase in temperature resulted. Clearly, there was a lack of grease lubrication. Paul and I chased the grease piping to discover that since refit, it had been wrongfully re-connected to a bulkhead test fitting. Well done Versatile Vicker's of Montreal.

So, as we came alongside in Kiel, Germany, a mountain of maintenance stood in front of us so it seemed, but as the first few days went by everything withered away. It had been sixteen years when in Malta aboard *Alliance*, that I came so close to Italy and getting to Anzio to visit Dad's grave. I didn't then but now, the opportunity had finally arrived.



We had a P2 in the branch, who steamed in the boiler room but also had a machinist's specialty. Randy Tyler was a quiet but meticulous man who took great pride in machining anything from bushings and valve seats to spindles and pipe fittings. When he was idle, he kept his hand in at turning down anything from candlestick holders

to decorative wheel spanner handles. Randy was always helpful and never said, "No!" in helping out other departments.

It was Randy who liked the idea of travelling across the depth of Europe, so when the time was right, we took a train from Keil and boarded the Munich Express at Hamburg. It would take us from Germany through Austria, Switzerland and then across northern Italy and southbound to Rome.

After a night's stay in Rome, we would catch a local commuter to take the short 40 km south to Anzio, the seaside town on the Tyrrhenian Sea. The emotion of stepping down onto the station platform for the first time ever, was one of anxiety and anticipation. On this warm and beautiful summer day, we walked so slowly, my thoughts imagining of the hell this must have been, right where we stood. How difficult it was to conceive that this was the place it had happened. As the train and its clatter drew away from the station, few people were in sight. The surroundings now turned so peacefully quiet where among a stand of date palms with the chirping of a few content birds, a large white on black sign above the platform of this immaculately kept pastel-shade station read, ANZIO. I was finally here, still in disbelief. Randy and I curiously stepped through the archway of the station to ask a taxi driver where the Beachhead cemetery was. "Bon journo. Americano or-r Br-r-itish?" he responded, and much to my surprise that an American cemetery was also near the town. . . Patton's 5th Army.

After we had checked in at a medium rate hotel, we headed for nearby Villa Claudia and the serene tranquillity of the Anzio Beachhead Cemetery. As Randy and I finally came upon Dad's weather-stained headstone, I reflected on what a massacre it must have been on the 16th of February in 1944. Some time later, I heard a voice from behind me that asked, "You bambino? You baby son?" I turned to discover that the aging groundskeeper being all so familiar with his responsibilities, was as equally familiar with the engravings on the Dad's head stone. I was deeply taken as tears welled. "Yes. . . yes, I am!" I replied. He then went on to explain that his maintenance routines had Dad's headstone scheduled for clean-up and gardening in about a month's time and he would do something special, by planting a rose there for me. . . part of the insignia of the London Regiment of the "Fusiliers." It was very emotional for me.

Our stay was to last for three more days gradually realizing that Anzio was to be the nearby holiday resort town for the locals as well as the day-trippers from Rome. The town, now re-built, still had smatterings of bomb ruins here and there but by and large, an Italian seaside resort that offered two long black sand beaches, one of course being the war-time beach head itself, along with a cobble stoned quay that served as stern-on landing points for fishing vessels. Along the quay were several bistros, patios, and outdoor bars where Randy and I lulled in the hot afternoon sunshine, tucking into prosciutto, raw shellfish, and all washed down with local bieras.

The visit to Anzio concluded but not before I had re-visited Villa Claudia two more times, unknowing as to when or if I would ever return. More tears. Randy, in the meantime decided that he would venture over to the nearby archaeological island, Ila Ponza by hydro-foil for a day or two. Where I was determined to head back to Germany via Paris and Koln, I was to board the fleeting Tee Express for the trip through southern France. Randy would follow. After a couple more visits, one to Lubeck and a night in Hamburg, I felt the need to get back aboard ship. It had been a glorious and most memorable journey.

The game of “Schoop”

About a month later, we exited the North Sea from exercises and steamed toward Iceland. By now I had come to realize of the brand of camaraderie that evolves by sailing with the NATO Squadron. Among us was the R.N.’s Type 42 H.M.S. *Glasgow*, U.S.S. *King*, the Dutch frigate *Piet Heyn*, the mammoth, heavily gun-laden German destroyer, *Schleswig-Holstein*, and a Portugese frigate whose name has escaped for my lack of Hispanic lingo. We got ashore and if you liked fish and clothing made of Icelandic wool, Rejkjavik was the place to be for the bargain price. Dubbed by the crews therein, the five mobile bars and the floating restaurant, *King* (dry navy) drew alongside and the mingling would begin; *Skeena* for Moose Milk would start the ball rolling. It was then to *Piet Heyn* for gargles of Amstel draft, the *Glasgow*’s S.R.’s pub for J.C. Sparkling keg bitter, over to the Portuguese bateau for the best of Sandeman’s Oporto port, and then storm-troop the ‘*Holstein* for lager and schnapps.

By the time we had arrived on the mess, we could see that there was a ferocious dice game underway. About a dozen herrens would sit round a table, shift multiples of dice to their left for the next player while all would shout out in unison, “Schoop!” All dice would be rolled and whatever the dots revealed, pandemonium would break loose. The dice were thrown into any and every direction of the mess. They would jump to their feet to the rumble of falling chairs, tipping tables, and breaking glasses with spilling beer flying everywhere, the group would scatter in order to retrieve the dice. The hunt then led to blood-letting circumstances that saw split heads, cut fingers, bruised shins and a whole lot of bent and beat-up broken furniture. It was like havin’ a football game in a combined saloon and furniture store. . .without any equipment on. While all of this turmoil was going on, the players continued to holler their heads off, some with pain

and others with glee, the latter having recovered the dice, returning to the table after picking up another stein of beer at the bar on the way back. Another round would begin. Some of our boys joined in, but for me, I just thought I'd roam around the dim-lit mess and take a look at the myriads of ship's badges and mementos attached to the bulkheads. One in particular intrigued me. I approached it to see what the tally-plate beneath had inscribed. The plaque looked like a piece of somebody's toupe or better yet, a trophy of the unmentionables. I pulled out my trusty zippo to read the inscription when suddenly, blue-black smelly smoke started to poof. I had somehow managed to flash up a piece of furry Bavarian deer hide. It disappeared into the atmosphere, I disappeared out of the mess, and the boys playing Schoop all disappeared under the crashing tables in pursuit of yet another handful of dice. That was fun???

So, to finish off the run ashore, all mouths headed for Mid-Rats at the "King's Midnight Café." Food aplenty, with a wash-up of the night's runs-ashore.

"I can speak very good French!"

It was now in the month of August and, through intermittent snow squalls, the squadron continued westbound. We ran exercises at the southern tip of Greenland until the squadron broke into two halves. *Skeena* proceeded to the port of Julianehab (now Qaqortoq) for a two-day stop. It was a small harbour in the southern reaches of a vast tundra inhabited by natives who had few resources and were nearly totally dependent upon seal-hunting. After a local tour and a brisk walk through the town there was little else to see or do. Up on the hillsides offered panoramic views of the Denmark and Davis straits whose converging blue-black waters were dotted with fields of icebergs and bergy bits. Down in the shanty town, seal skin coats were at a bargain and the locals seemed on the prowl for anything that was shiny and free. It was good to get underway again after banking the boilers and running the diesel 'gennies' during the visit. That always drained the engineering manpower presented by the demands of going alongside a jetty with no shore services.

After two days at sea, the ship's evaporators had taken a turn for the worse. The vaps' output was reduced to making just enough feed water to keep the boilers happy and through the course of making repairs, use of domestic water had to be drastically reduced. The engineer, Lt. Jacques Prefontaine briskly swung up the ladder to present the situation to the

captain, who in turn directed him to proceed to the bridge and make a pipe concerning the conservation of domestic water to the ship's company.

Well nearly 36 hours had passed and we had managed to sort out the problems and we were now back up to operational capacity. I went up to inform "Engines" in his cabin. As I knocked on the door and then opened,



plainly he was involved with doing a divisional interview with one of the senior rates. After passing the well-received news however, he then said to me, "Has you can see, we are busy, but dat's great chief! 'Ow about going to da bridge and

making da pipe dat we are back on normal consumption? H'also, give the ship's company a "well done" for not using too much fresh water. Day did a good job. I will phone da captain and tell 'im, hokay??" "Aye, aye sir! . . . Will do." I replied. Off I went to the bridge and obtained permission from the OOW to make the pipe. "I picked up the tannoy. Announced that I was speaking on behalf of the Engineer, going on to say that the 'vaps had been repaired and that the ship's company may resume normal "at sea" domestic water consumption. I then followed with the "attaboys" to the crew for cooperating during the shortage and when I finished by saying, "That is all!" the OOW, Lt. Bertrand said, "Ay chief! Don' forget. Dis is *Skeena*, the FLU ship. Now you gotta say da same ting in French." I looked at him, thought for a second while raising the mike to my mouth and blurted loudly, "**En francais, le meme chose!**" The next pipe immediately to follow was not from the bridge. It was the Captain's voice in an excited tone. "**Chief ERA! Captain's cabin.**"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

How Times Are Changing

By the early 1980's, the navy was going through slow and, in most circles, unnoticed change. The undesirable effects of unification were held in sparing abeyance by our Chiefs and Petty Officers of the day, and some five to ten years later, the WW2 and Korean War veterans had reached their "25" and took release. With them went the methods by which we, as junior rates, were trained and disciplined. Promotion escalated and the new tenants now had the task of applying standards encountered from the old navy upon new junior matelots that were a product of a refining Canadian society. The art of naval leadership became congested with societal interference too. The Human Rights Act had been passed in parliament in 1977 which had a major impact on disciplinary control. We were entering into a social climate that challenged the navy's oath of unquestioned obedience verses the protection and freedom of Canadians was to be entrenched in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It seemed that in order to maintain a functional and ready ship, a disciplined sailor, and a divisional system that worked for its purpose, we were to have to strike a balance between these diametrically opposing principles. It wasn't going to be easy as we sensed potential deterioration falling upon us. Evaluation procedures became much more sophisticated and the 'Do as I say' methods of taking charge of people were to be put an end to. Because of new ethos and sensitivities, we were instead obliged by our seniors to mellow in somehow getting the job done with so-called humane and effective management. The days of exerting brusque authority were eradicated. Young people were now joining the navy from a social society that was obscure to us. We knew only of the navy's way of doing things in an environment that was unaccustomed to outside interference in exercising our unique tasks for it to function efficiently. Nevertheless, Chiefs had to carry on leading and setting examples from standards we had experienced and what was expected of us in the past as we were led and disciplined. You now had to swallow pride and take tutelage from the juniors that surrounded you that dictated the modern-day fair-play requirements. You had to get into their minds and understand them to be able to re-develop and refine your leadership techniques. It wasn't easy. What I also learnt in the process was that sometimes you'd have undesirable superiors and when you looked at the frequent attrition among the officer corps, it was better to make good situations out of potentially

bad ones. The expression, “Don't let the bastards grind you down for tomorrow he'll be gone, and I'll still be here!” became a good reminder and the watchword to prevent yourself from getting too excited. It just wasn't worth the time nor the energy and embarrassment, to deal with officers that were on a course shaped for unknown dilemma and a single command. It was clear to see that “the fun” was leaving the navy and the climate and platform for “the characters” therein, was deteriorating too.

Another crucial area of the navy's survivability rested in the ignorance of our traditions. The RCN and the modern-day Canada's navy was built on tradition and has thrived in its customs and purposes for going to sea in a magnitude that is far-reaching and much more rooted than brethren soldiers and airmen. Evolution was causing traditions to be abandoned in an out-of-scale development that significantly altered the navy's character by eroding its edges, thus affecting its unique integrity. Naval parade drill, regattas, make and mends, the uniform, Saturday and Sunday sea routines, naval slang and terminologies were taking an unconscious exit. And here we are having transited from the 20th to the 21st century, where technology has caused even the bos'n's pipe to take its turn in heading to oblivion. The pipe once roused you out, got you to Turn To, heralded stand easy, for up spirits, that dinner was served, to clear up decks and return gear followed soon after that the working day was done and a further pipe announced “Liberty Boats” or that the brow was open to proceed ashore. Late into the evening, the pipe would be put to rest for the day in its audible claim that the crew shall extinguish the “fill” in their pipes and put them down also. Two pips said OOD is needed at the brow or that four pips meant a requirement for Flying Stations. To hear the shrill of “the Still” in letting one know that a salute is required and in anticipation, someone from somewhere was going to tell you which direction to face. . .for flag, for admiral, for passing ship. The speakers in modern warships are questionably user-friendly to the high pitched shrill of yesterday and hence, repetitive practice of the skill is somewhat diffused and the art and tradition shall be lost in the future of the navy's wake.

It came that “warming the bell,” as sea cadet Petty Officer “Two-legs” once taught, was an evolving ritual in the navy. People were going, or at least preparing, to go on watch much sooner than they were required to do so. A man had to adjust to the times. Change, greater demands, and evolving technology required a good dose of mental preparedness in anticipation of taking over the watch and it didn't come as a result of the people going off watch that in yesteryear would otherwise, “warm the bell.”

Other areas were taking their turn as well. Officers were now proceeding ashore in denim blue jeans and anytime you might be asked to join the wardroom for a Friday noontime glass, it was a shocker to see that the main bill of fare was no longer posh finicky-foods but instead, french fries and gravy. . .and even poutine. Were these inhabitants as ignorant of the changing times and traditions fading away with change too?

A basic question to a brand-new officer might be, just how did the wardroom get its name? Once known as the Wardrobe where most see that as a jibe. It was the location within “ships of yore” where valuable captured articles were stowed and when emptied, the compartment was used by officers as a lounge and for communal gatherings. As time emerged, the capturing activities began to dwindle and the communal inhabitants of these spacious and empty wardrobes started to spend all of their time there and eventually, it became known as the Wardroom. Enter Jack, the character, who now transforms the term into the warehouse, the weirdroom, the bunhouse, the wardrobe mistakenly, and categorizing those habitants who live on Sesame Street in the 280’s or “midship ballast” for its central location in submarines.

And so as to whisk aside other deep-rooted traditions that came at the expense of having little or no compassion for them or at worse, in ignoring the knowledge of why. In skipping briefly ahead to the 1990’s, the remaining east coast steam-driven DDH/DDE’s, the one-time Cadillacs, had finally paid off for disposal after nearly five decades of relentless service to their navy, their sailors, their Queen and country. The crews however might have been given more scrupulous direction in providing well-merited recognition from their handlers. Because of the domino effect departure of these gallant old ladies, their sad but inevitable disappearance that saw “final sail-pasts” conducted within just months or weeks apart, for reasons of simplicity, expense, unforgivable ignorance, or all of the above, it was lightly determined that a discharging “sausage mill” should emerge. Each and every one of nine destroyers in turn, would pass down the same single paying-off pennant to each of their sisters until the last old girl finally “sailed past” into forgotten history.

Now to *Alliance* and “Blake’s Whip” my mind reflects, a submarine from whose navy on the 4th of May in 1910, provided the foundation for our traditions. As unique as it ought to have been to each of the vessels in a display of their elongated and dignified service, what should the exact length of that pennant have been. . .and why? Who should have had the honour of hauling and striking the pennant. . . and why. . . and how? It didn’t matter anymore because of escalating times. By abbreviating the

custom, cutting corners, and simplifying a proud, meaningful, and stimulating tradition, it had been broken and thus. . . shall it now be buried and forgotten? Forget the past or, we shall be condemned to repeat it.

The ugly acronym. . .MORPS

And with all these gradual and ignored changes, one was never among them but was now to be finally addressed. The navy's continuing tardiness to adjust trade structures and technical training content to meet the needs of ever-increasing technology. It always seemed to lag behind. When I had done my trades training in years gone by, still in place was a redundancy of systems and equipment for ships no longer in service among the lesson plans.

So now in late 1983, *Skeena* and the NATO squadron arrived in Halifax and much to my surprise, I was to head ashore into a staff job. I suddenly learned that I was to assist in a programme that was to transform the naval sea trades and upgrade the training system. The lights had gone on in preparation for the modernization of the four *Iroquois* class destroyers and the new Canadian Patrol Frigate construction programme. It was known as MORPS. (Maritime Other Ranks Production Study) As it scornfully entered the fleet, it didn't take long to twist its intent:

More Organization Required. . .Please Stand by

I still maintain to this day that MORPS placed a lot of demands upon the navy and in particular the people in it, but it was never given the support it needed to become successful. There was much confusion, resistance to change, and a lot to hoist in at short notice. Implementation would take over five years to get to a so-called steady-state. However distasteful new policy became, people resisted and had personnel managers and a lot of the old die-hards gotten in step with the programme, the navy and its training system would have been better off in meeting the future. . . the future of modernization and new-construction, high tech equipment and the challenges that were inevitably presented through the start of cut-backs that would begin in 1991. What was to really suffer were career instabilities and the strife that many good experienced personnel would endure through forced release. One thing assured me all the time though is that in submarines, we were already doing many things that

MORPS required and there were lessons to be learnt here by our skimmer counter-parts. But surface ship ethics and initiatives prevailed and the uninformed majority in that right resisted the new policies in the belief that you could make any system fail if you didn't want it to work.

As a part of it, I had the distinct pleasure in working closely with a very well-known ramrod from the engineering branch. LCdr Bill Greenlaw had joined the navy in the late fifties as an apprentice. Bill rose through the ranks to Chief ERA and in so doing became the youngest ever to be promoted to CPO1 at the age of just 31. With a ton of experience in all classes of ships, he transformed into a CFR candidate and took his commission in the marine systems specialty. Bill had been chosen by the Maritime Command Personnel & Training organization on South St. in Halifax to administer and regulate the phase 2 portion of the program that was exclusive to the engineering, hull and electrical trades. Once he had taken up his position on South St., he was tasked to draw up a plan that would provide briefings to the entire engineering community throughout the navy. Because of my background and experience, Bill wanted me as his representative Chief ERA so that when the briefings were conducted, I would combine to assist in the administration of the new policies as they were implemented. This was not going to be an "easy sell" among the many who were prepared to resist change. But because our wide exposure had led to a collective belief that change and update of the engineering trades was drastically needed in matching them to meet new technology, our confidence levels were extremely high.

It was to become a busy time with intensive travel across the country and to ports in and around the continent where ships were deployed. Our task was to ensure that because of the significance of the programme, it was mandatory that each and every individual in the entire naval engineering community was to hear the briefings. Well, it wasn't all that easy and as simple as it may sound. Resistance existed in and around the fleet on both coasts. . . especially on the west one. Out came all the pubs' and manuals that directed the navy on how to do things, but naturally those publications had not been revised to suit the changes that were at hand. The self-generated "grandfather clauses" had begun to permeate among the new-found requirements, and having to stand on a stage in a drill hall in *Naden* barracks describing and selling the new requirements was like being a 'triple twenty bed' on a canteen dartboard. Thoughts swarmed back to the art of persuasive speech-making on the 'couth course' years ago.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Sea Trainers Are We

South Street, MORPS, and working with good friend Bill Greenlaw were now over. By 1985, I had reached the pinnacle that is regarded as a highlight in any chief's naval career. I joined the Sea Training Staff and for some unspoken lack of comprehension and fundamental reason, it was deemed that there had never been a need for one from the outset. I was to be the first Chief ERA to do so on the east coast and in my own opinion. . . one was certainly needed.

Being a sea trainer was not just an honour. It was a tremendous challenge in representing one's own specialty within the sea-going fleet. It was your isolated opportunity to do things that came as a result of your own experiences at sea combined with trade knowledge and a good dose of a sense for safety. I was filled with enthusiasm for this brand-new challenge, further encouraged by my arrival and the branch now represented, a very new and rounded dimension to ship work-ups would ensue.

Through the years, I had been on the receiving end of work-ups programs for as many as seven times, and it was now an opportunity to inspire others in a very different way. In the past, whether in Britain or Canada, I, as well as just about everybody else, felt that as being the traditionally "worked-up," life for several weeks was to be gruesome, demanding, exhausting, and as it often appeared, lacking in common sense. Why would brethren antagonist sailors who had the god-like upper hand, want to be receptively hailed as a "bunch of senseless bastards" and egotistically pompous in lacking any compassion we would ask. Remember the early mornings and the need to jump over the side in *Micmac*, the need to remain awake for hours upon end while trying to stay alert to avoid an underwater collision, the need to get turned out once more in the middle of the night to find out it was just an on-purpose false alarm, the need to do as you're told while, "You'll have this done by the time I get back., or else!" Not many of us were inspired because work ups was often not a learning process but instead, a test in endurance that in homespun age-old theory, distortedly served in getting the rust out in training for safety and operations at sea. Why instead, couldn't it be done where crews would positively respond and execute with enthusiasm and in their best physical ability. By treating them with equal respect and fairness, by granting them the chance to recover, by showing and expressing with

common sense, goals could be achieved with a ship-wide feeling of esprit-de-corps and accomplishment. After all, there is no element of the navy that demands the input and degree of participation of every man aboard during work-ups and with such demands, the quintessence of “All Hands In” with mind and body, is a necessity.

I joined the staff that consisted of representation for all shipboard departments. Under the combined spirited leadership of Cdr “Gary” Garnett and XO, LCdr “Tony” Delamere, it didn’t take long to realize that a common sense approach to work-ups doctrine would prevail. It was indeed, to project as a very “learning curve” among ships’ companies where they would “walk” before they could “run.” As a collective team within ourselves, and as exhausting as it may or may not be, we would instruct or advise where and when needed, then vocally monitor the outcome.

Apart from the staff as a whole, I would focus in the marine systems side of programs. Our little circle consisted of the E.O., John Lockhart and Glen Laidlaw, the Chief Shipwright. As yet, we did not include a Chief Electrician. Combined, it placed heavy emphasis on damage control and marine systems failures. Again, my submarine instincts went to work and in the course of the next two years, we participated in several ship work-up programs. Whether it was gas-turbine, steam-power, AOR’s, naval reserve vessels, or good old diesel-generators, standing vigil over the “safety” principles of work-ups in the machinery spaces and on the main switchboards came with relative ease. We weren’t there to operate the gear. . .the crew was. Our job was to see that it was done safely and within the parameters of a “fleet standard,” not one of the “commanding officer’s,” as was often archaically assumed. And when it came to damage control monitoring, the experience of submarines prevailed in almost every application. In surface ships, invariably it was much simpler to curb or ventilate smoke, to manage 100 psi fire main pressures, and deal with H.P. air bursts of a mere 1500 psi on missile systems. The damage control teams that we monitored enjoyed new ideas through this sensible approach and seemed to achieve great satisfaction from their accomplishments.

Somebody forgot to bring the scan

As time swept by, we had completed work-ups on several ships. Each of those ships had done extremely well in their efforts by meeting those very “fleet standards,” with a revitalized approach. Some were shaky in

some areas due to either, the lack of consistent leadership or a mild letdown in the chain of command, but that was easy to fix with some strong criticisms here and there. However, there was a certain area within a certain ship that was not common to the fleet in its modern portrayal...and it was all about scran and whittlin’.

There’s an old mess deck expression that relates to the quantity of food available in ships at sea, and as food is the most important commodity that contributes to good morale in a ship’s company, it is only left that the quality is as equally good. **“Messing three among four of us, thank God there aren’t more of us.”** which relates to the shortage of scran, then: **“Messing four among two of us, Thank God there are but few of us.”** showed that the mess was on half-rations.

We’re starvin’. This was to be the case in a destroyer where the lame duck excuse for the availability of everyday fare such as chicken, pork chops, a little turkey now and again, and maybe a roast beef dinner on Sundays was, “We were cut off because our ration accounting was in error, and we had no time to draw stores.” Sea trainers had the perks of sampling food in all ships and it was always plentiful and top-notch in different ways. But now that we’re off the wall and away to sea in HMCS *Assiniboine*, the beans and wieners for supper had “no-longer available cuttings of four wieners” in it, and the very same pot of left-over mushy shirt-lifters still sat in the servery from the night before with a fan directed at the pot to keep a nice crust on them for breakfast on ‘toast- negative slide” . . . because there wasn’t any of that onboard either. For a little variation on the next day though, there were hot dogs for lunch. . . but if you hadn’t been in the meal line-up soon enough, it was “Sorry guys! We ran out of franks’ this time but you’re more than welcome to the buns.” This went on for five weeks and the food variety, quality and quantity never altered at all. Sporadically and for some marvelling reason, mutton, meat loaf, or pot mess stew became the fare of the day, and each of those lesser selections became the bill of fare. . . maybe once a week.

“D’ya’ know what? This ain’t new?”

Later that year the damage control report from “Operation Corporate” arrived on the desk of Chief of Staff Readiness in 1986. The report illustrated the dismal and fatal experiences that the Royal Navy had encountered during the battle for the Falkland Islands. I was tasked to review the report and at the same time, Canadian-ize acronyms and

terminologies so that the report could be adapted for our use as “Lessons to be learnt,” in the damage control training process. From my familiarity, I immediately discovered that a lot of the methods used by the R.N. were ones where the RCN and today’s navy had already been doing and in many cases, previously rectified or improved upon in vital procedures. During battle scenarios, multi-incident boards, a roving executive officer, adequate numbers of portable breathing equipment and extinguishers, etc., were all areas that the Canadian navy had earlier improved upon that the R.N. were now adopting as a result of the report’s recommendations. Had the R.N. been earlier aware of our methods, then possibly, just possibly, some ships and their crew members in the Falklands might not have met their fate as they did. But then why would the “mother navy,” in its long and gallant history, need or even wish to beckon to the colonials for advice.

“May I see your boarding pass, sir?”

Certain sea trainers, by virtue of their confidence, independence, and built-in character, certainly had their embarrassing moments too. We were doing a post-refit Ship Readiness Inspection aboard the tanker *Preserver* at Vickers’ Shipyards in Montreal. In order to do so, we, as a team, were to fly to Montreal very early one day, complete the inspection and then return to Halifax very late that night. The work done, we were now at Dorval airport to learn that the flight would be three hours late in its departure. Quickly, we all dispersed to the bar for some refreshment while XO, Tony Delamere insisted that he remain in the less-boisterous waiting area so that he could work away on his MARCORDs re-write, a mammoth revision to Command Standing Orders publications. Tony was dedicated to this cause and had been working courageously on the project for weeks, but only as his spare time became available.

So lost in his dedication and concentration, it was now finally time to board the plane. Tony started to fidget a little and, for some unknown reason, couldn’t find his boarding pass. In a panic and complete frustration, he searched his pockets furiously as the already late departure plane was boarding. Time was growing short to take-off and in raising Tony’s ire, the ground agent insisted that there was no other recourse but to buy another ticket. He sped back downstairs to “check-in” to do the purchase. However, he knew that when it came time to settle his travel claim with the admin’ crowd, no excuse in the world would be acceptable, especially from a responsible naval officer who just happened to be the

executive officer of an otherwise proficient Sea Training Staff. Tony wasn't very happy with himself and Air Canada as well but nonetheless, he finally got aboard the plane. As the access door went "thump" and the plane's telegraphs went "Half Astern Together" from the ramp, a red-faced and distraught Tony had hurriedly placed his brief case and burberry into the overhead bin. He was now left but to remove his cap before taking his seat. As he did so, from the inside headband, a piece of paper came fluttering to the floor just like the feather in the "Forrest Gump" movie. Everybody, except the bewildered flight attendants, joined in the chorus of embarrassing laughter.

"Ladies! . . . Man your positions."

My nearly three years in sea training whipped by at an indescribable rate just by the nature of its existence and the many diversified experiences and challenges from hopping aboard one ship to another and yet another. In that space of time, not only had we completed full work-ups in about a dozen or so ships, but also rendered our 'friendly services' to sea-readiness inspections in Reserve units and tenders. Additionally, we had undergone safety inspections in a large sail vessel destined for world charter in training sea cadets, the memorial HMCS *Sackville* for the care of the touring public, and one of a kind, diving tender ASXL 20, HMCS *Cormorant*.

Boarding *Cormorant* was an equal introduction on both sides of the gender scale in having females at sea. It was the period of trial that the federal government and equality groups lobbied for and finally achieved in years to follow. This aspect of going to sea was quite different and our customary capacity in directing and controlling battle scenarios became diverted for a number of causes, the chief one being screamin' women passing their orders and reports while fighting fires, shutting down bulkheads, and rigging shoring. We quickly realized that the energy was there, but getting used to observing privacy requirements when the action alarms went off, swayed our attention to the other basics. While the majority of crew was turned in sleeping during silent hours, posed several difficulties and delays in closing up because you couldn't enter the females' mess to chase them out or at worse, initiate an action scenario in it.

"Women at sea" is today established as common place and the results of their keen output is invaluable to the navy in the total team effort,

mindful that just about every new concept that has been introduced, just like MORPS, encounters the medium of resistance to change. From the outset, this one really did and it was seen as incomparable. But as a rule, and through the course of time, this seemingly impossible transformation was readily overcome. It was, and here we are today. The women are really, really good however a deficiency that many supporters (including myself) presently avow to is, where are the volumes of females and the ensuing option for their longevity in a career that is needed to make a mixed-gender society viable in the Canadian navy? Remembering that in order to gain knowledge and reap experience takes time and through that sufficiency, the reward of promotion and advancement in trades training usually follows. We have yet to see a sea-going female Chief Bos'n's Mate, a Combat Chief, or perhaps one day, another "hard-sea trade" Chief ERA. That a female was recently appointed as Coxswain of a frigate in fairness, is a part of the muddle that compares with their male counterparts as earlier seen aboard *Skeena*. With little sea experience added with bilingual capability, albeit they would get the political and preferred nod in the selection process. That many endeavours by females will be extremely difficult to achieve for another reason too. After two or three sea postings, and like a lot of males as well, the novelty and resplendence of being a shipboard sailor often eclipses. With this modern initiative having a short and succinct history, it is evident that most females then opt for release to perhaps pursue another career, but largely, to get married, settle down, and have a family . . . which is a very normal societal thing to do.

By the year 2001, parliament and the navy finally diffused the last of the male bastions within CF O-class submarines, by the nature of their 'lack-of-privacy' and unhygienic environment, precluded women in forming mixed-gender crews but the arrival of the so-touted, slightly more room and better living conditions of the *Victoria* class, propitiously defuelled the restrictions. Women were now, of their own accord, finally given another nod. . . to "slap in for boats." I for one hope that it all transpires with the equality that women deserve, but in such diesel submarines, as with all their predecessors, again, **"There just ain't no room for midship ballast!"**

My opinion evolves from a personal interpretation of the submariner as it applies to males as well: A man, and for this exercise a person, who gives of him/herself, remains constantly focused, is dependant and reliable, hard-working, diligent, responsible and through knowledge, experience, and dedication, sacrifices him/herself and family in an incessant

environment. . . which is no mean feat. It requires the realistic necessity of constant demands of much sea-time and physical endurance. Ultimately, through longevity and constant application, the would-be submariner develops character, patience, self-control, resilience, and adaptability, but to be all of this requires much nobility. As a novel “naval wannabe,” don’t just join submarines for a brief two years or so in laying claim to experience in yet another brief adventure as an impending boast to civvies and future grand children alike. But in order to garner in the honour and credibility of wearing “dolphins” and emerging as an authentic and knowledgeable submariner, demands much sacrifice of most of an entire naval career.

Non-Combatant Cormorant

So, in the summer of 1985, here we were, outbound from Halifax aboard *Cormorant* on a north-easterly course for Newfoundland. We were to train the ship’s company and test their mettle in mid-cycle work ups that incorporated diving ops from a 4-point mooring in Conception Bay. For a one-week period, this would allow for a static platform in the survey of three sunken war-time ore carriers with her SDL-1 submersible. With the mini-submarine embarked, *Cormorant*’s unique role was certainly not like that of any other ship in the entire navy. Around 1980, a large converted fishing vessel, M.V. *Aspa Quarta* was acquired from Italy and underwent conversion in Sorel P.Q. It would be a while before the conversion would complete because of several obstacles. With unknown particulars and the absence of either legible or written in English descriptions among her mechanical drawings, it had become a difficult chore. From the start, and as one example among a myriad of difficulties, there was to be no “docking plan” . . . the hydro-dynamic/mechanical illustration both critical and necessary for the provision of the criteria needed in docking and stability of vessels. So much had to be done by “guess-work” on the part of the Naval Archs and docking master. But the judgement from experience applied in order to obtain the “base line” of her keel, so that blocks may be positioned accurately in the dry dock, was masterfully executed by a good friend and past tutor, Jerry Prowse. With complications eventually aside, alien *Aspa Quarta* would re-emerge as an ocean-going fleet diving support ship complete with a submersible launch and recovery platform. Her revamped’ silhouette was to be regarded as quite like nothing else afloat throughout the world. Her especially large refrigerated fish cargo holds

and compartments served well in converting much space and flexibility to incorporate a decompression chamber, air compressors, and the multitudes of “mixed gas” cylinders required of her in her revitalized role. Unique she was and so was her crew. Assembled at sea for the first time in deep water was to be a shipload of deep-water clearance divers backed with a standard ship’s company. In the infancy of “women at sea,” incorporated within it were a couple of junior officers along with a group of cooks, stewards, stores rates and medical assistants numbering about 15 females . . . who were quite new at going to sea.

So once secured to the 4-point mooring in Conception Bay, static fire-fighting and damage control training of the ship’s company commenced. The eagerness shown by the females was impressive and began to gnaw away at the doubted, while a little skepticism prevailed in another area. Among the experienced hands who, in an air of self-assertion, vocally proclaimed, “No guns, no torpedoes *Cormorant* is a non-combatant, so Sea Trainers oughta back off with their under-water explosions and fukkin’ the ship up. She’s not built for it!” That view was to be curbed rapidly and it did as charges were chucked over the side to simulate the probability of damage from underwater explosions, get the crew’s attention and jolt and vibrate this gray painted naval vessel . . . just like all the others.

So, while digressing from safety workup for brief periods, and after all preparations were completed, the SDL dives commenced. The submersible carried a pilot and navigator in the forward sphere (controls). The sphere was connected to a 6' x 2' cylinder which provided crawl access forward or aft to an after but smaller sphere with room for two passengers, be they scientists, or in our case, a sea-trainer or two, who were definitely passengers.

Ride ‘em Cowboy

In order to get the submersible launched was by no means, a velvet operation as one might reason. Restricted to sea swell and heave of the ship meant that undue strain on the launch and the 3" recovery pendant from a traversed A-Frame was laborious and required much skill to avoid snap-back and an otherwise jettisoned submersible. The SDL, however compact, was no dinky machine. Her standard dry-weight displacement was about 15 tons and a sudden jar from negative to positive buoyancy would surely part the hawser-like braided nylon as the DIW tender would dance up and down like a cork. Once successfully afloat on the surface, it

was now the task of the divers to disconnect the pendant. A zodiac would be standing off and at the signal would come alongside SDL. One diver in wet-suit was designated as “Cowboy,” and it was his job to mount the submersible just as if he were jumping onto a saddle. Once he would disconnect “the pin,” he would pass a visual “thumbs up” to the pilot, dismount and swim back to the awaiting zodiac. Dangerous work indeed but in the calm waters of Conception Bay on this warm summer’s day, conditions were at their best.



Cormorant launches SDL1 - Conception Bay Newfoundland, 1985

SDL-1 went on to do her preliminary surveys of all three wrecks but now there was time to satisfy the curiosities of the rubber-neckers. It was certainly cramped but I shall never forget the opportunity to have done a dive. After all those years of going deep in submarines (negative portholes), it was the first time that I could look out the window and see where we were going.

We were down among the wrecks at about 150 feet and looming out from the darkness, we could eventually make out a large and eerie silhouette. It came to be that a sea-growth encrusted deck gun emerged from the wreck’s quarterdeck and as we gently circumnavigated the upright wreck in its entirety, it was empowering. To imagine of the fate and destiny of the human beings, the DEMS gunners that once hailed upon

these decks and defended bravely from their sparse gun positions, was indeed very eerie.

Hurricane country-down south

By the following summer in 1986, it seemed that *Cormorant*'s number came up once more. There had been some changes to her crew and a mid-cycle work-up was due. This time we were to fly aboard a CP140 Aurora to Tyndall AFB at Panama City Fl., and when we got down on the ground, there was one hell of a storm from a nearby hurricane with high winds and plenty of rain. Meanwhile, *Cormorant* was laying alongside . . . the crew fondly and anxiously awaiting our arrival we supposed. We were to board her at first light the following morning while initiating an alongside bomb-threat. It would commence with my (detailed off by STS Commander Gary Garnett) making a mysterious and foreign accent phone call to the ship very early in the morning. We arose in the dark and I was to "make the call." But then, we were to run into difficulties with the receptionist of the motel where we had booked into for the night. When he saw our accompanying fake bomb apparatus appear in the lobby at this very early check-out time, he became very bewildered and called the local cops. He had blown the whistle on us that in order to be convinced that it was a training exercise, the ship had to be contacted by the law to affirm of the evolution if one should ever be initiated by Sea Training Staff. The ship's skipper said "Yes!" and the receptionist wound his neck in. Cover blown, the Commander simultaneously blurted out with plan B. "Oh well. We'll still get their attention. Instead, let's have a steering gear break-down as we leave this wind-swept jetty!"

With a little difficulty due to those high winds, we finally got under way which indeed included plan B. The ship's special-sea-dutymen handled it commendably. And then as we rounded the breakwater for the open sea, it didn't take long for many to head for heavin' stations. The winds had increased severely indicating that the hurricane was over the waters stretching from Florida's Gulf coast all the way to Texas. Nevertheless, the plan remained the same as we headed for the exercise areas, not only to do work-ups as the schedule called for but also to launch the SDL. We were within the maximum sea state allowable to do so and interest was high about riding the vessel by a rare guest. Now Commodore JED (Dinger) Bell, former skipper from *Okanagan* days and now Chief of Staff Readiness, was embarked to witness the work-ups program. Much like I,

and he too being a submariner, the curiosity and semblance from past experiences meant that he really wanted to do a dive in the SDL-1. And so he did.

The launch was successful but not as streamlined as we had witnessed and experienced in the calm waters of Conception Bay. The Cowboy had to struggle to stay aboard as the submersible heaved and whipped between each swell and trough. Once disconnected, he would jump over the side and swim to the awaiting Zode'. Meanwhile, SDL-1, complete with the Chief of Staff ex-submariner aboard, slipped beneath the heavy swells within seconds. Just a short dive it was intended to be, but now the skies grew darker and the rains came pelting down while the winds increased substantially. We were now in excess of the maximum sea-state allowable for launch and in this case, recovery. Short dive nuthin'! It took four and a half hours to get that submersible back, and as she was finally lowered and secured aboard *Cormorant's* quarter with the A-Frame, the access hatch opened. Out stepped a pale-looking, frail, soaked with sweat JED (Dinger) Bell who later confessed, he wished he wouldn't have done it. I don't blame him as that little SDL-1 must have bounced about like a tempest in a very, very humid tea pot.

A "Tanker Wanker" I'm not...! PROTECTEUR

I was to move on once again. Following that memorable and satisfying time in sea training, I was then put in charge of FMG machine shops for about 6 months as a temporary shore posting. It seemed that everybody in 'gens' traditionally went through FMG at one time or another, but now I was right next door to SM1 in the dockyard and the joy and daily presence of old acquaintances returned. As brief as it seemed, I had now been a C1



for 9 years and because of MORPS, the prospects of going Chief Tiff for the fifth time was now a redundant reality. I was now prepared to return to sea in a way that would give recognition to Chief ERA's and indeed the engineering branch as capable and certainly most worthy, in the executive department.

I took over as coxswain aboard *Protecteur* also a first on the east coast in that regardless of what trade you were, all hard-sea trades were now able to be represented aboard ships as coxswains. Again, submarine principles applied in my new role, and I am often reminded

today that the Captain, the XO, and the entire ship's company enjoyed the way we did things. Hard work, get stuck in, long hours, have fun doing it . . . and play hard. Well, that's what we did. Sailing in *Protecteur* was both a combination of the opportunity of working with the entire fleet from another perspective, while experiencing several occasions when age-old naval traditions were often re-visited.

The skipper was none other than Captain "Hal" Davies, the very confident and traditional senior officer who had joined the navy as a supply bob but quickly found his successful niche in the operational end of driving ships and confidently leading the crews within them. By now, he had had three previous commands in destroyers and also became the Commander, Sea Training.

He was to drive this tanker *Protecteur* like a destroyer as well when exercising with the fleet. But during passage or times when ships weren't alongside to replenish, Father Hal', also an honorary "bunting tosser" in the Signalmen's branch, would often be found upon the captain's chair on the bridge, splicing fancy rope work and fashioning braid to bell clappers that were usually destined as personal presentations. Witty, cunning, daring and a sailor's skipper who thrived on custom and naval tradition quite like no other officer can I recall. The proof of his crew-congeniality and conclusive portrayal as he being "the landlord" would find him unexpectedly appearing anywhere in the ship, at any time of the day or night. I would enter a sparsely attended cafeteria for breakfast at 0600, to receive a morning greeting from Captain Hal' closed up in the servery with a chef's cap and apron on. "Good morning Coxswain! And how would you like your eggs on this very fine day? Red lead too, perhaps with cap tallies as well?" Other times he would be patrolling about on the vast upper deck when on one day while we were all sat in the mess, his bearded face appeared through an open scuttle that was accompanied with a "Good afternoon gentlemen! Nice day isn't it?"

Integrity?

The Executive Officer, a three-ringed Commander, was an ex-shipwright who went CFR at a time when he was a budding killick aboard the old frigates in the early 'sixties. His name was Cdr Albert Tanguay. He opined of himself that he had a lot more to offer the navy than clearing ships' sewerage systems and welding pipe brackets where later, many would agree. As a Commander, this very speculative and subdued officer

was the type that would keep everybody on their toes. His manner and poise were that of the type where his standards of cleanliness, smartness, and the ability to get things done without raising his voice, was masterful. Junior officers feared him, the troops respected him, and *Protecteur's* Chiefs and Petty Officers in their seasoned wisdom, supported him to the fullest regardless of the mystique he carried as the XO. On any occasion, and so it seemed to everybody on board, nothing ever pleased him. His method was to keep 'em all guessing. He would conduct evening rounds at sea in such a different way. In the main cafeteria, by peering under milk coolers, sighting for toast crumbs and spilt ketchup under pantries and tables, or dustballs under bunks and in behind lockers in the messes. All of this without uttering a word, was enough to the men reporting the compartments to ensure that *Protecteur* was maintained as a spotlessly clean ship. So that there would be no surprises, I was to learn among the privileged very few of his stratagem. I had only been aboard but a few days and just hoped that everything I was doing was acceptable for XO, crew, and ultimately, Captain Hal'. It was hard to get a read and the possibilities of asking anyone was irresolute, safe to bet that if I did, might offer a marginal display of hesitancy or incapability.

We were yet to sail and alongside in the dockyard one morning, the telephone rang. A soft voice from the other end murmured, "Coxswain! Will you come up to my cabin?" "Aye, aye sir! Be right up." I replied while hanging up the handset and breezing out of the office in a single sweep. As I arrived at his cabin door two decks up, he invited me in and offered me a seat, a cigarette, and a cup of coffee. He began, "Coxswain! You probably think I'm a man of integrity." I responded while putting my coffee down, "Why yes, I do sir!" At that reaction, he glanced at me with a smirk and in a chuckling tone replied, "Well I fukkin' well ain't!" And that was as far as we needed to go on that topic. He then shifted attention to the captain and how he ran the ship. He was pleased to serve under Hal' and led me to clearly understand that in the profession of ship handling and navigation, he was his closest ally. Because of Hal's spontaneous emergencies throughout the ship at any given time of day or night, it was imperative that this XO was aware of his meanderings and in particular, his location throughout the ship. "Anytime he's in the after house or worse, way down below in the engine room or store rooms 'Swain...for the safety of the ship, I want to know where he is!" he insisted. Then he turned and glared at me with an astounding, "That way. . .I can keep an eye on the officers of the watch!"

It was this area where XO had major concerns and it quickly reminded me of the prevailing mystique of the wardroom and its inhabitants. Officers tales are more in line with the limitedness and the expectation of the “Don’t tell anybody unless I say so” impression I get of the wardroom both professionally and socially. For whatever did, or does go on in the wardroom, the truth can only be revealed to a fellow officer . . . and rightly so in cadence with the lower deck. Therefore, the so-called mystique! We as lower-deckers would keep our distance but maintain a cautious eye toward the analogies of our ancestral leaders. Then the controversy begins and we would come bewildered. Admiral Lord Nelson, the father of the navy defined his belief of an officer: “As you start the world as a man in the navy, your future conduct in life will prove as both an officer and a gentleman. Remember that you must be a seaman to be an officer; and also, you cannot be a good officer without being a gentleman.” Lord St. Vincent then contrastingly casts his doubts upon his wardroom colleagues and said: “Discipline begins in the wardroom. I dread not the seaman. It is the indiscreet conversations of the officers and their presumptuous discussions of the orders they receive that produce all of our ills.” So enter Commander Tanguay who looks for the leadership and quickly it is his fundamental sense and duty to himself to spot the deficiencies observed by the good lords, Nelson and St. Vincent. Now the wise officer will take his orders away from the wardroom and sift them through his department but with the trust, faith, and support of his charges thereby making him a good officer. It is a form of mutual respect that both seasoned sailors and professional officers regard each other for. Good officers understand the hands and the good divisional officer, the fine captain and the XO who respect their men and so, the mystique prevails. This is what only a lower-decker can relate to and may not one single officer, unless he was careless and reckless enough . . . aggravate that mystique.

The crew

With much to do, sometime later I returned to the office with a surge of initiative and confidence since revealing his dependency upon me. Many of the procedures were to me, time-consuming and for the most part, typically mundane. Watch & Quarter Bills, charge reports, ration reports, leave forms, and yes, the dreaded request forms. As was the prevailing routine, I was inundated with personal request forms on a daily basis. Request for leave, requests for release, requests to see the padre, requests

to see the captain on a service matter, request to ask a question. The psychology behind the privilege of a submission of formal request just had to change. I decided that all non-urgent requests, the lion's share, were to be entertained on Thursdays only. Not miserable Mondays or troubling Tuesdays. After all, the next day was Friday where "unofficial sliders" took place at noon, followed by a weekend off as was in order for most. "Not a bad navy after all," would opine an otherwise disgruntled hairy, "... so what do I have to drip about?" The numbers of request forms reduced dramatically, and I could now get the hell out of the office leaving the regulator to handle the routine admin'. *Protecteur* was a large vessel and lots of encouragement, participation and presence throughout her gangways, messes, and flats became this coxswain's priorities.

Aboard also, among an elite group of chief petty officers, were Chief Bos'n's Mate Dickie Ryan and fleet-wide, well-known chaps, Joe Smale, the Chief whittler along with Gary Moore, the exuberant Chief cook. Months later, we were at anchor in Fort du France on Martinique Island among the cruise ships and a myriad of visiting yachts. Joe, Gary and I got ashore on one of the Dickie's LCV's for a few hours and ended up in a bar on the waterfront. Like most bars in the Caribbean', they have character and this one was not to be outdone especially in a place like Martinique. Describing the wakes of its clientele, it displayed bank notes from every corner of the globe. Every inch of space was splattered with everything from Indian rupees, to Deutschmarks, Thai Bahts, an American 'fifty', ten quid sterling, Hong Kong dollars, and so it went. . .but mysteriously, no where could I see that infamous note of legal tender that familiarly ascribes to every canuck who readily shops for car parts, paint, tools, and light bulbs when he's home. . .Canadian Tire money.

I jumped into my wallet to produce a crisp and brand new \$1.00 coupon, hunching that if I were to offer it to the bartender, he would certainly like to reciprocate with perhaps, some free samples of his bar stock. I handed it over to the gentleman whose eyes now grew like saucers as he said with a grin, "Oo is 'dis guy on da Canadian dolla'?" he referring to the image of Haggus McBagpipes, the CTC icon. I replied with a lot of confidence, "Why, that's our prime minister! Who else? President DeGaul?" His eyes darted about the back of the bar looking for a vacant space for this new-found bank note of rare memorabilia while excitedly acclaiming in his Franco-American accent, "Boy! 'e look like a pretty 'appy guy! He smile big. 'Dis is wort' some beer for da 'tree of you!" Equal trade indeed we thought, but not of the magnitude that some years ago in some other distant lands, our cunning and daring naval brothers and fore-fathers made many

dealings with good ole' Canadian Tire money recognized by the local populace as legal tender.

Customs and traditions certainly prevailed in *Protecteur* yet again, when it was time to “weigh and proceed” from Fort du France. On the outbound transit, Captain Hal’ opted to turn to port and circumnavigate the southern tip of the island rather than shorten the distance by steering north. He purposely did so to conduct a small ceremony by having to pass under HMS *Diamond Rock*, truly a stone frigate that was once a heavily armed British bastion that served as a defence against the French in the Caribbean during the 16th century. By doing so, we faced to port and piped this “rock” as we navigated past at a range of about a mile. It was a majestic display of the Captain’s cultivation and sincere respect for naval history.

“Still no boarding pass, sir?”

During that northerly passage back into the operating areas off Puerto Rico, among others, *Saguenay* would come alongside for fuel and stores. And while she had just completed a mid-cycle work-up, none other than the now, Commander Sea Training, Tony Delamere would come across to *Protecteur* by jackstay. When I had learnt that Tony was to visit us, I immediately turned to “Buffer” Dickie Ryan to have a little fun. As Tony had the distinction of rating a “pipe the side” as he was to be jackstay’ed aboard, it seemed to me there should be some screening done . . . before he could be accepted and lowered to *Protecteur*’s upper deck. So, while Tony was but a few “in-hauls” left before paralleling high above the ship’s side, the process was halted while churning waves and white caps lapped at his trembling feet. A bewildered look suddenly appeared on his face. “Uh-oh! What went wrong?” he thought as he dangled between the two ships yet just a few feet to go. Above the din and clamour of hovering helos, barking orders, ships’ fans and sea noise, the buffer then yelled out, **“Coxswain sez we can’t swing ya’ inboard sir. . .unless ya’ got a boardin’ pass!”**

Saluting at sea has much history and tradition behind it. An example is the custom of merchant vessels saluting naval vessels by dipping their national flag, as was the case as merchantmen would engage on us during our transit north. It extends from the days of sail when passing merchantmen would “strike” their sails as a form of salute, but only thereafter would the naval vessel do likewise in acknowledgment, now assured that the merchantman was a “friendly.” Today, it is not uncommon

for the occasional passing vessel to gloss over that form of respect through dipping her colours, but whether through ignorance or disrespect is indefinable. If this be the case, the naval vessel will ignore the circumstance, her ensign remaining “close up” while continuing on, and upon her lawful occasion.

“Attention on the upper deck . . . Face to port!”

We were to immerse in yet another form of deep-rooted naval custom in paying respects at sea. Later in the year, we sailed to join the NATO fleet as a last deployment before entering major refit. We did so in the North Sea, and almost immediately we stumbled onto a task. The STANAVFORLANT Commander, Commodore Lynn Mason, embarked in flagship HMCS *Athabaskan*, was being relieved after he and his staff had led the squadron for the customary one-year period. In order to celebrate the occasion, modern custom had it that in line astern “sail-pasts” were in order where the rearguard vessel would ‘leap-frog’ ahead by overtaking the entire column until manoeuvring as vanguard at the head. While doing so, each of the multi-national ships’ companies would display their cultural and customary respects in the form of pantomime and other hair-raising activities so disguised, but respectfully serving as a form of salute. It was great fun among those that had been together for such a long period of time and as a vessel detached to return to its home port, or in this case where the Commodore was relinquishing command, there was much jubilation as very active and descriptive farewells abounded. Grapefruit cannons fired away while banners offered a subtle remark or two or instead, illustrating a cartoon or displaying an effigy or image that reflected upon an earlier inter-ship social or at sea-strategy engagement.

In *Protecteur*, having just RV’d, we had little time to prepare for the sailpast when Captain Hal’ had me piped to his cabin. “Coxswain! What can we do about the sailpast?” he asked anxiously. “*Protecteur* just can’t sail by the squadron with just piping “the still.” That is just not our savoir-faire!” he reminded me in his essence. I then thought about “Dickie” Ryan again. “Let me see what the buffer sez’ about this sir. I’ll get back to you shortly.” I trundled off to get a hold of Dickie and in no time flat, he assured me that between us, we could get the entire ship’s company mustered together for instruction to “Man the side and Cheer ship!” Now both Captain and XO agreeable, the whole process saw us clear lower decks to the dispersal area where the entire ship’s company were given a

demonstration of what to do, how to do it, and where to position themselves when the time came that *Protecteur* would overtake the Commodore and his staff aboard *Athabaskan*. It took just 15 minutes where it was now just a case of visiting each of the assigned areas of the upper decks to ensure that the right numbers and requisite personnel were available to bask in this rare opportunity. We two did.

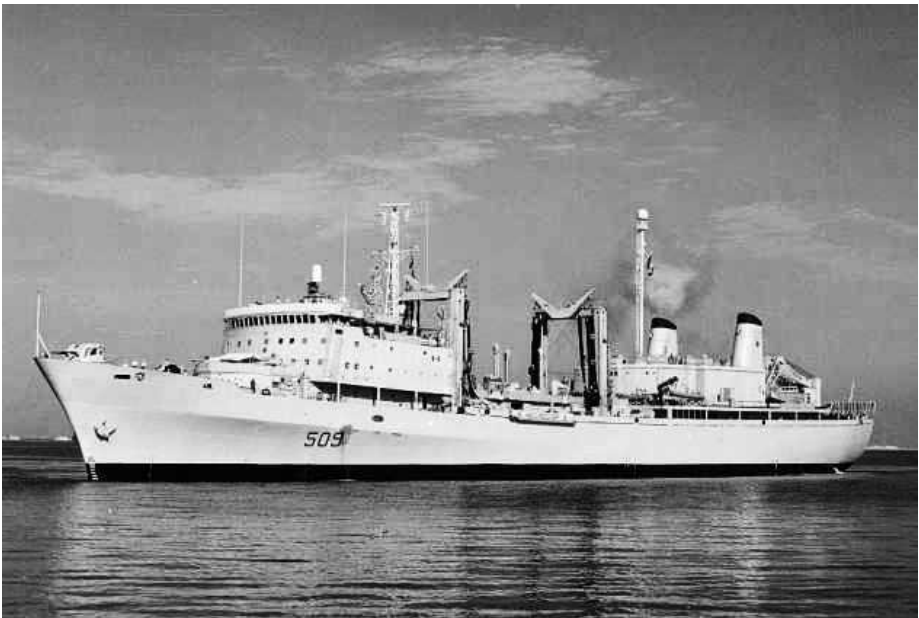
The evolution of “Manning the side and cheering ship” takes its form from a time when to “man ship” was the act of a show of power and a commitment of the crew’s outward trust and respectful “friendly salute” for Royalty, Lord Admirals, as well as warships of other nations. Cheers and happy noises would also emit that emphasized on this form of salute. All hands would take to the yards and gaff rails high above and for all to see thereby rendering the ship defenceless through abandoning their gunnery stations. In modern times of course, such an act has digressed that ‘manning the side’ now takes place by the ship’s company lining the flag, upper, and flight decks where fitted. And in the thrust of the moment, in the days of sail there was yet to be an engine room branch...and their modern-day presence is such that they remain invisible as somebody has to stay down below to keep the shafts turning...don’t they? As for the traditional “three rousing cheers” from bareheaded sailors whose caps are grasped in the right hand, shall counter-clockwise rotate once with each “cheer,” which is a most unique sight when done in unison and to the cadence of each “Hoo-rah” . . . and certainly NOT “Hoo-ray.” I choose not to purport on the occasions when the inherent cap or two have been seen to have gone over the side in the past, while the man next door or possibly up on the flight deck...would rotate his cap in the opposite direction which severely detracts from an otherwise splendid pomp of discipline and unison. For a change, there is no connection to naval history or tradition that I could pinpoint that analyses the origin of the old “sore thumb” and its distinctness. Such a simile certainly applies to a formality that is filled with errors.

We quickly slid abreast of *Atha-bee* and as bridges drew parallel, the order was passed from the executive officer by main intercom. **“Man the side!”** at which every man advanced one pace toward the guardrail. Then came the order, **“Three Cheers for Commodore Mason!”** followed by . . . **Hip!** (pause)**Hip!** (pause)**Hip!** (pause) where in-unison responses by the ship’s company erupted with three very loud **“Hoo-rah!”**s. White caps spun their circles in cadence. Commodore Mason stood proudly and front-saluted in response. . .tears from overwhelming pride visibly streaming down his face. *Protecteur* had once more showed her talent and distinction.

But there was to be an extension to this account when suddenly there came muffled, thumping echoes emitting from the destroyer's hull. From above our bridge deckhead were a group of the guys dressed in *Protecteur* sports jerseys, each armed with a hockey stick and salvos of pucks. . . firing slapshots at *Athabaskan*. It was a Saturday, and tonight it was "Hockey Night in Canada," . . .with our 'an ocean-away' TV's much out of range.

"Up Spirits!"

While returning from that memorable deployment, it was to be a joyful time as *Protecteur* had fulfilled all of her requirements by serving the fleet untiringly well. Captain Hal' wanted in some way to be able to celebrate all the good work that had been done during her long operating cycle, the ship now heading for major refit once we would arrive in Halifax. After about two days in the English Channel and having cleared Land's End, I



HMCS Protecteur - getting underway from Roosevelt Roads P.R.

ambled up to the skipper's flat and as soon as I knocked and pulled the privacy curtain aside, he briskly asked, "Coxswain! How can I have an "Up Spirits"? Instantly, I accepted this exciting challenge and replied, "Well sir... Marcords' state that we require CANCOMFLT's permission

as he is your supreme commander. But then as he's not aboard, you as commanding officer need an excuse." I replied confidently. "Tell me more!" he demanded with a gleam in his eye and a smirk on his grizzled and bearded face. Then just about in one long breathe, I continued, "If you feel that the crew has endured a lot of stressful work or exposure to the elements, and we really have now sir, haven't we??...you are quite within your right to carry out a bubbly issue, of course immediately informing the good Commodore on arrival at Halifax.

It all began with the good ole' Royal Navy at the Pillars of Hercules, sir. When they celebrated "The Siege at Gibraltar," the thirteen "sieges" covered a long period of time and required much effort that a tot of rum all round was certain to be in order as the captain would wish to celebrate. "Thirteen rum issues is kinda greedy sir, ain't it; but as we're heading for the middle of the Atlantic, we should seize the moment and only have one sir! Good 'nuff captain sir?" He agreed and we did so the next day. Chief whittler Joe Smale and I, he dressed in his three-badged killick vittler's uniform of the past and myself in dress of the day as we administered the issue to all hands. It is on these occasions only, that the wardroom was also entitled to a spirit issue. . . and so did they too, rejoice in our daily, lower-deck, "one-upon-a-time" observance. That rum issue led to the social atmosphere that we were to enjoy by having a barbecue banyan, a beer issue, and a ship's concert later that evening. Among others, the concert starred the Chiefs and PO's mess and their renditions of "Three Blind Jellyfish" and the "Chelsea Pensioners". Happy, simple, and daring times! By the time we arrived at Halifax, the 'Supreme Commander', Commodore Charles Westropp had been personally informed of our "poke at the rum monkey" by Captain Hal' where there wasn't much he could say or do after the fact he mused. Never stuck for a response like any good naval officer, could only concur with the reasoning, "Oh! Well that was indeed very nice now . . . wasn't it?"

And so it came to pass that after entering refit, I would soon be on my way again. I had thoroughly enjoyed the experiences and the honour of sailing in that ship as I had become a "tanker-wanker." I had learnt so much more and concluded that you never stop learning. How simple it had become to understand of the responsibility of one man, the XO who within a triangle of a ship's company in making it pleausurably work. A masterful captain who when he had to, did so by declaring "Do" or "Don't," the XO "We will" or "We won't," and the Coxswain, "Here's how" or "Why not?"



HMCS Protecteur 1988

Commanding Officer Captain Hal Davies presents the book 'Ship Ahoy' (the world of ocean liners) to his Coxswain with a tot all round' in his cabin. He later invited his steward to join us for 'Queen's'.

Author's note: During the course of researching, writing and completing *Sons of Neptune*, in the milieu I spent much time mulling with names from a diminutive circle of retired career naval officers, one of whom would accept to review the content and compile the Foreword. I thought he should be well-known and admired by the Lower Deck. He should be long-serving both at sea and ashore and whose background and experience included strong leadership, much versatility and a down-to-earth dose of familiarity with naval traditions and life as it was for those upon the lower deck. Indeed, a sailor's Sailor who possessed an element of mutual respect regardless of rank or responsibility. It was difficult to decide upon from that diminutive circle, but during the Naval Centenary in 2010, I elected to ask Captain Hal'. In his customary way, he considered it an honour and enthusiastically agreed to do so. On February 15th 2011, sudden news had hit the Navy...all those within, past and present. He had passed away while vacationing in the Bahamas. Dolphin Code 78: WISH YOU WERE HEREto have read this book.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

And now for a glimpse into the past:
Times before change. . . “Ripley’s this is not!”
The Characters...and their dits!

And so we sailor’ed on, in the belief that as the new frigates would undergo construction, we would be prepared in some way to meet the challenge. The hard part, of course, is that the people in it were a product of a yester-year navy, and the tales of how they came to be what they are today must not go unattended to. At this juncture, and by now through these pages and from all accounts, one should be well acquainted to some adequacy of the navy, the ships, the submarines, and fore-warned of the deeds and compassion of those who sail in them. It is only fitting then to reflect on precious and unimaginable stories and those of ‘the characters’, ‘the unsung’, and their experiences.

One of the major downfalls of today’s modern navy began in the mid 1980’s. For so many years before the green uniform, a stropky killick or a three-badged A.B. possessed a vocabulary containing descriptive adjectives and pronouns that would blister paint on a ship’s side and embarrass his anti-gas mask. Where did these guys go? If they died, hell must be overcrowded. They represented of how it was possible to fold, bend, spindle and mutilate just about every rule in Queen’s Regulations and make it through a naval career without getting hanged or shot, while maybe still ending up as a chief in the process. To puff away or hand out duty free smokes at a dollar a carton, or something else without a filter or a cork tip, carried in his sock next to his ankle or conveniently stuffed in his jumper beside his last ship’s Zippo. . .a pint of black rum strapped to his other ankle. . .wore #3’s ashore with rubber sea boots that substituted for leather ones in dire need of a shine. . .with cap flat aback, unbuttoned cuffs on his jumper that were rolled up a turn, so his ‘dragons’ stood out like port and starboard running lights, pushing back a fifty-cent quart under the bridge in the Seaway Tavern while the Duty Ashore book on the brow had your whereabouts dutifully signed out for the pipe shop or the dental clinic in the dockyard.

The heart-warming reality is that there still exists, many characters in the navy. Their obstacle and indeed, the obstacles of the suspecting audience surrounding them is that they are emerged into an environment that no longer affords to cater to the welcome diversions of a timely

skylark or the tongue in cheek acceptance of a comical and witty exhibitionist in pantomime. Social ethos and correctness, ethnic minorities, gender equality, sexual harassment, quality of life, and the constant technological demands placed upon today's sailor just don't provide for time and place to skylark, join in Sod's Operas, or carry on like a court jester. No longer is there malingering at the bar, skivin' off, going ashore on a "taker's", not a "maker's", and doing things smartly as long as you don't get caught and above all, against the camaraderie of messmates. Maybe, just maybe, there might return one day, opportunities to rejuvenate the enthusiasm of nerve while greeting it with warm acceptance and forgiveness where needed . . . of jolly jack tar and his acts and utterances of ribaldness and aiming dare. Perhaps bawdy but beautiful stories and some far-reaching tales from the past, shall help to rekindle the possibility that characters shall prevail upon the lower deck and that their bosses shall weigh their existence as a significant need, however outrageous. Fairy tales begin with "Once upon a time" . . . but sea stories and salty dits start with, "This is no bullshit" . . .

The Browning on Bonnie' in Belfast

Eddy D'Orsay was a matelot who in the minds of everybody who knew him, served as the perfect example of the typical hairy bag. His sly grin and smiling eyes, to this day still attest to his wit, cunning, and perception as a matelot while humbly maintaining his faith as a true messmate. As an LSAA, Eddy commissioned HMCS *Bonaventure* and relates to a story that backfired, shall we say, as he exercised his integrity as a 'gunbuster'. The former HMS *Powerful* had only been commissioned for a few days and was in final preparations to sail from Belfast after post-commissioning activities had been completed at Harland and Wolff Shipyards. It was 1957. Among other duties, our Ed was on the brow watch-keeping staff and he was to take over the watch as quartermaster of the forward gangway, relieving LSQM McQuiggan. Because of the constant threat of the IRA, the brow staffs were armed and Eddy was to assume custody of "the duty Browning 9mm pistol" and loaded clip from Mac, as part of the turnover. Eddy was alert to the level of dexterity that prevailed in people in the Quartermaster trade, that many still do in today's transformed mob known as the Bos'ns. Eddy on the other hand, was a product of the most sophisticated level of small-arms training in the RCN that produced marksmen among gunnery rates, but the number one requirement that was

drilled into gunners in handling weapons was “safety” so he was obliged to be very adept.

As Eddy approached Mac, they engaged in a yarn, the latter providing a sketch of present security matters aboard and what Eddy might anticipate in the next ‘four’. He now happy with the course of events, Mac passed the sidearm to him. Eddy then asked if the chamber was clear. Mac replied, “ ‘Course it is! . . . Look!” and to affirm his reply, he cocked the weapon back without releasing the clip as a round went into the chamber. Eddy immediately responded to Mac in declaring, “No it ain’t, ya’ fukkin’ bonehead. Now it’s loaded!” Mac countered with, “Bullshit!”, and in demonstrating his disagreement, pointed the gun in an opposite general direction and squeezed the trigger. “**POW**” . . . went the pistol, scoring a bull right through some nearby fan trunking. Surrounding heads on the busy gangway area all turned suddenly and in loud, ear-splitting unison queried, “**What-the-fukwazzat?**” People ducked for cover everywhere and a dockyard matey who had just stepped up onto the brow to head ashore, froze in his tracks. Up in the air shot his arms just like missiles while loudly pleading, “**Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!**” and there, tumbling down the gangway from his discreet grasp, were four pounds of pusser’s butter and a carton of Export ‘plains’.

It needs to be concluded here of the matelot’s continued spirit that prevails throughout the navy. It deals with caring for your own kind and keeping your oppos out of the shite. Not to worry about the dockyard matey with his probable rewarded booty for a favour to some sailor but more significantly, how Eddy ‘covered up’ Mac’s inherent blunder and the spent bullet. LSAA E. D’Orsay was also responsible for all ammunition records and muster sheets. As such, it was his duty to ensure the precision and careful record-keeping of all forms of on-board ammunition and be accountable for its legitimate purpose . . . or in this case, careless use and the certainty of an accompanying, punishable offence. As *Bonnie’s* crowded forward gangway was a working brow for dockyard maties to transit parts and equipment aboard and ashore, there was no officer present at the brow . . . or duty MAA for that matter. The forward gangway quartermaster was the sole form of responsibility. The OOD was stationed at the after (ceremonial) brow and was not to become aware of the incident, as the unexpected sound of the discharging pistol was also probably not heard over the surrounding din of shipyard and onboard activities. Eddy quickly realized this and probably saved Mac’s neck, he having to account for his actions as to why the weapon was discharged. When Eddy came off watch, he went to the magazine compartment. He inserted a replacement

round in the magazine clip and dexterously adjusted the daily accounts as: "All ammunition mustered and correct." Good messmate!

Wedding Bells in Belfast ... lots!

Well, this wasn't to end Eddy's adventures as well as for the lads around him. It is reputed that while *Bonnie* was completing her "fitting out" and preparing to sail to Canada and the RCN, at least 21 guys were to get married to some of the finest colleens that Belfast had to offer. "There were so many of the troops getting' married that there was a weddin' every weekend!", assured Eddy.

"There was a guy by the name of Cameron . . . a killick Met' rate. Cam' wasn't too well-known because he was a bit on the quiet side. So quiet that nobody knew he was already married. His new wife-to-be had a rich family who had a big house in Belfast that was really a mansion. Well this wedding promised to turn out as one hell of a party and the whole mess got invited. Also, there were a whole lot of civvies there who were "friends of the bride." I mean this was a big bash. Then, just after the local vicar pronounced them "man and wife", the word got out that Cam' was already married. Everybody was hammered and then a punch-up broke out with the civvies. Furniture, glass, and flyin' ornaments started to shatter and even a bunch of statues got toppled over and smashed. The cops were called in and a lot of guys got arrested. The wedding then became null and void. All I can remember after that is that I couldn't eat anything, especially toast for the next three days because somebody thumped me in the mouth."

Eddy then talked about another wedding. "Then there was Bill, a QM rate, who met this party and quickly fell in love with her. This was to be another big wedding bash so everybody got primed and were howlin' for this one as well. After the ceremonies were over it was time to take weddin' pictures in a garden, just as it started to pour with rain. The guy taking the pictures was drunk too and was havin' a hell of a time tryin' to get this staggerin' heap organized to take a group picture. The rain was comin' down in buckets and he kept telling everybody to back up just a little bit more, and a little bit more, when all of a sudden, somebody in the front row tripped and fell backwards and took the whole bunch of us with him. Down we all went in the slime and mush and our uni-bags were all covered in mud. In the end, Bill had about a hundred wedding pictures,

but they all came out blurred. There was an exception though. There was one of me and his new bride only, and it turned out just perfect.”

The Gunners’ Store

Eddy himself was not to be idle either. Although still single, he enjoyed playing the field too, just like any other hairy-ass. “Yup! We sure had a lotta fun in Belfast. I remember the day soon before we sailed for Halifax when the ship was open-house to the citizens of Belfast. It was a real cold day in the month of January and me and my winger trapped these two real good lookin’ parties dressed in long winter coats that were comin’ aboard. We asked if they’d like a tour of the ship that was limited to pretty well the upper deck and the hangar only. Well just near one of the 3”50-gun sponsons, was the Gunner’s store where we stowed the swords, rifles, and the webbing. When we got in there, we turned out the lights so nobody



could see us through the opened hatchway. There was a table in there that we used to ‘whiten’ the belts and gaiters on for the shore patrol guys everyday. Well, me and my winger took turns usin’ the table and that was fine until it was time for the two parties to steam ashore. As they headed over the brow, the OOD said, “Well it’s easy to see where you guys were, ahem....and what you were doing!” On each of the backs of the ladies’ winter coats were the white outlines of a belt with two buckles on the back, and a pair of pussers’ gaiters.”

The one that topped it off though was the young killick TAS rate who was a real lady’s man. This curly, red-headed guy was really handsome as far as women are concerned, and he was the epitome of a “matelot who had a girl in every port.” But like the Met’ rate, he too had a wife back home in Ontario and while in Belfast, he decided to have one there as well. He met this very attractive girl, and you guessed it! It didn’t take long before he asked

her to marry him. They did, and as we finally sailed for Halifax, his new bride had already gone across on a Cunarder.”

The day that *Bonnie* arrived in Slackers, Jetty 4 had been well-prepared for Canada’s new flagship and while just about anybody who was important in the RCN stood proudly on the jetty as the first heaving line came ashore with welcome. On the jetty too, were families, wives and sweethearts who hadn’t seen their husbands, sons, and boyfriends in a very long time. But among the crowd also were three women standing here and there, who didn’t know each other . . . a wife from Ireland, another from Ontario, and his girlfriend who lived up in the north end of Halifax. Eddy said, “I remember seeing him standing on the cable deck and waving. But when he saw the three women all wave back, he vanished down below. He didn’t get ashore for the next month for whatever he did to get in the shit, he wound up getting’ himself 30 days stoppage of leave so he could hide.”

Government Controlled Recreation

In the fifties, Eddy decided to take his release but it came short-lived. Nearly a year had passed, he signed back on, and he was briskly drafted back to sea. It didn’t take him long to get his ‘hook’ back either and now Eddy was back on track and the adventures would continue. Later, he commissioned one of the new *MacKenzie* class and because of his “time in”, was the killick of #8 mess. Eddy was a resourceful and innovative leading hand as well and it didn’t take long for him to decide that the whole mess should each start throwin’ a “buck a week” into a slush fund. “Ya’ never know when we might need a few dollars!” he would always affirm to the lads.

Well time went by since the mess agreed on the new rule. As a matter of fact, it was forty weeks and everybody kept making their honest contributions and the fund was getting very large. There might have been a few rubbers handed out at the rate of 5 bucks for 6, or 50 for 60. But the end result was that by the time the new destroyer was scheduled to make a visit to Caracus, Venezuela, “killick-a’-the mess Eddy” decided it was time to spend some money, so he went to work. He had heard that in somewhere in Caracus, there was a government-controlled whorehouse. Eddy called a mess meeting and declared, “If a whole mess-load of guys lookin’ for a shit-hot party with “plenny a’ booze and a good piece of ass to go with it”, this is the place to go. I hear it costs about forty bucks a

hand. For that, everybody'll get lots of beer and hardstuff, a dollybird, and a room as well." It was unanimously agreed to by the mess, so Eddy said, "Right! Done deal! When I get ashore, I'll go get it organized." Well because of all the excitement and anticipation, it didn't take long for the word to get around in the whole ship. So popular was the idea that everybody else wanted a piece of the action as well. Eddy held his ground but finally, he had to give in. "Right you guys. If ya' want in . . . forty bucks a head!" Well, right through the ship . . . the messes, the cafeterias, the Burma Road, and even the boiler room now became full of the buzz about this hooley in a whorehouse as the anxiety and excitement grew steadily.

When the ship arrived, Eddy and a winger jumped into a cab to go looking for the house of ill-repute. With the help of the cabbie, they found it in a little nearby town called Los Teques, way up in the mountains. This nice big, well-kept place could lay on a large party, especially for a bunch of hairy bags. The party began with transport laid on and the whole bit. Everybody was now up at the whorehouse having the party of their lives, and it was to continue for the rest of the weekend. Eddy carried on regulating the activities by handing out the price of the booze and marking it down on a "tick list." He had two rolls of pre-paid tickets . . . red ones for the room and green ones for any one of the selected and pretty Latin-American ladies who, for this grand occasion, numbered near a hundred. How appropriate the colours were . . . red for the 'district' and green for the possible 'aftermath'. Things were becoming bubbly and roary-eyed that at one time, the room tickets all disappeared. Somehow, they were returned and nobody cheated . . . just like good hairy bags always are.

The following morning, Eddy went back aboard to change his nicks and by now, the buzz about the 'goings on ashore' had wafted up one ladder to the wardroom flat, and then up the next one that led to the Captain's cabin. He hadn't been aboard for more than a minute when there came this shattering pipe over the main intercom. **"Leading Seaman D'Orsay! Report to the Captain's cabin."** Eddy now feared the worst for going a little too far in this venture. He thought that maybe he stuck his neck out by organizing the best part of a Canadian destroyer crew at an orgy up in the mountains in this massive "bag shanty." When he got up to the skipper's grot, he was invited in, expecting a proper blast and his leave jammed. But much to Ed's surprise, the captain instead asked, "Leading Seaman D'Orsay. Is there any chance that myself and some of the wardroom can attend the party too?" To no one's surprise, Eddy just can't

for the life of him, remember who the skipper was. Now ain't that typical of former LSAA Eddy?

“Hutch”

CPO1 Doug Hutchinson, known by all as “Hutch,” was a Chief ERA whose only drawback was that he came in as a tiffy. But that was alright because he carried himself more like a stoker, not an artificer apprentice. Hutch was always confident and I can say that since I met him as a P2 in *Micmac* in 1961, his character never changed nor did his engineering know-how, lifestyle and constant need of a haircut. His hand got forced in 1980, when as Chief ERA in *Algonquin*, had chosen release in disagreement to shipboard policy.

Hutch was always direct, seldom wrong, and loaded with a wealth of knowledge and engineering experience. He was a sailor throughout but with a big ego. He knew no end to getting the job done in the most arduous of conditions. His biggest debt was to his men who worked very hard for him but then Hutch would get stuck in with them. Hutch loved a beer too and the social friendship that went with it. My association with Hutch was a common affection for a few reasons that were something unique over many. We came from Manitoba, we sailed in *Micmac* and I punched fires in # 3 boiler room on the same watch.

From that long association, he in the early 70's, always tried to get me into the 280 program. He used to come to visit me in *Okanagan* on occasion when we might be alongside in Roosey Rds. Here we were, in the early evening when most of the lads were up at the club, or out at the chiefs' beach, or over in San Juan. Instead, we would elect to go through an almost empty boat and just talk about pumps, engines, and all the other things that huffed and puffed, went up and down, or whizzed around. It was pleasing and an experience to compare differences in ships and submarines as well as similarities. Of course, it was then time to sit down, have a few 'sociables' and do a proverbial “wash-up.” That was a necessity because we then felt good about ourselves.

The City of Flin Flon, Manitoba

During these spaced and enjoyable times that we would meet, Hutch would tell of the time when he joined. His philosophy was always the same

regarding his hometown in Manitoba. Flin Flon is what we call in Winnipeg, “Up north”, for anything north of Selkirk and Gimli to a ‘Pegger was north. He maintained in support of the NHL’s Bobby Clarke that, “There’s only two kindsa’ people come from Flin Flon . . .hockey players ‘n Chief ERAs!” Well, there had to be more to Flin Flon than that so when asked how his hometown ever got a name like that, he replied, “It was named after a guy called Josiah Flintabatty Flonatin. He was an English inventor of a boring tool that was used to discover gold. Right in downtown Flin Flon, there’s even a statue of him that was designed by the guy who did the L’il Abner comic strips . . .Al Capp. Pretty good, eh?” as Hutch in assuring such a tale with a confident smile. Well, with all that in mind and weighing Doug’s intellect, one could only be intrigued. Just like the time he was aboard *Algonquin* during a NATO trip in the late seventies. There was a Meet & Greet aboard ship and Hutch got talking to a Norwegian Chief. “I’m from Flin Flon. Ya’ know . . . big country up north. You probably never heard of it.” “Oh yes I did!” replied the Norwegian. That’s where they still eat missionaries, isn’t it?”

Tiffy Apprentices

In early June of 1952, Hutch, the young blond-haired 17 year old teenager, made his way to Winnipeg from Flin Flon and that took all of his resources. He went to HMCS *Chippawa*, the local reserve establishment to “sign on.” *Chippawa*, in those days, had resource to suit the times and times as they were, meant minimal cabin space was available to bed down the odd and wayward transient new entry as he waited for his train to get him to the east coast and New Entry Training in *Cornwallis*. It seemed as Hutch was going in as a technical apprentice, he would be delayed in Winnipeg for nearly a month until the remainder of the block draft of apprentices were assembled from across the country to make up a complete new entry division. This was to be the first ever class of tiffy apprentices under the Technical Apprenticeship Plan and the product would see such specialties as shipwrights, air artificers, electrical technicians, armourers, and of course engine room artificers. To confirm a little history, Hutch was soon going to meet new friends with such names as George Brownless, “Spook” Spanik, and another very familiar, “used-to-go-down-ladders-backwards and very quietly”, and long-serving ERA, Doug “Catman” Gillespie.

The apprenticeship plan would, for the first time in the navy's history, develop into a division between the lower deck ratings. They were known as artificers and unbelievably, sometimes referred to as gentlemen of the lower deck. Not because of their questionable demeanour, but more for their higher level of education. After their training period of four arduous years in the former "Head" class converted factory ship *Cape Breton*, they would be promoted to P2. They would then join the operational fleet and combine to serve for an obligatory period of 3 years at sea as opposed to the standard majority new entry who served an initial total of five years. They took comfort in knowing that NCO status was their's by right. Having reached the level of Petty Officer and much like a Crown CPO, they could not be demoted below it as other ratings could. In contrast, rapidly they would enjoy their privilege of status. However, they had to face the fact that unless they were a senior Chief ERA, their rank did not carry the same 'pull' as that of their equivalents in other branches that bore no corresponding compromise of an easier life in supervising others. They were workers, some less good-natured, while objects of jealousy and jibe and derided for lesser time at sea in comparison to rank.

"Ya' can't troop me . . . Sir!"

After going through his joining preliminaries, Hutch had some time to spare. He would remain in Winnipeg until the draft arrived and when nearing his departure to *Cornwallis*, all that was left was to get sworn in. Hutch thought that this was pretty exciting. They gave him a little bit of tin for his pocket and he was employed in the manual party until departure. In the mornings, he would go out on Smith St. and raise the white ensign, paint the 4-inch gun mount on the parade deck, scrub out the flats, bollock the brightwork, and make up the one-man skirmish party. Rather dull and unrewarding work but he got on with it. After all, Hutch was going to be an ERA and "ERA's won't do that stuff, will they?" So that comforted him.

After a couple of weeks, time seemed to drag and Hutch was getting anxious. So one Saturday night, he had a few dollars put together and decided to go down town on a little bit of an O.D.'s run ashore . . . in civvies, of course, as uniform wouldn't come until *Cornwallis*. He, on that night, met a real cute girl of which Winnipeg had plenty of as I can attest to. As the night wore on it appeared that this "Flin Flon-er" heading for the

navy, swaggered himself about to which his new acquaintance became totally absorbed.

Being only modest in the dollar department, he offered the girl to stay with him for the night but it would have to be in his makeshift cabin at the one-star "Hotel Chippawa." During silent hours however, the duty quartermaster twigged that "the ship" had extra ballast aboard and Hutch found himself up on the carpet on Monday morning to answer to the 'Jimmy'. Hutch was by now grown up enough to defend himself and in so doing, analysed his situation quickly when asked by No.1, "Hutchinson! What have you got to say for yourself?" Weighing the generalities of the question, he replied, "You can't troop me sir. I'm not in the navy yet!" Instantly, the First Lieutenant turned to the coxswain and said, "'Swain! Go get me a bible." Hutch's head was spinning for he was to suddenly complete his joining routine and then spend the rest of his time in *Chippawa* on stoppage of leave with a (1952) \$10 fine that would come out of his pay whenever he might get his first one.

"If ya' loose yer leave form . . .read the instructions on the back!"

Before another tale about Hutch, there should be some explanation of the road blocks and intricacies in getting home on leave, and worst of all, getting' back on board. . . without being adrift. At one time, annual leave in the navy was a period within a whole year that you exclusively had to yourself. No officers, no chiefs, no scrub-outs, no duty watches. For a total of 30 calendar days a year, you would bask in knowing that you were at home on your own time with family, and especially among old friends from the days prior to signin' on. And where else could young guys like us get that much vacation time in any civvy job?

In the 50's and 60's, the idea of flying home on TCA was a near impossibility unless you were in the rackets or had a large pawn shop inventory. Instead, the more-within-budget train or bus fare was an option but the travel time factor ate into your leave. You were issued with a travel claim, the T.R.O., (never knew what the letters meant) which entitled you to 50% of the standard return train fare and documented proof that you really did go to the "Address On leave" on the leave form. Well it didn't take much to twig that if you could get there and back at no cost, there was a little money to be made here because there was a couple of ways to get home that wouldn't cost a cent. Hitch-hiking was one alternative, but you never knew your luck or where you might end up. So getting a 'flip' on the

White-Knuckle Airlines, was the way to go. There was one slight gamble here too. It had no guarantee of getting you back aboard on time on the return trip unless you gave yourself enough time to deal with the unknowns. The best bet was to get to RCAF Trenton, in Ontario, the home of the crab-fats' Transport Command. Here is where the greatest volume of air planes would come and go, and the opportunities of getting a flip in anything from a C-119 Boxcar to an Expediter, or a Dak' or even a bush-plane Otter that was heading to Winnipeg when starting my leave and Shearwater on the way back, meant that you might get there in less than a day. But if you got stuck in a tiny detachment at Dorval or Malton in Toronto, you might end up sleeping on a wooden bench in a waiting room overnight. All in hope that the single flight scheduled to arrive and then leave, might have room for a matelot, and it was heading in the right direction.

In addition to annual leave, travelling time was granted that was aligned on train travel to and from certain destinations across Canada. Halifax to Winnipeg and return was 5 days, Toronto 3, and in contrast, Vancouver and Newfoundland were both 8. Now 8 days for any destination in Newfoundland from Halifax necessitated all the Newfies in the RCN to brush up on their arithmetic. Eight days meant that although the Newfie' Bullet might get you from Port-Aux-Basques to St. John's in twenty-four hours, it was the guys that had to further sojourn to the "outports" of Newfoundland by boat, ferry, or even dog-sled whose schedules were sporadic and more concerning . . . weather dependent as well. Annual leave entitlement was 30 days per year and if Newf' took 5 days annual leave six times and then tacked on the travelling time, he was seein' off the pusser for another 48. The only problem was that if he went on leave that often and was gone from the navy for nearly 3 months a year, you had to train him all over again.

"The Bus to Winnipeg"

Back to Hutch when he finished *Cornwallis*. He decided to go to visit his grandmother in the U.S./Canadian border town of Piney, Manitoba and spend the Christmas holidays with her on the farm. As usual, there wasn't much money so he and five wingers decided instead to take a bus all the way to Winnipeg.

They sailed from Digby to Saint John in the CPR ferry *Princess Helene*. Before they boarded the bus in Saint John, the six very young sailors got

into the worst beer ever made known as Red Ball. Later, they boarded the bus and one of the group, "Curly" Howe, got awfully sick and decided to let 'er go all over this P2PTI and his wife who were also seated in the bus. Being a typical "club swinger", this guy was only an inch away from a muscle bos'n as he exhibited his consistency as all PTI's, by being perpetually pissed off and offering appropriate threats. The bus finally stopped at a gas station where Curly, with some dubious help from his wingers, got back aboard with a bucket of sujeer and started scrubbing out the centres of the bus so to speak.

When they finally arrived in Montreal, they had a six-hour wait until the connecting bus would depart. Routine was, that every new-entry who passed out from *Cornwallis* had to take his entire kit with him. As there was no facility for baggage shipment to either Halifax or Esquimalt, it was directed that everybody became responsible for their own kit by taking it with them on leave. The kit consisted of a big kit bag, a blanket bag and a lashed hammock.

As the hours passed, it was nearing bus departure time and Curly had gone astray again. This time he staggered into the bus station with all of his kit, and a young lady who he had instantly fallen in love within the preceding short hours. His hammock was all undone with blanket and mattress hanging limp and dishevelled. Curly insisted that his new acquaintance, who was very strong in the French language only, and purported to have come from Winnipeg, should accompany them on the bus to the great prairie city. Immediately, the group began to figure their financial resources and between the six of them, couldn't muster enough for another fare. So, like a gallant knight, Curly stayed behind with his new-found partner.

The bus continued on to Toronto and then Detroit, where another one of the group never made it back to catch the bus. In Chicago, the party continued and one of the remaining four got thrown in jail during a mild scuffle in a local bar. What emphasized the requirement by Chicago's finest was that because he was a well-prepared sailor, he had a pusser's dirk in his pocket and was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. Alas, the remaining three finally got to Winnipeg and then went their individual ways.

Hutch recollects that it was about 40 below that day and the last leg to Piney was so close, but yet so far. It was now time to start thumbin'. Being in naval uniform in those days especially on the prairies, it didn't take long to get a ride. Most prairie travellers had empathy for servicemen but even better, curiosity and an endearment toward hairy bags. After all, with

either ocean over two thousand miles away from Winnipeg, people had to admire the endurance and determination of going all that distance ‘on the thumb’, of course unaware that Hutch had travelled by bus.

His first ride got him as far as just south of Winnipeg to either St. Cloud or St. Hebert. As cold and blustery as it was, and possessing good sailor initiatives, what better place to stop and warm up than the local hotel beer parlour. In went Hutch and it wasn’t long before he was surrounded by a group of locals whose curiosities were as equal to the highway travellers. Time and beer guzzlin’ went on, when one of the group who appeared to be deficient of digits on his hands offered Hutch a ride as he was soon to leave in a southerly direction toward Piney. Out they went to get into this half-ton pick up, only to find that when Hutch jumped into the cab, the truck was negative windshield. Being 40 below, and with a truck like this, Hutch could quickly calculate a wind chill factor of 75 below and evidenced the answer as to why this helpful guy had no fingers on his hands along with little, wee cauliflower’ed ears.

HFC . . . Hank, Frank, and . . . Catman

During those same decades, Household Finance Corporation, the loan company HFC, had the monopoly on matelots on constant lookout for an easy loan ‘til payday. HFC made a mint on jack’s interest payments and to get a loan anywhere without paying for time was rare even with the affluent, but few matelots who proffered from their mates in the loan-shark business. When it came time for money on a blank week, a steam iron or a burberry could get you seven or eight bucks at the Barrington Exchange but big-time loans at Hank, Frank, and Charlie’s were \$100.00 minimum.

In talking of the truth and nature of sailors and how a helping hand was always nearby, there were other trustworthy ways . . . even in a panic. Hutch was on a weekend run ashore in Halifax on an early Saturday evening in civvies and once more, very low in the dollar department. He didn’t know where his winger “the Catman” aboard *Cayuga* was. Hutch became interested in obtaining a room for the night at the Gainsborough Hotel, just across and down Hollis St. from the Seagull Club. Rooms at the time were five dollars a night, and to get stuck into the ease and comfort of a bed with clean linen, a table, two chairs, and maybe even some party, was a luxury compared to the congestion and slim privacy in the mess aboard ship. In the “Shitehawk Club”, he pinged around looking for a touch, when he saw a couple of stokers with H.M.C.S. CAYUGA on their

cap tallies. They were both chompin' on the main cuisine of the club . . . hot dogs... dragged through the garden. He approached them briskly and asked, "Do you guys know Petty Officer Gillespie?" Both of the stokers looked at Hutch and replied, "Sure do. . . we steam on the same watch!" Hutch now felt a little more encouraged, and boldly said, "Good! Give me five bucks and you can collect it off Petty Officer Gillespie when you go back onboard. Tell him Hutch said so ...and by the way, wings, ya' got mustard on your silk!"

On Monday morning, the two stokers anxiously approached Catman, standing in *Cayuga's* starboard gangway, just before "dungaree divisions" on the jetty was piped. They told the Cat', "We gave this guy called Hutch, five bucks P.O. and he said you'd be good for it." The Catman looked up at the channel-plating above, tossed his head mildly from side to side, then handed over a fin without a murmur.

"The Streaking Chemox"

During the seventies, the streaking rage thrived throughout the land and sailors took the opportunity without exception. No one will ever forget about the guy who streaked on the ice during an NHL hockey game at the Pacific Colosseum, which somehow set the country off into, "Me too! Me too!" On a Friday evening aboard (HMCS Swizzle Stick) *Algonquin* in Halifax, it was shoppers' night where everybody and their wives would meet in the mess after doing their downtown shopping. PIER Jack Rivard earlier suggested to Hutch the mess pres', that for entertainment he would "streak the mess" as was the popular and sociably acceptable thing to do. When everyone was gathered in the mess, Jack would surprise them all by bursting through the escape hatch from #9 mess directly below . . .in the buff. As zero hour drew close, Hutch left the mess to help "streaks" get up the hatch. As Jack began to strip, his apprehensions grew a little and he thought to at least don a chemox so that no one would know who he was. Hutch thought that was a great idea while alerting Jack not to activate in case he burned someone or something.

Moments later, the hatch rumbled open and Jack emerged in his chemox and began running around the mess. The laughter from the guys and screams from the wives became deafening. Inquisitively, the gals all cried, "Who is that? Who is that?", when one wife suddenly declared, "That looks like Hutch!" when another wife said, "No, that's not Hutch!", to

which her husband peered at her in awe and said something loudly and expletively in questioning her seeming familiarity.

Catman's analogy

“The Seaman and the Stokers should be friends”, is a furtive phrase that has prevailed in the navy for a lot of isolated reasons but really, there's a lot of good wisdom in the saying. And although the clankies from below were for the most part, void of any inter-action with the seamen, “Catman” Gillespie was an exception. One segment of his drafts from ship to ship, to yet another ship, is recorded as *Iroquois*, to *St. Laurent*, then to *Cayuga* . . . and it was this phase of his career chronology that made him state, “I knew everybody aboard, except when I went to *St. Laurent*. Life at sea was from the ERA's mess to the machinery spaces and back again, and what it really meant is that I never had need to go to the upper deck. You could get lost up there. Not so in the old Tribals!” he continued. “Goin' on watch meant that you had to pass everybody who lived forward, and that was just about everybody . . . then venture out onto the iron deck to get to the boiler, gear, or engine rooms. This way everybody aboard knew everybody and sure pulled the ship's company together. Call it focus, dedication, all hands in, and all that sign-on crap but at least you knew what the branch next door was doin', and that made us all feel good.” The Catman could never had said it better!

“Off cap . . . sailor!”

There was a time in the mid-1950's when *Micmac* was alongside HMS *Malabar* at Ireland Island, Bermuda for a weekend. The reverend at the local church in nearby Somerset decided that it would be good will to invite the ship's company to his Sunday service. The Captain was somewhat apprehensive for turning down the invitation for it would create the impression that Canadian sailors were not good Christians. Therefore on Sunday, “Hands to Church” was piped after divisions and large numbers including the captain and his wardroom appeared at the church entrance. After a Saturday night on the town in Hamilton, some of the lads were still a little giddy. In the church strolled a matelot, hands in pockets but worst of all, with his cap on. The Chief Gunner's Mate seated patiently in a rear pew waiting for the service to begin, quickly sighted this

disrespectful act and decided out of good “Chief’s initiative”, to voice his disdain so as not to embarrass the ship’s congregation. He rose from his pew and with a booming voice ordered, **“Off caps in the House of The Lord. . .ass’ole!”**

Much later and well into the service by now, many were becoming fidgety and restless while others started noddin’ off. It was time for the reverend to make his lengthy sermon. Sensing and sighting the obvious, the reverend decided to ease the situation in anticipation of the time he needed to complete the service. He asked of the captain from the pulpit, “Sir! When do you and your ship’s company wish to leave and return on board?” The captain replied, “As soon as you let us out of here, reverend!”

Dragon’s Breath

The Bermuda dit was also related to me by the Cat’ who, as it seems, had a penchant for the brisqueness of Chief Gunner’s Mates that extends to another episode. While he was aboard *Huron* in 1974 during a NATO trip, the newly commissioned gas-turbine destroyer had the occasion to visit Chatham Dockyard in the YewKay. While there, much entertainment had been prepared for the ship’s company by the host staff at Royal Naval Barracks, HMS *Pembroke*. Among the many events offered, was the one that would be most familiar to Canadians . . .an afternoon B-B-Q for which several of *Huron*’s Chiefs and Petty Officers were cordially invited . . .with a guest as the case may be. Well the Chief Gunner’s Mate was among them and on the eve prior to the event, had been corralling about at the Con’ Club in Military Rd. and the G.I. Club, both in downtown Chatham. In the process, he had managed to lasso a damsel who from hereon acted in the role of the opposing character and became tallied “Puff, the Magic Dragon.” It was soon noticed by the Gunner’s Mate that Puff somehow really enjoyed her tipple emphasized that by the time ‘last orders!’ were called, she insisted on being graced with not one, not two, but three large gin and tonics. Opportunities thereafter became rewarding to the Chief Gunner’s Mate, and so in anticipation of the following day’s invitation to the *Pembroke* B-B-Q, he decided that he would like to escort Puff as his guest. He did so and when meeting her at the dockyard gate the following day, quickly noted that Puff was still . . . “right in the rats.” After some subtle exchanges of introduction at the party, the chief noticed oddly enough that Puff was skirmishing about the tables and counters picking up all abandoned wine glasses and beer bottles and seein’ off the dregs. So

intent was Puff at getting that extra-extra drink that as she passed the flaming and smoking barbecue, she chanced upon what looked like a full tumbler of white wine or even better, a tall and cool lager beer. She didn't really care anyway. It was booze and she was determined to drink it down. She grasped the glass and began to suck 'er back, when in sudden convulsions then hidden in a massive spray of rejected beverage came the contents of the glass . . . that was filled with cooking oil. The spray in its large volumes was to be perfectly aimed and discarded right into the burning and flame-lit embers of the barbecue, where instantly flames shot up in mammoth proportions, the exhalation of a fiery-red dragon. The magic of Puff!

The Camouflaged Dog

Other things were going on as well during this socially-active visit to Chatham. On board was a young Master Seaman by the name of Al Kirkland. He had a good run-ashore P2 oppo named Mike Boyer. Mike and Al would always "proceed" together, and at a time when appearance was very important. Looking good was the top priority . . .if you were up to a little trappin'. Three-piece suits were the order of the day as Mike and Al stepped across the brow for a 72 hour leave and run ashore. Personal impressions were one thing, but tin was another. Mike and Al had to pool their limited amount of run-ashore money.

It wasn't long after that while sitting in a cosy pub, that they met these two very attractive ladies. Time passed and discussions grew exciting when it was realized that these two young parties lived in a shared high-rise flat in the north-end of London. They then opined that a night on the big town just up the Thames' might be more adventurous than just hangin' about the pubs and clubs in Chatham's Military Rd. Besides, it seemed that they, the ladies, were somewhat affluent and when finding out that Mike and Al's funds had now dwindled to just eight mere pounds, their generosity expanded to footing the entire cost of what looked like a good 'grip'po.' London of course is not far from Chatham but familiarly in England, getting from a congested point A to point B, twenty or thirty miles is not only time-consuming but very costly in a taxi cab. At the insistent offer of the ladies footing the fare, the foursome sped away, each in joyous anticipation. Mike and Al, of course, were already dressed and ready to go, so the ladies further suggested that when they arrived at the flat some two hours later, they would like to freshen up and change into

something that would compliment the stature of three-piece suits. The glamour boys were invited to sit and relax, each over a large glass, while the two young ladies scurried about in getting dressed. Al decided to sit on what looked like a very comfortable and colourful settee. He plunked himself down in all of his full weight upon the settee. As he did, he felt something that was lumpy and warm and as an object wiggled, let out with a surprising and fading “Yelp.” Al was startled. He quickly arose from the settee to find that he had sat with full force upon what appeared as a small Chihuahua dog. Its markings were almost identical to the pattern of the settee upholstery. He had crushed the little tike. He was dead!

Oh, what to do, while soon the ladies would make their grand entrance. Al thought quickly while Mike gawked in disbelief. They surely didn’t want to make a mess of this great opportunity. So quickly thinking like all good matelots do, Al grasped the limp and expended canine and briskly shoved it under the settee cushion. Continuing so as nothing had happened, he resumed his seat, crossed his legs and while grasping his drink, he tapped his knee in nonchalance. Soon, the ladies entered the room. They looked very charming and glamorous but suddenly, bright smiles and beautiful eyes turned into looks that could kill. They immediately noticed that Foo-Foo’s tail was protruding from beneath the cushion that our Al was seated upon. “You beasts! You vicious inconsiderate barbarians! What have you done to Foo-Foo? Where do you come from . . .from the darkest jungle? You terrible men you! Get out! Get out . . .both of you!” they screamed in tear-welled eyes.

Les Dance Lecons a la Quebec

A well-known Chief ERA was a kipper named Derek Sherlock. Derek came to Canada from the YewKay where he had taken his apprenticeship and then joined the RCN in 1954 as a direct entry. He had the distinction of serving in Her Majesty's engine rooms until he retired in 1982 as Chief ERA in *Algonquin*. Having sailed with an oppo of his by the name of Moe Coates, it is easy to understand the story of what Derek taught Moe in refining his social life when they were in the light cruiser *Quebec* in 1955. Moe was the ERA of the watch in the after engine room and Derek was his throttle watch keeper.

Knowing Moe personally, he was a very quiet powerhouse of an ERA, whose wartime experience in the RN and gentle tone but effective leadership was very assuring among us buff stokers in later years in

Micmac. He was also very quiet and unassuming and with those qualities came an element of shyness. That shyness also restricted Moe in his social activities as a confirmed bachelor. He was awkward and like a fumbling elephant in his ability to strap on to a party ashore whenever he went to the mess or better yet, to a dance at “the Jube”, the Jubilee Boat Club.

Derek really felt helpless in encouraging Moe to shape up until he finally thought of a plan. He insisted upon Moe that one of the first things he must do was learn how to dance. Moe in a startle of surprise and midlands accent asked, “Well . . . how the hell am I gonna do that?” Derek, who was sure and quick to respond said assuredly, “I’ll teach ya’!”

Moe wasn’t too sure and then declared, “Well that’s not such a good idea because I wouldn’t like to be seen in a dance hall with the likes of you showing me what to do.” Derek said, “Na’! This’ll be easy! We’ll have lessons for a week or so when we’re on watch down below.” Well Moe had to stop and think about this because there was no way he would want to relax his responsibilities nor was he capable of suffering the embarrassment. Moe then said, “Well there’s stokers down there and they’ll see us.” Immediately, Derek countered with further assuredness that he would explain to the stokers that this was a serious undertaking and because Moe was highly regarded, it would be easy to gain their confidence in keeping it all a secret. “Nobody will know! Don’t worry about it . . . Nobody will know!” Derek said with further assurance.

The time came for the first lesson. It was a morning watch down in the pit. The ship was steady steaming, the revs had been trapped and entered, and the hourly readings had been gathered and inserted in the log. Moe and Derek then began to converse back and forth in each other’s ears over the din of the machinery. After a few moments of verbal exchange and physical demonstration of where the feet go and what the arms do, they suddenly began to clumsily trip about on the console platform . . . arm in arm. It seemed to go not too bad at all and Moe was also relieved that the stokers weren’t really paying attention to the pair but instead getting on with their chores what with doing rounds, scrubbin’ out and doin’ the bright work ‘n all. He saw that there might be a chance here.

A few days had passed and *Quebec* was still underway. Meanwhile, Moe was becoming very capable, so he thought, and was beginning to enjoy this new found artistry. In reflection of his progress, he even started to quietly refer to Derek as Arthur Murray. Derek noted the progress, and then resourcefully decided that he needed accompanying music to help create some rhythm within Moe. He sought the assistance of a pair of the supportive and discreet “on-watch” stokers. In order to overcome the

machinery noise, they were to arm themselves with wheel spanners and begin to rap out cadences of fox trots and boogies upon the catwalk guardrails in the cavernous space below. It was now late at night during the first watch.

The ship's Commander (E) was Cdr Forrester. He had just finished doing some paperwork and thought, like most other engineer officers when they're up to it, to have a quick skeg 'round before he turned in for the night. Dressed in his gleaming white and oil-blotched overalls and flashlight, he progressed along the darkened flat above the after engine room and suddenly encountered this out-of-the-ordinary and imperceptible noise rising from the space below. Expecting the worst, he poured himself down the ladder to the after engine room. On the catwalk, he peered curiously over an educator pipe, and there before him were the chief of the watch and his ERA intensely swirling about the engine room with smiles as broad as the oceans. The stokers looked up, and abruptly halted their rendition of Nat King Cole's, "Let There Be Love." Moe and Arthur, whose grins quickly sagged, did a 360 about the space and their focus locked in on the Cdr(E)'s look of disbelief. From the top of his lungs, 'Engines' demanded, "Chief! Wot in the hell are you doing?" "Dancin' sir.", came Moe's reply in a quiver. "I wanna see you two in my cabin in the morning at 0700!" He whisked himself up the ladder and disappeared into the night with a furious slam of the engine room door above.

At 0655 the following morning, CPO2 M. Coates and PO2 D. Sherlock stood outside the drawn curtain of the Commander's cabin door in spanking clean # 5's. They entered the cabin to see a still scowling gingerbeard who quickly demanded, "What were you two up to last night?" "Taking dancing lessons sir." was Moe's reply on behalf of the two. Commander dwelled for a moment then shouted, "Was it good? Do you realize what a sin this is?" He paused and settled. "Don't let it happen again! Carry on!"

Engine Room Chiefs are Fitness Freaks

Like many in the navy, there are officers who firmly believe that it's time to do something innovative for a change and in hope that their initiatives will be noticed and the troops usually served as the tool for the basis of them. Still, in *Quebec*, while alongside under the bridge at spacious Jetty 4, the Commander decided that it would be rewarding to the ship, the navy, and his self-progression, to conduct daily P.T. sessions on

the jetty. He'd seen other navies do it, especially the Japanese who even as civilians, do this regularly as part of their culture throughout their lives. They would clear lower decks to the "uppers" every morning at 0600 and go through strenuous P.T. for nearly half an hour. Well . . . not as demanding would such direction result in the "Big Q." As a token of the initiative, they cleared the ship of the entire ship's company including the officers just as overnight leave expired at 0750. Now to a ten-minute arms and legs in emergency, then face aft on the jetty at 0800 declaring by flag and anthem that the navy was "open for the day." "My! Now won't the captain be impressed!", mused the Commander.

Lt. (E) "Tommy" Orr was the young divisional officer detailed for the engine room Chiefs and Petty Officers' division. The Chief ERA was Joe Sutton and included in this motley and predominantly rotund shower along with Derek and Moe, were other notables like "Mush" Downing, "Huey" Lyons, "Doug" McNiel, "Gabby" Goodwin, and "Killer" Kiley to name a few. The diameters and massiveness of the majority of the group was certainly evident and would be accustomed to comments and description like, "Thunder Gut" . . . or "What did you do . . . swallow an army helmet?" or in other parlance exclaiming, "This is not a beer-belly. It's a roof for my tool-shed!" Chief Sutton himself, came in at over 300 pounds and in physically describing his girth, he had two money belts sewn together and buckled around him in order to hold up his trollies. To further describe of his mammoth frontage and his effect on ship stability at sea, Joe often used to lie shirtless on his bunk for a power nap in the afternoons. If the ship was encountering some heavy rolls, his stomach would sway back and forth in un-checked free-surface effect and metronome cadence with the Atlantic. This then served to the theory as to how HMCS *Quebec* would often experience loll, and the occasional inability to snappily right herself.

Well back to the jetty as everybody got fallen in by divisions, the Commander atop a makeshift dais ordered . . . **"Ship's company . . . ship's company . . . H-A-A-A! . . . Divisional officers take charge of your divisions. (pause) Conduct PT!"** The Commander was then obediently flooded with the proverbial multitudes of obedient D.O.'s "Aye-aye sirs!" from every direction on the massive jetty, now come playing field. Immediately, each of the divisions sprung into action. The TAS division began jumping up and down in unison like gazelles, the gunners fell to the deck and started push-ups, the stokers did likewise while the supply rates swung their arms and bodies to and fro from side to side. LT. Orr's eyes flickered in different directions, then turned about and gazed at the fifty

odd strong division of jumbo ERA's and Chief Stokers. He paused for a brief moment, then slowly crossed his arms upon his chest with hands covering his shoulders. He then ordered in a succinct and quieter tone, **"This position . . . Ready! . . . Commence deep-breathing exercises!"** . . .and so they did until the quartermaster on the brow nine minutes later, alerted the Commander on the jetty . . . **"One minute to Colours, sir!"**

"Where's the fire??"

Soon after this period, Joe Sutton was drafted as Chief ERA aboard a frigate. One morning in the main flat while they were alongside, Joe smelled smoke. He turned around in somewhat of an excited manner noticing that close by, one of his stokers was available. He hollered, "Hey stokes! Grab that fire extinguisher! We gotta fire around here . . .I can smell smoke." The stoker grabbed a fire extinguisher from a bulkhead stowage and quickly drew toward Joe thinking that he would lead him to a smalley inferno when suddenly he stopped in his tracks and said, "Chief ...!" "Never mind. Hurry up. There's a fire 'round here . . .We gotta find it!" declared Joe in an interruptive and rising voice. "But chief . . ." said the stoker once more. "Hurry up with that extinguisher. I can smell smoke!" cried Joe who was now irritated. "Chief . . .Fer chrissakes . . .listen to me!" insisted the stoker. Finally, Joe turned about and glared at the stoker asking, "What, What?" The stoker said, "You gotta lit butt in the cuff of your pants Chief!"

Derek's Sample

In years to follow and by 1980, "Derek of Arthur Murray fame", found himself as Chief ERA aboard the gas turbine, *Huron*. He was progressing in his years and was starting to set plans for retirement. Apart from his financial goals and securing a civvy job, his well-being and family requirements were just as much a concern. He was to undergo a vasectomy.

Huron's MA was a French-Canadian PO1 whose name always escaped Derek. The nearest that he could recall is that the spelling came close to something like "Buzzard." Derek returned to see Buzzard, as he had instructed, immediately after the operation so that a final test could be forwarded to the lab' at *Stad'* hospital. The test required that Derek produce a sperm sample for analysis to determine the success of the

operation. Derek went home for the weekend and after a moment of private enjoyment, funnelled a sample into a plastic pill vial. He then efficiently placed it into his burberry pocket that he would wear to return aboard on Monday morning. Unfortunately, over the weekend and unaware, the sample had leaked out into his burberry pocket and as he handed the vial to Buzzard in the sick bay, it was obvious that another sample was needed, added that Derek also had a dry-cleaning bill on his hands.

Buzzard reacted rapidly to this situation. He told Derek that later in the morning, he could organize the chuffs 'n puffs washplace out of bounds exclusively for his use and even assured him that he would assist him in his exoticism by providing some Playboy magazines etc., to help raise his confidence. This way, the sample could be forwarded to the lab on schedule.

It was after the morning scrub-out when sure enough, the heads were out of bounds and Buzzard gave Derek the nod. In went Derek and with some difficulty, commenced in the exercise. After a few moments of graduating success, the compartment door flew open and there in the gangway stood a gaggle of stokers all pointing fingers, giggling like schoolgirls, and adding comments like: "What's up chief?". . .or "Need some salt with your vinegar, chief?". . .and "Forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty! . . . Boom!" Poor Derek. The sample was delayed after all.

Motor Mech' Makes Smoke

In the summer of 1960, *Bonaventure* was commanded by Captain Landymore. The carrier went alongside the Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York City and remained auxiliary steaming for the duration. It was a significant day in that an eastlant U.S. admiral was to visit the ship. In so doing, it was decided that ceremonial divisions on the flight deck were in order. Being in the summer and *Bonnie* . . . being flagship of the RCN, the Captain and the Jimmy, Commander Joe Paul thought of something appropriate. The ship's company would do something special in representing HMCS *Bonaventure* and indeed the RCN, the ship's company exhibiting their splendour and discipline in No. 6's, tropical whites. For as often in those days, there was no finer sight than to see a ramrod ship's company turn out in whites. Hidden below the grumbling that would ensue because of the magnitude of preparation required, the truth was that everybody inwardly and secretively knew that they looked splendid and very, very proud. The term "tiddly", had no place here for this was the

ultimate of smartness and one of the few occasions that you would see personal cameras appear which drives the point home. I'll bet that any sailor today can remember where and when he wore his dress whites even when in the tropics for the opportunities were rare. A large contribution to this rarity was the heavy preparation and demands of Her Majesty's Canadian 'dhobey wallahs' and their steam-driven laundries.

The ship's company fell in and the admiral began to do an inspection of the ranks with Captain Landymore, Commander Paul, the Crusher, Knobby Hall the MAA and all the sycophants in tow that formed a line behind the admiral to the tune of fourteen people. The last plug, was the killick scribe whose collection of station cards as handed along, was quickly growing.

It wasn't long after when one of the troops raised his eyes slowly noting the start of a plume of ugly, black smoke issue from the funnel from a steaming forward boiler. A black shadow was beginning to form across the flight deck prompting the curiosity of more and more eyes to look up including those of the inspecting party.

Then the strain hit as every man-jack assumed his natural tendency to fend for himself. "What do I do? Stand here and get covered, or do I break ranks and head for the island door?" . . .the only access to overhead cover on this huge expanse of mobile airport. Well not only one or just a few, but even the admiral and the skipper sort of sidestepped with a target of getting to that door. You could feel the tension in the air as everybody had the same idea. First one, then six, then two dozen, then finally everybody on the flight-deck broke ranks and ran like hell to that single door as this now humungous thick black cloud of soot laden unburnt bunker C came raining down on the hundreds of matelots in their starched and brilliant whites. To paint a picture, it was like everybody heading for the Macdonald bridge tollgates at seven in the morning 'cuz the toll was going up to a dollar from a quarter at 7:15.

Soon after, all leave for the day was jammed including the Cdr(E) who was quickly called to the C.O.'s cabin where a cluster of stewards were running about after two people in soot covered uniforms bearing ranks of a four ringed skipper and a U.S. admiral. He demanded to know who and what was responsible for this unforgivable and most embarrassing act that would stain (so to speak) the impressions of the RCN for many years to come. As it goes, the Commander turned to the propulsion engineer, who turned to the chief stoker, who turned to the watch bill to find out that P1 Johnson was the man in charge of the watch on the steaming boiler. He was quickly relieved of his watch and smartly escorted to the captain's

cabin to explain his actions or lack thereof. When threatened that his boiler ticket would be revoked, Johnson replied, "I'm a Motor Mech' sir. I'm part of this re-muster to the stoker's branch and I don't even have a boiler ticket." P1 Johnson got case dismissed.

Olie' the Hypnotist

"Olie" Saunders was a well-known and popular stoker throughout the east coast fleet. 1960 . . .while in *Cayuga*, she was alongside St. George's in Bermuda and as every Bermadoo- bound matelot knows, the White Horse Pub at the foot of the jetty was the first and last stops on a run ashore. On this particular night, Olie had lured a large audience to demonstrate his hypnotic powers. Even Junior, and all the other bartenders, had stopped 'pulling the pumps' to dwell for a spell, in order to watch Olie perform. Olie selected a volunteer from the audience, needless to say, a Canadian hairy-bag off of one of the frigates, dressed in number 2's. He was a huge man and Olie went to work. As he was taken under Olie's spell, he then arranged to suspend him head-up between two chairs whose head and feet were all that supported him between two chairs. He then lured five local females to bare-footedly stand along the length of the tranced and straining individual, for a good long minute that passed like an hour.

Later in the 1970's, Olie was aboard *Algonquin* and successfully taught Rollie Malbeuf hypnosis. Rollie hypnotized Al Gipps and said in the mess one day, "Your balls weigh 500 lbs each. Pick 'em up." At which Al quickly sank and lay flat where his genital area was pressed so hard to the deck. Rollie then turned to a P2 stoker and declared that his frequent glasses of 7 Up were each equal to the potency of two tots of pusser's rum. After three glasses of seven up, the P2 became totally sloshed.

Whenever the ship was to go alongside, the mess, being well established as the ship's nerve centre, very much catered to the needs of their foreign guests as well. Many visitors were cordially invited aboard to enjoy some good Canadian hospitality. Everything was well organized in order to please the clientele. They even had "swizzle sticks" bearing the ship's badge, emblazoned with C&PO's Mess. This of course didn't go down too well in some circles. During a rare visit to the ship by a certain admiral, the idea of a Canadian warship who had a mess and bar that handed out swizzle sticks as long-time souvenirs and a constant reminder of memorable visits, just was not on Vice-Admiral Douglas S. Boyle's list of urgent fleet requirements. "Get rid of them!" he insisted,

during a visit to the ship with Command Chief Petty Officer Doncaster. And so they had to and they did. Was this a sign of yet more changing times??

Meanwhile as ‘Rollie, through Olie’ became very adept in hypnosis except that when he would have a beer or two or three as the night would wear on, his hypnotic powers would gradually dwindle, then fizzle away.

During a social evening while alongside in Portsmouth, England, a psychiatric nurse was one of a series of “swizzled” guests in the mess. Because of her trained capabilities, she quickly identified Rollie as a hypnotist and warned of him to not look, or speak to her. Later, Rollie had concentrated without the aid of a discussion and indeed became successful at putting her under. He, as the night wore on, became more fizzed and couldn't bring the nurse out of her trance adding that he wasn't trying very hard and then deciding to get turned in. The nurse went on to do very strange things for the rest of the night. The following morning when Rollie had his senses return, there was not a nurse to be found. No one is too sure if she ever did get out of her trance as she got ushered ashore with the rest of the guests (and their swizzle sticks) by 2359.

Poor Olie has been gone from us since the early nineties though his popularity and skills shall never leave those who knew him. Today, I often wonder though. There was a time when I was aboard *Skeena*, it might be a good idea to quit smoking. For fifteen dollars, Olie assured that his powers would rid the urge for tobacco, so I went to see him aboard *Assiniboine*. He took me down into the relatively quiet tiller flats and the first thing he said was light one up. “Well, well!” I mused. Two days later, we sailed for a six-month NATO and the best that I could do thereafter, was to discover for the first time, that cigarettes tasted horrible. . . but that went away in a week.

“What happened. . .Where am I . . .Who are the Beatles?”

It wasn't too long ago that east coast hairies used to have allotments going to “Bernard's the Tailor” in Portsmouth, in the YewKay. The popular draw at a good price was tailor-made #1 uniforms in the finest of black gabardine adorned with very distinct Pakistani gold wire badges. Time went by and in more recent occasions, the popularity swung toward mess kits tailored in baratheia or fine calfskin. At the same time, to have a nice hand-made civilian suit by Bernard's was also a joy to behold

especially when the price was right and a monthly allotment made it sound like only ten bucks.

To meet delivery dates, a Bernard's representative would regularly visit Halifax to measure up people in anticipation of a ship visiting Pompey. The rep' had a call from some chief aboard the frigate, *Inch Arran* and it was arranged that he would go aboard and do measurements at 1600 on a certain day. When he arrived, he was directed to the chiefs' enclosed mess and knocked at the door. He entered to find that the potential customer was flat out on the settee in full uni', and passed out from a good tot-time session that had commenced at noon. The tailor thought best that because he was flying back to YewKay in the morning, he could still obtain the sleeper's measurements while captive, resting, tits-up, arms folded and doing Egyptian PT. He was successful.

Time had passed and when the ship sailed from Halifax and arrived in Pompey a month later, the chief went around to the shop on Queen St. to pick up his suit. He signed the receipt, took it back aboard, and continued on his "rig-run" ashore. To wear the CANADA badged uni-bag in Pompey in those days was to advantage for trappin' and the like. . . even though civvies were illegal.

Days later, and after the ship had sailed, he decided to try on his new suit. It fit perfectly, but he was quick to note that the suit was completely void of any pockets. "Beatlemania" had arrived in Britain and pocket-less suits were in vogue throughout the European continent. Being a bit disturbed about this and the ship not going back to Portsmouth, the chief decided to send Bernard's a letter complaining about this absence of appendages and wanted some action. When the '*Big-Inch*' returned to Halifax a month later, there was a parcel in the mail. He opened it to find a neatly folded set of material-matching "pockets" and a note that said, "Sorry. . . take your suit to Fit-Rite's on Barrington. Maybe they can help!"

Maggie" . . . the baby flat top is fast

Murdo McRitchie was another stalwart of the engine room branch and when he joined the navy, had no premonition as to the size of ships. I can share with that, for whenever I saw a ship that sailed on the open sea as a boy who came from the prairies, anything that sailed on the Atlantic so it seemed, was huge.

Soon after Murdo joined the navy, he was drafted to *Magnificent*. As he walked up jetty four under the bridge with his kit bag and hammock,

there she was in all of her mammoth proportions. Murdo was taken with her size and thought that the only ships in the world that were bigger were the Cunarder “Queens.” After Murdo had spent some worthwhile time and experiences in *Maggie*, it was now time to head into Norfolk, Va. for some well-deserved R&R. To this day, Norfolk is still the principal home of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, and as such, ships of every size and class have shadowed her piers and cambers for as long as one can remember, but for the sake of term familiarity, “jetty” will prevail.

Magnificent drew alongside an empty carrier jetty and her imposing dimensions and the furl of her white ensign in the land of Old Glory made everybody aboard feel very much, the Canadian ambassador in being part of the country’s Flagship’s company. Leave was piped on day two and the jetty’s characteristics had changed dramatically. Twice the size, USS *Forrestal* had now come alongside and the louder whirl of her fans, her multitudes of ship’s company, and her cavernous dimensions now dwarfed and humbled *Maggie*’s presence.

Later that evening, Murdo and some of the boys had meandered up to the EM’s Club as all good matelots do to start off on a run ashore. After they had gotten their round in, Murdo sat down and at the table next to him was a voice from a fellow who sported a shoulder flash that read, “USS *Forrestal*.” In a Texan drawl came an intrusive comment, “Hey buddy! Where y’all frum?” Murdo turned to explicitly state, “Canada! That’s what the sign on my shoulder sez, donit?” To which the American gob pursued with little hesitation, “Y’all off that baby flat top?” “Yep. . . ‘sure am!” replied Murdo. “How fast can that baby flat top go anyway?” asked the inquisitive cowboy. Murdo thought for a moment then replied, “I don’t really know. . .we’ve never opened her up!” The Texan then inquired, “What branch y’all in if’n ya’ don’t know what speed she does?” Murdo then replied with exactness, “Engineerin’ department. What else?” Then the yank’ said, “Ya’ mean ta’ tell me thet you’re a ‘snipe an’ ya’ don’t know what speed that little ole’ baby flat top’ll do?” Murdo then thought for a brief moment and replied, “All I know is that we spend an awful lot of time keepin’ up with the aircraft!”

“The Whittlers”

Chief Petty Officer “Doc” Halliday and a few others like Joe Smale, Bill Pentland, Jack Darrow and Gordie Melrose were victuallers. To

landsmen, it becomes a riddle as to why people who deal with stores, groceries, canteen supplies, and things duty free, are called victuallers.



Long ago in the Royal Navy, King Edward VI was very keen that his sailors said their prayers properly, and if they did, he said that they could have as much beer as they wanted. That was a far-reaching measure because Admirals Hawkins and Frobisher were both willing to sail at sea as long as the beer lasted and that was a

very long way indeed. Meanwhile, the men of the orlop liked that very much. A new department was set up to supply the beer and the rest of the ship's provisions. The officers appointed to look after it were "pursers." With such authority, their habit was of pocketing anything valuable by cutting down the sailors' rations so skillfully. The names of sailors who had long before left the ship, or even those who had died in passing, remained upon the list of her complement and in this way the purser would maximize upon the entitlement. All of that added up and "with a little off here" . . ."and a little off there", the sailors themselves now called it the Whittling Department. Today it is spelled Victualling to hide this early sham. . . that by the mid-twentieth century, still needed hiding.

"Floatin' Fags"

Doc tells the story about when he was aboard *Bonaventure* and at sea during exercises. A huge quantity of cases of cigarettes had been stowed in a well locked up compartment that no one ever had need to go into except to re-stock the ship's canteen once a week or so. Somehow or other, a section of sea water pressurized firemain that ran through the 'baccy locker had sprung a geyser of a leak to the extent that the compartment flooded out and rendered the sundry tobacco as destroyed. When the ship went to anchor at Bermuda as part of an R & R during the exercises, a representative from Lloyd's of London had been dispatched to board *Bonnie* to certify the cargo as damaged and accountable for insurance purposes. Left with the several waterlogged cases of tobacco, the supply

officer then requested instructions for disposal from the agent. He replied that when the ship is long underway and resumed in exercises well off the coast of Bermuda, to simply give them all “the deep six” during the night hours. The supply officer was satisfied with that direction and then passed orders to “Doc and his whittlers” to make it so.

The exercise required absolute radio silence among the modest fleet that sailed with *Bonnie*, so there was no need or even a necessity to establish inter-communications that would otherwise reveal position and make up to the enemy Orange Force.

HMCS *St. Laurent* was plane guard to the *Bonaventure* the night that when the banshees had left the flight deck and were airborne for a long duration, Doc, along with his selected victuallers chose to discard of the cases of cigarettes. Meanwhile, as “*Sally*” trailed the carrier at a one-mile range, very alert lookouts had spotted floating debris in the phosphorescence of the calm waters on both sides of the bows as she slowly and obediently churned her way through the moonless night. As the banshees were airborne and the ship unable to communicate, *St. Laurent* stopped DIW and lowered her boats to retrieve these several bobbing objects from the balmy sea. As the cache was brought aboard, it was soon realized that the booty required handling and administration of the victuallers once again. Upon investigation, the silver papered lining of the cartons of cigarettes had maintained water-tight integrity therefore rendering the confections, both consumable and profitable, toward the ship’s canteen and the whittlers who managed it.

Sam’s Encounters with the “Whittlers”

Sam Morris is a retired Lieutenant-Commander who joined the navy as an Ordinary Seaman, became a communicator, remustered to an Electrical Technician and as a C2, took a commission. He tells of the time when he was in the *Bonnie*. “Wick” Wickstrom was a whittler who was pretty enterprising and very resourceful. He was exceptionally good at cutting hair and was self-installed as one of the many ship’s barbers at 50 cents a head. Quite often when alongside in foreign port, “Wick”, with a wink, would rise from the settee in the mess and announce that it was time to go and collect his “flying pay.” Everyone marvelled at how Wick, as a naval storesman, was entitled to such an ill-gained allowance especially as his only tie to any sort of flying was the furnishing of spare parts and nuts and bolts to the technicians that kept the pilots in the air. After about three or

four long hours, Wick would return to the mess fingering the bills of his wad of “flying pay” spilled out from the coffers of observers, their riggers and fitters, who usually had a rough evening’s round of poker.

In the same mess was another whittler of P1 status, who was as equally enterprising and whose name was “Shag” Tabor. Shag saw to it that broken and u/s tools were taken back and used in transaction by the whittlers in the form of weight. In practical terms, forty pounds of busted tools would get the customer a brand new L4 tool box. Shag was a bit of a scudsy bastard as his nickname might portray, as his girth and appearance was always in want of major maintenance. Nevertheless, his exploits were those that never affected his prone to luxury and successes in the navy.

Alongside in Portsmouth, he had placed an order with the local green grocer in order that “the vittles” were availed on time and supplied in abundance. The quantity of transaction was well received by the Chandler and in a show of appreciation, everytime Shag came to Pompey, he was provided with a hotel room, a running tab, and free fare in some of the finer restaurants of nearby Southsea. It wasn’t much longer when Shag got promoted to C2, and this startled everybody in the mess. Wick remained as a P1 and became quite inquisitive as to how Shag got his buttons in asking, “How the hell did they promote you, ya’ goddam skate?” His reply to the request was simple. “There are three things that a man in the navy must usually abide by in order to get promoted. Work hard . . .fear God . . . and honour the Queen. I really don’t do any of ‘em!”

Under Age, I’m definitely not!

Among the supply rates, Duke McAfee was another naval storesman who because of his hockey playing skills was at one time, touted to make the NHL. However, poor Duke was of a lesser “don’t-needya” size, so he did the next best thing and joined the navy. When he went through *Cornwallis*, he was a very rare commodity at the age of 22 which meant that he was entitled to bar privileges at the ‘wets’, unlike the rest of the Iroquois division who were all UA. His means of, “Yes! You may pass!”, came in the form of a mess card that when displayed, allowed entry to the canteen by the holder. Needless to say, the card became very popular among Duke’s immediate but under-aged wingers, Sam Morris and Stu Lingard. Duke soon became a little lonely going off to the bar for a beer as a new entry among the regular ship’s company members so he decided on a plan to get Stu to join him for a beer. Soon after, he went into the wets

and ordered a beer and then went off to the heads for a slash. While there, he tossed his card out of the window to the patiently waiting UA, OS Lingard. Stu then went into the wets confident in knowing that the card would allow him by the sentry, and so it successfully did.

The next time, Duke thought that he'd like to invite Sam along as well, to make a comfortable and more obvious threesome. So the card got chucked out the heads window twice, and the three sat down to an ale or two, quite confident that there'd be no knowing the difference. Later on, a three-badged killick appeared in front of the trio and started a mild altercation that led to the sentry having to call in the regulating staff from the main gate. Duke was charged for causing a disturbance and was about to be weighed off by Fred Copas and Reg Player the divisional chief, when Sam thought that justice wasn't being done. He went to Chief Player and quickly convinced him that Ordinary Seaman McAfee was innocent and in fact the three-badged killick had provoked the scene in the wets. Duke was issued a case dismissed and the three-badged killick got trooped instead. After court was held, OS Sam Morris was summoned to the chief's office. He was asked by the chief, "What were you doing in the wets? You're under age!", to which Sam in his very early career was trooped for the first time and issued with "fourteen days #5's."

"Not me Chief! I'm Comm' School."

So today, although quickly fading until the last navy-blue clad new-entry who joined the navy retires, the very Canadian naval expression, "Not me Chief. I'm Comm' School!", still might stand as the acceptable statement: "Don't blame me. I'm innocent." Many modern-day sailors might not be aware as to how it originated but this getting' you off the hook excuse all started in HMCS *Cornwallis*. 'Cornwallis, the establishment for New Entry Training, was also home to the RCN's Communications School and as such, sparkers and the modest numbers of personnel from the ship's company consisted of about 10 percent of the total complement. Apart from the wear of branch badges and G.C.'s, it was sometimes difficult for a pursuing chief or petty officer to differentiate between the tougher-disciplined, new entry trainees and the some of the lesser demanding but still limited privileges that the sparkers and ship's company were entitled to. Among many, excused doubling, addressing every rank from AB to C1 as "Sir", or unrestricted use of the canteen are examples that under no circumstances was a *Cornwallis* O.D. ever to

savour until passing out day. In other words, the term became the daily utterance among the sparkers and ship's company which in their view, separated the men from the boys.

Bulging jumper . . .the game backfires

In the early sixties', an LSPW by the name of Lester Croxen was ship's company at *Cornwallis*. He, along with all the other Pay Writers, worked for a self-proclaimed Super-Chief of the branch named Laliberte. His opinion was that he knew what was going on at all times and there was none better than the Chief Paywriter. Now this became a standing joke between Lester and the Chief, Lester feeling that as a killick-paywriter, he too was the best the navy had to offer. So over a considerable length of time, the shit-chuckin' between them prevailed. As Lester quoted: "We did it in jest. We drank off base. We visited his home for parties and get-togethers at Christmas and Thanksgiving."

On a typical day at the office, the chief would lay the cash out on his desk, count it all up, then walk away and turn his back on it. So comes a Friday afternoon, getting near to 1500, and we're all getting' ready to go to Divisions and Evening Quarters. The chief has all his money out with the plan to start countin' it right at 1500 when "Hands Fall In" is piped. That way, the chief has an excuse for not going to divisions. Along I come and as the chief's not lookin', I pick up a bundle of \$5's that tallied up to about \$500. I didn't have time to jam the money in my pants pockets so I stashed it into my jumper pockets as fast as I could and left. Imagine that. The first time anybody ever went to divisions with \$500 on him. I then killed some time with the rest of the hands at the drill shed. Finally, fifteen minutes or so had passed when the pipe sounded, "Hands Fall In." Numbering, sizing, platoon inspection, stand at ease, stand easy and then the G.I. sounded "the still" on his gunnery whistle. He required that the comptroller fall out and report to the pay office. A few minutes later, the Supply Officer, then the P1's, the P2's and finally, me. Still not knowing what was going on, I was told to report "At the double." On my way, it suddenly dawned on me that me stashin' the \$5's, might have something to do with this. Well my heart skipped a beat, but I didn't think it was too serious because the chief and I had our smooth neutrality. I kept doublin' right into the office to find the MAA talking to the chief at his desk. It didn't take long to find out that the missing money was what it was all about, so I immediately turned over the \$5's. Well, a little bit of discussion

went on with the MAA and the chief and the next thing I know, I'm in grey coveralls . . .and in cells. By now, it's 1700 on a Friday and nothing could be done for me, the alleged thief, until Monday morning. I explained the whole story to one of the divisional officers . . .some Sub-Lieutenant who couldn't find his arse from a hole in the ground. Likewise, the OOD just wanted something to put in his log and he did nothing as well. Then I was escorted to the galley . . .after everybody else had eaten and there was not much scrum left. Now it's well into the evening and my wife at home in Annapolis would be lookin' for me. Having no access to a phone, one of the other writers finally got the news through. This ordeal would go on for the next ten days in cells. Monday, they start providing me with counsel with someone I didn't even know. I told my story over and over again. Now there was talk of a court martial and I'm gettin' pretty concerned. Where could you work if you're convicted of stealing, especially in the pay branch?"

Lester continued. "Finally, someone somewhere, started to believe my story and there came a compromise. Seems that AJAG suggested to the chief that he keep quiet, and I got case dismissed with a "Don't ever do dumb things again . . .and don't use his office as a thoroughfare anymore." We still had to continue to work together, but how cagey he was at dodgin' that one. About a year or two later, the chief died but many years after that, I was having a beer in the Army, Navy Club on Barrington St., waiting for the Seaway to open at eleven. Some drunken matelot in there was goin' on about a guy who stole some money from the cash office down in *Cornwallis* a few years back . . .and he knew him. Well now! How a story can get twisted."

Ron Shields - New Highness

Petty Officer Ron "Hank" Shields was a formidable stoker who tells of the time when he was brand new in the navy and was fortunate to have had his occasion of personally meeting with royalty. In August of 1951, OS Shields had just completed N.E.T. at *Cornwallis* and on a train, heading for HMCS *Naden* for a six-week Stoker Mechanics' course. On arrival in barracks, he was quickly informed of two things. That he was to stand by HMCS *Uganda* and commission her to "*Quebec*", and that for the meantime, was to train as part of a 100-man Royal Guard for the anticipated visit to Victoria of HRH Princess Elizabeth and her new husband, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

By autumn, the royal party were on the western leg of a visit to Canada. and after Vancouver, they were to board HMCS *Crusader* and take a day passage to Vancouver Island. Ron recalls that although the would-be Royal Guard trained and trained in parade drill and route-marches, etc., he and his fellow-guardsmen were “good”, as they were all just fresh out of *Cornwallis*. The day had finally arrived but rare is the case in Victoria, it was a cold and rainy one. Nevertheless, the parliament grounds were at their regal best with flags flying, the *Naden* band playing, and spaced upon the grounds of the legislature buildings, was the Royal Guard consisting of sailors from throughout Pacific Command. They were as splendid and smart as could be, and a credit to the nation and its navy. Within the ranks stood Stoker Mechanic Ron Shields, and like everyone else, he too was cold, wet, and shivering. When the royal couple finally arrived, the crowd went wild but now the order to “Present Arms” which would launch the precision drill, could not be heard. All that could be done was follow the man beside you. Being wet, cold, and now shivering, the problems compounded and all the intensity and precision training that the guard endured in preparation for the demonstration were quickly slipping away. They became bewildered. The guard was now to be inspected while Ron stood trembling as his hand clung to the butt of his Lee Enfield at the slope and his eyes rivetted dead ahead. Slowly the royal couple were drawing nearer and nearer to his position in the front rank. Finally, HRH Princess Elizabeth stood directly in front of buff-stoker Shields, and in a very gracious and smiling manner inquired of him, “Hello . . . So what is yore name, and where do you come from?” Ron trembled and shivered all the more. His rifle quivered, his eyes dazzled, and finally he blurted out aloud, **“Ma’ name’s New Brunswick and I come from Ronnie Shields Your Highness!”**

Good Christians at much-needed prayer

It is rather a convenience in the Royal Canadian Navy that because of its relative and manageable size, to describe of personalities, the oft-repetition of ships’ names, as well as events that seem to circle back upon each other. Amass HMCS *Quebec*, a distinguished naval officer named Budge, and Ronnie Shields once again, in merely illustrating the fact.

The assumption that sailors are very independent, impetuously rough and ready, and to the landsman are often scaringly viewed as pirates ashore, there is a secret element of them that is God fearing. From a motto

that was at one time warily emblazoned upon main gangways, the after canopies, the cable decks, or more appropriately where space was less confined, on the bulkheads and bulwarks of ships' quarterdecks, we were witness to an accompanying third tally board to battle honours and ships' names: "Fear God. Honour the Queen." Beyond anyone's capability is to regulate the elements and when at sea, no better is the description, "For those in peril" that are on it, above it . . . or under it. As a former submariner who later "took up the Cloth" once prophesized, "There ain't no atheists in a life-boat!" In final desperation and a last-ditch effort in praise for mercy, it is time to call upon the Lord.

In September of 1953, light-cruiser *Quebec* had departed Narvik in Norway to join Exercise Mariner, an international exercise in the northwestern Atlantic. It was a 19-day war game of great magnitude that included over 300 warships from eight NATO countries. *Quebec* joined the carrier group consisting of USS *Bennington* and *Wasp* and *Magnificent* along with many others that would include HMS *Eagle* and the British battleship *Vanguard*. By the fourth day of the exercise, the weather had deteriorated that produced high winds and heavy seas but thick fog contributed to another problem. Of the carriers in the force, 32 of their aircraft including Avengers, Sea Furies and the like remained airborne and the possibilities of safely recovering them became a serious problem because of the zero visibility. The situation compounded as fuel gauges slowly plummeted with no other option but to ditch.

Quebec's renowned C.O., Captain P.D. Budge also had another well-known quality and that was his strong belief as a Christian. On this very inclement day, he directed that those who could be spared from the ship's company lay aft to the quarterdeck in order to pray: "That God be called upon to take solace and offer mercy in the heavens above." The token gathering was then hurriedly led in prayer by two padres of the R.C. and Protestant faiths, who by irony were named Maclean and MacLean. Ron Shields and a shipmate named Bruce McKone were a part of that modest assembly and as prayer issued forth that the skies might clear, it had happened. The fog had lifted, the rain squalls ebbed, and the fighting winds seemed to lessen at the same time. High above were the myriads of aircraft that could now be clearly seen from the carriers' islands and especially from the brightening quarterdeck of HMCS *Quebec* and the astonishment in the eyes and souls of the bare-headed men who stood thereupon in prayer. Immediately, the planes began to land in desperation, not necessarily on their own ships as would be in one case. It was a very thought-provoking and emotional time for Ron and Bruce. By 1998, they

had never forgotten that day and would still speak emotionally of it. Aren't sailors classy? And as an American pilot of a Douglas AD Skyraider forcibly chose *Magnificent* as a place to touch down from the debacle, he was ordered to remain for a lengthy period until conditions had improved. He got a little pickled a couple of times at the grace and generosity of his new-found Canadian shipmates. By the time he flew back to *Bennington's* flight deck where he belonged, his fuselage white star insignia had been replaced with a red maple leaf.

. . . and then as a Commodore

Commodore P.D. Budge had a reputation circling around the premise that if he had never heard that one before . . . or if he could be outwitted, the potential culprit would get off the hook. One story has it that as Commodore RCN Barracks at *Naden* in 1957, he was in his ground floor office running defaulters on an AB. Through an open window, plainly visible was a hydro pole as the Commodore mused at what he could do for excitement to give the rattled AB a fighting chance before passing punishment. He challenged the defaulter to a race. He told him that if he could reach the pole before he did, he would offer "Case dismissed." The AB flew out of the office door and ran down the gangway for the outside while the Commodore jumped out the window. When the AB arrived, he was greeted with a boyish smile, the Commodore leaning with one hand up the pole and the other on his hip. "What took you so long?" he asked.

Even as a Commander several years before, he maintained prankishness. In *Cornwallis* as the executive officer, he was always prepared for intelligent counter-wit from the troops. P.D. Budge, and his pet peeve for irish pennants was always on the lookout for them at divisions. 'Remember that Sea Cadet?

As one matelot was continuously being picked up for 'pennants', he thought of a plan to keep the Commander at bay and off his back. He very carefully tucked about two feet of black thread into a thimble to stow in his jumper pocket. He then took the standing end through the eye of a needle, pierced it through his jumper so that a half inch of pennant, prominently protruded from the breast of his jumper. As the Commander approached this very familiar face again, he immediately saw the thread and began to slowly pull it away. He yanked, and yanked away . . . then finally stopped. By now the thread was a foot long. Commander Budge boyishly smirked while he turned his attention to the next man in line.

Then Captain Budge as C.O. in *Quebec*, an OSQM by the name of Armand Barette was to become well-known throughout the navy. He was a popular man and was continually regarded among his shipmates. Armand of course had a physical condition that also contributed to the lack of hair upon his head. Therefore, Armand had a selection of toupees that would suit different occasions . . . ones that were reasonably appropriate for pusser's divisions as well as others he could wear that would impress the ladies when he stepped ashore.

At ceremonials one day, the ship's company were ordered to "Off Caps" for inspection. Captain Budge, who went to great lengths in "knowing his men", faltered on this day and in licking his wounds would accept correction graciously. He stopped in front of Armand while noting that his hair was in need of a trim. Armand then removed his wig . . . two-three, passed it smartly to the Captain . . . two-three . . . and accompanied his smart movements with a well-deserved suggestion. "Here Sir. You cut it!"

"Dave, The Son of David"

There was a real "jack-me-tickler" aboard *Bonnie*, an RP named Able Seaman Herb Leviston, who I had the pleasure of being in *Cornwallis* with. The modern-day Herb is well known around Halifax as Dave Leviston and in later years, Monsieur Dave le Viston, the renowned businessman amongst hairies that when he took his release in 1980, never left the area. He caught on in the realty business very successfully dealing with many sailors as they came and went through Halifax. In Dave's earlier years as a sailor, his imagination and resourcefulness matured rapidly. He was very much like the rest of the abes where it didn't take you long to build up a defence with daily life and the ability to survive. As in all ships, money was short in those days and ever-enterprising Dave devised of many ways in which to gather dough. He would leisurely meander about the carrier's countless messdecks and passageways and confront passing acquaintances with a . "Ya' wouldn't have two-bits to spare, wouldya wings? I gotta get some stamps from the canteen." Well after posing the same question to a multitude of receptive donors, it didn't take long to gather enough to buy a hundred books of stamps. Much like a Whittler, by getting two-bits here, and two-bits there, Dave was now ready for a good run-ashore.

Sometime later, while alongside in San Juan P.R., Dave was duty and decided that he'd rather get ashore and go on a run. It was a time when the opportunities for favours began to dwindle as the proverbial request form that enfolded a five-dollar bill to lure the chief into a "Yes please!", had become a thing of the past. However, Dave was of the Jewish faith and being very much in the minority, he thought to use his beliefs to his advantage with the master-at-arms, CPO1 Knobby Hall. He submitted a request form that read: "***Request for turn of leave out of watch from 1400-1800. Reason: to attend service at the local sinagoge in San Juan.***"

When the MAA received the request form at his office, he hastily tore it up and summoned AB Leviston. As Dave anxiously arrived at the MAA's office door, Master' Hall went on to explain that unless the correct spelling of (synagogue) was included upon the form, his request would be denied.

Dave left the MAA's office in a quandary and asked dozens of passers-by, 'How dya' spell synagogue?' Nobody had a clue, so then he went all over the ship in search of a dictionary. In RCN terms, Bonaventure was a big ship, and Dave spent nearly two hours rummaging through the passageways, messdecks, and offices trying desperately to obtain access to a dictionary. As matelots in those years never really had the need, a dictionary just couldn't be found. Possibly the chief scribe had one, but Dave knew that an A.B. approaching a chief with such a request was not in the stream of 'gettin' on with your work'. So Dave then took another shot where the request now read: "***Request for turn of leave out of watch from 1400 to 1800. Reason: to attend service at the local sinagoge in San Juan.***"

Well that didn't work either, and to the continued crafty delight of Knobby Hall, he then tore that one up. Again, he submitted the request form that this time read "sinagawg", and shortly thereafter, a pipe shrilled through the ship.... "Able Seaman Leviston, Master-at-Arms Office." Dave then galloped up to the office where Master' Hall, with a diamond eye, was completely rolled up in laughter as he shredded away with the third request. By now Dave was very frustrated but began to build a defence. He was now, evermore determined to get ashore. This time he filled out another request form that read: "***Request for turn of leave out of watch from 1400-1800. Reason: To attend service at the local Jewish church in San Juan.***"

Chief Hall finally relented and granted the request. Later in the day at 1800, Dave didn't return on board and if you ask a well-dressed, middle aged Dave Leviston today about who carried that duty watch in his place,

he'll tell you that the MAA filled in for him. There just has to be a lot more to the story.

And well-dressed and a lady's man he was too . . . even years later in 1975, when his adventures shifted to social activities in Montreal. Dave was now a killick, aboard the destroyer *Fraser* whose coxswain was the ever popular CPO1 "Bob" Wibberley. By the mid-seventies, proceeding ashore in uniform in many places around the world was suddenly discouraged. To everyone's delight, civilian clothing was therefore allowed to be carried aboard HMC Ships and matelots always liked to look their best. For the few that didn't, there were standards to meet in order to get across the brow, and subsequently, everybody went ashore looking their best. Dave was always impeccable and the proud owner of eleven fine suits with matching haberdashery. In fact he was so particular about his appearance that he also felt his hair and sideburns just had to be conducive to the crumple-ene, wide-lapel and bell bottomed trouser suits that were in vogue during the seventies. After all, Dave had an image to maintain. How the hell can you charm the ladies ashore if you wear such fine suits but have a haircut that only looked good in the soda shop gabardine, 18" pleated drapes of the fifties?

So in search of a way, Dave decided to go to sick bay. After several visits, he finally convinced the sick-bay tiffy that he had a scalp and facial hair problem. The MA then opined that until another examination was conducted some months later, Dave was not to cut his hair too short and above all, accompanying sideburns that extended well below the regulation limit, were not to be altered, shortened, or shaved off. Well, having a sick bay chit with an authorized diagnosis like that became all-encompassing in Dave's assumption. It would certainly produce a physical appearance that did not conform to regulations. He was therefore "Excused wear of uniform entirely" for the duration.

It wasn't long after that a draft-chit arrived on board. LS Leviston was to attend French language training at the "megaplex" in BFC St. Jean in Quebec. He completed his "out-routine" by reporting to Coxswain Wibberley for final administrative instructions for attending the course. The coxswain then looked Dave over very closely and declared, "Now I know you're excused wear of uniform but I stress that your sideburns are to be no longer than they are at the present! Ya' got that Leading Seaman Leviston?" Dave assured Chief Wibberley that he fully understood what he meant.

A couple of weeks had now passed, and Dave was comfortably installed into this very different environment. The megaplex was a nice change and

what he liked the most was a chance to get ashore every night to do a little hustlin'. Dressed well for the occasions he was, and as time passed by, his sideburns and hair were really progressing to the point that no one would ever believe he was in the military. He was stumbling his way through the course until one morning, he was told to report to the School RSM, a Chief Warrant Officer from the Vandoos. Apart from his falling behind in training, he was also dismayed about LS Leviston's appearance and the necessity of his attending the course in civilian clothing. Dave assured him that he would buck up in his training and insisted that he was simply adhering to the Coxswain's parting instruction: ". . . your sideburns are to be no longer than they are at present." There was certainly a language barrier and through much interpretation, the RSM remained unconvinced that *Fraser's* coxswain would accept such an appearance. He made a phone call to Halifax to speak to Chief Wibberley. In that discussion, the coxswain assured the RSM that the direction was clear. . . "No longer than they are at present." Mystified, the RSM conceded and told Dave to return to class. After the course completed a few weeks later, Dave had remained civilian attired, his wardrobe complimented by his sideburns and hair-style, while much to the liking of the ladies ashore. For his outcome on the course? Most of his instructors were successfully converted to speaking in English.

Dave Lecky

Much can be said about a typical stoker named Dave Lecky, whose rank as a P2ER was short-lived. Dave joined the navy in 1957 and after *Cornwallis*, spent his whole career at sea except when he went ashore for trade group training. Dave was in *Victoriaville*, *Haida*, *Buckingham*, and then whisked into *Crescent* until he was then shovelled off to the other "Cardboard Carton", *Algonquin*. It was nearing Trade Group 3 time of his career but nevertheless, he was ushered aboard *Bonaventure*. There he stayed until there was room on a course and off he went. When he finally scraped his way through that one, RCN Depot thought that because he was so invaluable as a *Bonnie* rating, he was told to return. After a couple of more years at sea, his fate changed and he was put aboard the brand new tanker *Protecteur*. He spent 3 and a half years there until his expertise was noticed and *Preserver* (the other one) felt that they could use his services too. Off he went like a true "tanker-wanker", and serve he did. After reasonable time, he was then pier-headed to *Fraser*. From there he went to

the *Ottawa*, did well, so well, that the career manager thought that his body ought to be in *Margaree*. So he joined her and stayed there until he finally got a shore draft. . .well sort of. He was detailed to work in the engine rooms of YDT diving tenders at FDU(A). A year went by and his calling came for the final time. His last days in the navy found him finishing up back aboard *Margaree* in 1983.

Dave had a very different career having occupied many ranks within the navy. He had been an O.D. an A.B. and then went on to be a killick. He had that rank three times until the new one was introduced, that being a Master Killick. He had been a P2 twice, the first time reverted to LS and in order to get to be a P2 a second time, there was now another rank to attain, but that never happened. He finished his career as a P2. It needs to be said here that whatever rank he carried, he was also Captain for a day, but not in recognition with Christmas tradition. While aboard one of the tankers at Roosevelt Rds. In Puerto Rico, a USN staff car was dispatched to the jettyside to take the Captain to his chosen destination. Civvy-clad Dave was heading ashore on a run with a winger and as they stepped off the brow, Dave approached the driver. "And who are you waiting for?" he asked. "Captain Hinton." the driver replied. Dave countered with, "That'll be me. . .and this is my XO!" as they climbed into the back seat. "Where to Captain, sir?" came the question. "Downtown in Old San Juan, please. We have a meeting to attend."

At one time when Dave was a killick for a third time, he was shoved off onto a first aid course by the regulating Chief to make up numbers and satisfy the ship's quotas. Dave, being very unassuming, but at the same time nobody's fool, had done extremely well on his final written test. He scored a 98.6 percentage mark. After everyone in the class was mulling on their results, a four-ringed Captain who was also on the course approached Dave in stating, "Well Leading Seaman Lecky. . .you seemed to have done quite well on the test. H-m-m-ph. I only got a 93!" Dave peered back at the captain and said, "You shoulda' done better than that sir! I gave you my paper but you still got the first three answers wrong!"

Dave's frigate days were to be full of pranks as well. He recalls that when the U.N.T.D. cadets were riding the *Victoriaville* or the *Digby Flyer*, those aspiring to be engineering officers had their obstacles in front of them too. Dave had them "feeling bottom ends" on the main engines at 5-minute intervals in order to chase down that bandit bearing that just might be running a little too hot.

“Racin’ snakes”

In describing of Dave Lecky’s physical stature, one immediately thinks of the value of he and the likes of him, have in the navy. Every engineering branch in every ship, and especially in submarines, must have their “duty racing snake.” When times so often occur that a valve cannot be reached, or when a spanner, a split pin, or a nut should fall into a crankpit or a lube oil path, or whenever there just ain’t space to climb in, under, above, behind, or even through, a certain engine, machine, or tortuous and congested system, there must be a racing snake. A stoker, whose body resembles that of a bag of antlers with ribs like a xylophone who can slither in and out and around tight obstacles with little effort. It is frail and insignificant looking men as these that we have become so dependent upon and the truth is that without them, might mean as much for the ship or submarine to have to return to harbour. They go unsung these men who compare as an “advance party for a famine” and without them, our engine room pride and honour would be at stake. Thus, ships’ captains and even engineer officers must be aware of the value of having these walking skeletons, but very healthy rare individuals aboard. At ceremonial divisions as an example, might these scrawny and otherwise unheralded individuals be nailed for not having a haircut, shabby shoes, or a dirty cap. They’re important and deserve their recognition. A good XO might order a Make and Mend and an extra tot instead.

“Hairy Fairies”

In describing the plight of naval air pilots, it is worthy of the observations of Captain(N) Keith Nesbitt, a prominent submarine skipper and past submarine squadron commander who said it this way of the navy’s Air branch and submariners:

“One of the great tragedies that befell our navy was the loss of naval aviation and the Fleet Air Arm. One of the reasons it was such a tragedy was that the spirit of the Canadian Fleet Air Arm (FAA) was extremely unique and something to be proud about. Those guys performed dangerous work very professionally and gained international acclaim for how they did it with a minimum of fuss and ceremonial folderol. Significantly and most importantly is that they demonstrated a type of irreverent, yet kind, humour which I believe was very “Canadian.” To me, that familiar get-on-with-it, work hard, play hard attitude equalled to that of my

experience among folks in the submarine service. The platform demanded such an attitude which many Canadians could easily identify with. That ethos is what separates submariners and naval aviators from fisheads. Simply put, had the FAA stayed within the navy, a large representation of Canadian ethos would have remained leaving the brunt to the Canadian Submarine Service that if it should similarly fade away, the most Canadian part of the Canadian Forces would sorrowly vanish.”

Under the Bridge. . .a challenge

A young naval air pilot LCdr Rod Bays, (later, our XO in *Micmac*) recounted the time when he piloted a twin-rotor helicopter and sortied with HMCS *Labrador*. She was parked bows south on Jetty 5 just beyond the then, brand new Angus L. McDonald bridge at Jetty 4 in the Halifax Dockyard. He too, landed facing south upon *Labrador's* flight deck in order to land stores. In anticipation of later lifting off, he reckoned that the new bridge above him would be somewhat of a challenge to fly under, and “a first” among naval air pilots. In the process of doing so, the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, Rear-Admiral Hugh F. Pullen in his office ashore, was peering through his window that presented a grand view of the harbour especially *Labrador* at Jetty 5. As helo landings and launches were very new and in their infancy in the RCN at the time, he watched with inquisitiveness and bated breath.

Rod lifted off and soared away from *Labrador* with speed and precision, right under the bridge. The admiral was shocked. Almost immediately, he picked up his telephone and summoned Chief of Staff (Air), Commodore “Nibs” Cogdon. He demanded an immediate report from this wayward and undisciplined pilot and issued assurity that he would be court-martialled to boot. The Commodore ordered the report and LCdr Bays wrote in convincing fashion that his actions were appropriate due to the elements presented by aerodynamic conditions and transverse wind sheers, etc... .to which the Commodore new was a pile of bullshit.

The Commodore had little choice but to take the report to Admiral Pullen along with his misgiving support to the written excuses. The Admiral, after reviewing the statements and rating the judgement for this blatant action, became succinctly reassured and ruled a “Case Dismissed.”

“Lemme have a look!”

The navies of the world certainly do travel it, and the RCN was, and Canada's navy of today are no exception. Upon the oceans and seas until the middle of the twentieth century, an age old tradition respecting funerals at sea was by disposing of a corpse to the realm of Neptune as the deceased slipped from beneath his country's flag at the precision of the padre's words. . . “commit this body to the deep.” During the preliminaries and as a precaution, the ship's sailmaker would enter and wrap the corpse in canvas shroud for consignment. He would ensure that the last stitch in the lap of shroud over the face, the needle was thrust through the nose to prevent the body from slipping out of the canvas. In modern times however, today's sailmakers operate sewing machines and added to the ecological concerns that have been thrust upon sea-going minds, the solemnity of burial at sea has had to change to reduce garbage from going over the side. Today, where within some “Wills”, such a pre-determined desire for disposal is listed, or through the wishes of the bereaved next-of-kin, the ceremony has instead, been miniaturized by the “scattering of ashes” upon the sea.

Soon after the ceremonial orders had changed, the remains of a cremated senior officer were to be taken to sea and scattered at geographical co-ordinates somewhere upon an ocean. A certain Leading Seaman, here known as “Lofty”, was detailed off to transport the ceremonial urn to the quarterdeck in time for the Squadron Chaplain to conduct a service for the immediate family and a modest and equally bereaved selection of the deceased's commissioned colleagues. On his way aft on the port side of the upper deck, Lofty was stopped by Knobby, one of his wingers from the mess who asked, “What ya' got there, Lofty?” “It's the urn with the officer's ashes that we're gonna scatter today. I'm humpin' 'em aft for the Padre!” he replied. Knobby was both curious and intrigued and said, “Hey Lofts'! Lemme have a look. I've never seen anybody's ashes before!” Lofty said, “Well c'mere. . .hurry up. They're in a panic for this. I can't waste time!”

Lofty then sidestepped into a low deckhead breezeway in remaining aloof of the gathered ceremony back aft. “Here!” he said. “Quick. . . have a look!” Lofty opened the hinged lid of the heavy urn for Knobby to get his butcher's. Then suddenly, with a powdery whoosh from above, a thundering exhaust fan intake quickly gobbled up the ashes. “Aw' fer fukksakes Knobby. Look wot ya' made me do. Where's that fan discharge to?” “Er, um, I dunno Lofts'!” Lofty was now a little rattled. “What the

hell am I gonna do now ya' nosey bastard?" Knobby thought for a moment and said, "I know! Let's get down below to the mess, quick!" Both in a panic, they sped down ladders two rungs at a time, Lofty gripping the empty urn tightly as they descended. When they arrived in the mess, Knobby hollered out to everyone sitting 'round a settee. "Help you bastards. We need ashes right now. Everybody pick out the dog-ends and dump the ashtrays in here. Hurry!"

"Boy in the army - Man in the navy"

Prairie sailors have lots of mettle. There was another Manitoban by the name of Lloyd W. Hogg who retired from the navy in 1975 as a P2FC, and was heavily decorated for his service in Korea. Lloyd came from Strathclair, sixty miles north of Brandon, and declared how difficult it was to get work and even exist on farms on the prairies during the Manitoba floods of 1950. The Korean conflict had begun and many of Canada's youngest and best did many irrational and fib-like things in order to find work, or best yet, serve their country. Lloyd was only sixteen, but anxious to get away from home in search of opportunity. He ran away.

After being on the loose for several days, he came upon a recruiting office in Brandon and decided to join the army. To his dismay, he was too young so he persevered in thinking of what had to be done to get in. With some careful manipulation of his 1934 birth certificate, he blotted out the "4" and inserted a "3". He succeeded in baffling the recruiters and found himself as an infanteer in the P.P.C.L.I. Off he went to Korea to fight in the war, but it didn't take long for Mrs. Hogg, his mother, to learn that he had joined the army and tried to track him down. She persisted, and eventually was in a mean and demanding relationship with General Rockingham, the Supreme Commander of the Canadian Contingent in Korea. She became very upset at the Canadian Army and their condoning of having young sixteen-year old boys at war, in a foreign land, and on the other side of the world. She had won her case. Immediately, Pte. Hogg was located on a battlefield near the 38th Parallel, sent back to Canada, and told to: "Report to your Mother!"

Instead, he found his way to HMCS *Chippawa* on Smith St. in Winnipeg, and immediately signed on as an OSRC in the gunnery branch. After basic training at *Cornwallis*, he was drafted to HMCS *Athabaskan* and went right back to Korea to get on with the war. It only goes to show that unlike the army, people who join the navy are not only courageous,

but very, very honest. When he signed on in the RCN, he was seventeen, of worth, and just like any other valiant new entry who persistently chose to serve his country.

Padre - Out of the Dress of the Day

Very active in retirement, a well-known old G.I. tells of the time while at sea on a Sunday morning in HMCS *Quebec*. Padre Peglar was the word of the Lord in the light cruiser and his visits to see the men below were frequent. At “stand easys”, he would knock and enter a random mess to enjoy “coffee with the lads” knowing full well that the brew would be nicely enriched with a splash or two of pusser’s neats. The men liked that and so did the Padre. Because of his frequent visits, he often liked to create discussion. He might ask of the messdeck killick, “When you made that trip to Greece, did you go to the Parthenon?” The killick was very responsive to the padre’s inquisitiveness and replied, “I can’t remember the names of all the bars we went to Padre.”

But on this warm and breezy day in the Caribbean, the padre was to turn to in earning his one- day- a- week pay. Ceremonial Divisions were called on the quarterdeck and the Padre would officiate in prayer for the ship’s company. He began with the “Lord’s Prayer”, read a short sermon, and then clutching his prayer book with both hands as padres always do, continued with the “Naval Prayer.” He was just getting to the passage . . . *“Who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging of the seas.”* . .when a sharp gust of wind came up that lifted the Padre’s robes completely above his waist and stayed there while continuing . . . *“Who has compassed the waters until day and night come to an end”*. . .and all the while, here was he in displaying that the Padre is built just like all hairy bags, in that they are just that. Clearly too, he was out of the dress of the day but much like many matelots, was also “negative ‘nicks.”

Our ship

A certain newly arrived Captain aboard an east coast Tribal Class destroyer was introducing himself by addressing the ship’s company after clearing lower decks to the foc’s’le. One of his intentions was to aim at bringing the crew together in positive spirit. He reasoned, “This is not my ship.... This is not your ship.... she’s our ship!” A muttering was then

clearly heard from somewhere up near the bullring. “Good! Then let’s sell her!”

“D’ya hear there. . .”

There were guys who had other physical and sometimes, unusual defects as well. Ron Gauthier was a killick in the ‘sweeper, HMCS *Thunder* around 1959 on the east coast. Ron had experienced a serious car crash sometime earlier and as a consequence, received severe injuries to the right side of his face and head. As he slowly recovered, happily he was none the worse for wear, apart from being . . .negative, starboard ear. Doctors and plastic surgeons feverishly went to work and after a lot of innovation, fashioned a “quick-connect” ear made of rubber. The ear appeared very, very real and human-like and Ron was pleased as he could give this right-hand threaded device a nifty half turn and “Click!”. . .the lug ‘ole was in posish’. Ron then found ways to reconcile with such an anomaly by putting his “new ear” to imaginative and worthwhile use rather than just tweaking it to the side of his head for the sake of appearance. With that, Ron’s confidence was restored and after a little getting used to this neoteric apparatus, was ready for steamin’ ashore with the boys again.

He was soon to do so somewhere in the ‘States in a local bar. And like all pubs, bars, and taverns, if you left the table to go for a leak, you stood the chance of getting your mug or glass of beer whisked away by another matelot who was a little confused or perhaps one that’s maybe a little slack in getting’ the round in. Ron could fix that. Much like matelots who sport partial or complete false *dentures, it is known what they do to fend off the thirsty. But as Ron still had the teeth he was issued with, instead, disconnected his ear and plopped it into his frothy quaff.

**A method of personalizing one’s beer. There have been times when others have decided to share it. Several submariners around a table might suddenly discover that they themselves had all types of substitute teeth in one form or another. In affirming their bond and loyalty with each other, they would all chuck their “teeth”, and into a glass of hops. . .and pass it round as “queens”, each taking a gulp until the glass was dry. Addenda: Does not excuse “real teeth” owners from participating by having a wet as they must.*

So back in Halifax some time later, it was time to get ashore again and do some trappin’. Ron and the boys decided to head off for the Wednesday night dance at the Olympic Gardens on Cunard St. in Halifax. (“Carp’s”,

or The Carpenter's Hall, also known as the "Shipwright Shoppe", was good on other weekday nights, the Jubilee Boat Club, "the Jube." was the best in town on Saturdays, which left but the Seagull Club on Sundays, being the only one open on the Sabbath. . .but the Shit-Hawk Club on Sundays is another story.) The idea being that anywhere you went for a "dance" in 'Slackers, the ultimate goal was to trap parties and impress them to no end.

As the night wore on to the music of a very young and fledgling "Dutch" Mason, a certain young lass became very engrossed with Ron's charm and good looks. So engrossed were they that Ron and the pretty lady began to get closer and closer each and every time they danced. It was getting real steamy by now and as they further embraced into Santo & Johnny's, "Sleep Walk", the lady began to. . .lustily nibble at his ear for which he could not feel. Suddenly. . . "Pop!" . . . and off it came, now at the secured arrangement of it dangling from her lips as she fell away at arms' distance and fainted right there on the spot. Dutch and the boys played on with much broader smiles, while not missing a beat.

The Madeleine Islands Fishing Family

Some stories are very hard to believe in their legitimacy but when one should think hard into the traditions of families, their culture, and their means of local livelihood, there may be good reason to understand of the grief that some might endure when political decisions can personally overwhelm an individual in seeking vengeance. Such was the case in the early 'seventies' when the tanker *Preserver* dropped in on a good will visit to Saint-Pierre Et Miquelon, the French possession in the Cabot Strait. At the time, there was a grave ongoing dispute over the borders of territorial fishing grounds between France and Canada. One of the crew aboard the AOR was an Able Seaman who hailed from the nearby Madeleine Islands of the province of Quebec. Before joining the navy, he was a nurtured fisherman as was his family and forefathers, who for generations had fished for their livelihood upon the areas that were now in dispute.

Ceremonial Divisions were held on the jetty to greet the Governor of the Islands. He was courteously invited to inspect the ranks and so expressed his pleasure in doing so. As he was escorted toward the first division to be reviewed, the former fisherman broke ranks, ran up to the Governor. . .and swiftly kicked him right in the crotch. The AB was

quickly weighed off and sent up to the ranch in Gagetown for 90 days. On completion, he got turfed on a dishonourable discharge.

The Harrison Brothers

Sharing names that sound alike is common in any society but there was one in the navy that was spelled the same and remains as a very important part of Canadian naval history that I feel, requires preservation. For as time shall move on and memories fade, there is little doubt that unless you sailed or served ashore with any of them, something has to be respectfully said through recognition of the Harrison brothers and the mark they made by their presence in serving their country for an accumulation of exactly 150 years. It is popularly known of the USN's five brothers, "the Fighting Sullivans", who all perished at sea in the same vessel during WW2 and a destroyer was to be named after them in commemoration. But can it be claimed that no family anywhere in the world, except that of Mr. & Mrs. Harrison's six-son brood from Picton, Ontario, all served in the same navy as a generation and should, at the least, be posted in Guinness World Book of Records or Ripley's Believe It or Not? On only one occasion would three of the brothers ever sail at the same time in the same vessel. Shipwrights Larry and Tommy along with Gordie, were all aboard *Saguenay* in and around the Expo year of 1967. During that celebration, the navy's Trident newspaper ran a featured article on the threesome, but the tale of the naval Harrison brothers went no further than that of a typical newspaper. Once read, is usually discarded.

Larry the eldest, joined the RCN in 1960 and was to pave the way for follow-on sibs' Tommy in 1961, Gordie the year after. . Earnie as an electrician in '63, and Art by 1965 who became the third shipwright. Gary, the black-sheep, had a little catching up to do as he was only born in 1959. But when of age, he too joined the navy having dwelled for two years at sea as an FC but nevertheless, all brothers serving at the same time until he transferred to the army in the late 1970's. A real black-sheep indeed. The boys were a jacky and humorous lot and were certainly characters. A story about taking charge and then applying a little dry wit in the aftermath applies to the nature of the Harrisons.

Smith?

LSWS ‘Gordie’ was the Corporal of the Gangway aboard *Fraser* at 0200 on a Saturday morning in the early 70’s. *Fraser* was berthed at old Jetty 2 in the Halifax dockyard. By Gordie’s side was his faithful bos’n’s mate whose name was OS Smith. Along with young Smitty there were two other Smiths aboard *Fraser*, but unlike the Harrisons, they were not of the same family. . . just more Smiths.

Suddenly, headlights shed their rays upon the dimness as a car rounded the corner of the jetty to discard some passengers about to come aboard. A smirking Gordie and young and keen Ordinary Seaman Smith stood eagerly watching from the shadows of the brow situated under the flight deck overhang. Down on the jetty, a bunch of cackle ensued and by the sound of things, a beer-party had just concluded. After a few minutes of “Take care ass’ole!” and “See ya’ tomorrow lover-lips!”, the car began to back up at a rate of knots. It kept going until a thump was heard, followed by slamming car doors and all kinds of f’in’, blindin’, and cursin’. The car’s rear wheels had jumped over the spurn-water at the end of the jetty, the chassis now lodged upon and free-wheeling, Gordie quickly assessed the situation and decided to send young Smitty out on the jetty to help all these drunks get the car’s wheels back onto the jetty. Smitty trundled off across the brow like a good ode should and in his dutiful and responsible presence, was determined to somehow save the day. A short time had passed where now everybody was trying to take charge and between the dimness of the jetty and the brightness of the headlights, a loud splash and some more eff’in’ and blindin’ could be heard. Ordinary Smith the bos’n’s mate, had fallen into the ocean. Ever alert Gordie immediately calculated on this escalating dilemma. He sprang into motion by sounding the action alarm with the accompanying pipe, “Emergency Stations. . . Emergency Stations. Man overboard on the jetty. Duty Watch. . . take action.”

Well the emergency party managed to haul young Smitty out of the harbour and lifted the chassis off the spurn-water and get the car’s rear wheels back onto the jetty. By Monday morning, it was time for the details of the incident to be gathered by Coxswain Joe O’Reilly, in order to form a report for the XO. As he read through Gordie’s written statement of the events, he looked up and said, “Leading Seaman Harrison. It says here that Ordinary Smith fell in the ocean. Which one?” Gordie broke into a grin and with a glint in his eye replied, “The Atlantic!”

The Frustrated OOD

And so it seemed that the Harrisons were always duty on the weekends. In 1968, LS “Earnie” had just married and moved into a new home in Dartmouth and was yet to get hooked up to a telephone. Brother LS “Larry”, lived just around the corner on Boland Drive and where Earnie was required to provide a telephone number for ship recall purposes, determined that nearby Larry’s would do for any notification.



The young, proud, and always smiling Harrison Brothers in #3 dress in the hangar aboard HMCS Saguenay in 1966. L. to R.: Larry, Tommy and Art. In the back: Gord' and Earnie.

Earnie was the duty technician aboard *Gatineau* one Friday night alongside in Halifax. He had planned to go hunting in Cape Breton on the Saturday morning after his watch and would be anxious to get a good start by leaving town as early as possible. So he previously talked to his relief who agreed to come aboard to relieve him at a very early hour instead of the standard 0900 on weekends. He did so, and Earnie was all excited about getting a deer and was off and running by 0715. Meanwhile, Weapons Officer Lt. Sylvester, the Officer of the Day, spotted Earnie

racin' ashore. He would give it a bit of time and then decided to telephone him as per the number listed on the ship's recall list.

The telephone rang and a bleary-eyed and aggravated "Larry" answered the phone. The OOD opened with, "Is that you Leading Seaman Harrison?" Larry replied, "Yes, it is. Who wants to know?" "This is Lt. Sylvester. Get your body back on board immediately and report to the Duty Coxswain." Larry stood puzzled for a moment knowing that Earnie didn't have a phone. He then said, "Oh you got the wrong guy. You want my brother." With that he issued "Tommy's" phone number, hung up, and went back to bed. Lt. Sylvester made the call. "Tommy" answered the phone and the OOD immediately inquired, "Is that you Leading Seaman Harrison?" "Yes, it is. Who's speakin'?" to which he replied, "Lt. Sylvester. Get your ass back aboard because I saw you going ashore early." "Tommy" didn't like that tone at all and suggested, "Why don't you go pound sand and get a hold of the right guy." So he too knowing that Earnie never had a phone said, "You want my brother "Gordie"!" So he passed on his number and by the time that phone call had been completed, Lt. Sylvester had finally given up. The time was now nearly 0900 and Sylvester was to discover that the relieving duty tech had already been aboard for over an hour and a half.

The sincerity of friendship

Much like myself, a former oppo from submarine days, named Jim Brannen, rose in the branch to become a non-apprentice Chief ERA. The earlier introduction of "Jim, the Pink Panther" had a well-rounded career steaming in all forms of main propulsion that the navy had to offer. Recip', old and newer boilers/steam turbines, gas turbines, direct drive diesels in minesweepers and diving tenders and of course diesel electric generators in O Class submarines. Few can acclaim to such trade versatility in the engineering branch and his well exposed career gave him sound knowledge, complete confidence and a practical method of leadership among his subordinates. He had a keen sense of wittiness and his emotions spoke high of his loyalty and deep-rooted regard for the navy and especially the people in it.

In earlier pages, I reflected on the passing of a dear friend named Tom Pitt from *Cornwallis* and *Micmac* days who died as a result of the JP5 explosion aboard *Nipigon* in 1965. When Jim read of my account, he

offered to tell of his experiences in the aftermath while serving aboard *Cape Scott*.

“Once upon a time” or “This is a no shit dit’!”

“In 1965, the RCN’s ARE 101 named HMCS *Cape Scott* sailed eastbound from Slackers for UK/European waters. She was to be present at the *Ojibwa* Commissioning in Chatham England and later R/V with *Bonnie*’ and the Fifth Squadron, and the RN and Dutch navies for exercises in



HMCS Cape Scott

Biscay, the ‘Channel and North Sea areas. I was an AB trade group 1 stoker working *Cape Scott*’s Factory Staff in harbour and steaming ‘vaps at sea. She was a good and efficient ship under the command of Tony Law who was in MTB’S during WW2. A little different, perhaps a green thumb; hung believe it or not, flower pots in the wheelhouse and I think the bunhouse windows too. Quite the old lady, the “Great Scott” very consistent. . . 69 revs at full speed ahead and 69 revs at economical steaming speed!!! I still have her brass RPM indicator tally as a memorable rabbit. On arrival in Chatham ‘yard the Canadian greyhounds were there not recalling all of them, but do remember *Nipigon* well for what was soon to follow.

Without a doubt, I also remember two of Chatham's pubs... The Fountain, and one right outside HMS *Pembroke's* Barracks Main Gate where Kiwi matelots who were picking up the frigate *Blackpool* came to drink and fight. After the commissioning, we sailed Chats' to Guzz loaded with crates marked "S/M SPARE GEAR" etc. which included two motor bikes, furniture, china, etc., all destined to be later landed and delivered to *Stad'* Wardroom in Halifax as well as other destinations. Ah the daze of "rabbits"! I really miss 'em.

We arrived in Plymouth and prepared to settle in for a month alongside (rough shuffle!!) while the Fleet went to sea and came in on weekends. *Bonnie'* had to anchor in the 'Hoe ...'Scruffy'O'Brien the skipper was not amused! We worked weekends as required, and had a great run ashore during the week. 'Got to know Union Street very well along with the demon scrumps. Also was a guest of the RN Crushers for a night but that's another story.

After the mishap, *Nipigon* later arrived alongside in Guzz and requested *Cape Scott* assistance. They were great days when we didn't have to rely on the Dockyard or civvy contractors for repairs etc. We didn't really know what our job entailed until we had arrived aboard *Nipigon* in finding that that it wasn't an explosion in the *Kootenay* sense, but more of a major fire and fireball. Eventually, myself and another ABEM, Denis Goudreault



were detailed to go and assist in clearing out the Stokers' Mess so that x-rays and pictures could be taken, while I think the *Nipigon* stokers had been moved ashore and billeted in nearby *Drake* barracks. Denis was a typical

ERA of the watch Jimmie Brannen in Okanagan French-Canadian stoker from St. Hyacinthe, PQ. Short, stocky, swarthy and had an accent you could cut with a knife. He had a terrific sense of humour. We were met by the Duty ERA who briefed us on what lay ahead and what we had to do. In prep, we had to strip down and he gave us overalls and wellies to protect us from the JP5, flood water, AFFF and any other crap we might

encounter. By this time, we had become a little apprehensive. The ship appeared deserted and had none of the vibrance that a ship alongside usually does. The Burma Road was dark-lit in what appeared to be necessary lighting only. The atmosphere smelled of burning and you could actually see the path of the fireball which exited out of 12 Mess. God knows how far forward it got! We timidly went down into the Mess....What a sight! It also was dark and smelled of the odour of burning, JP5, damp and something else. It was eerie and has stayed with me 'til this day...Don't ask me why. You could see the path of the fireball from the JP5 tanktop cover all the way around the mess and up the ladder to the Burma Road. One other odd thing.... the head of the bunk over the tank cover wasn't even touched but what was extremely evident were the silhouettes of the hands sleeping in their bunks that were in the path of the fire ball. Anyway, we started to clean out lockers and buggery boxes that the inhabitants of 12 Mess were relieved in not having to do. Then I became a little stressed out. It was when we were clearing out the buggery boxes that I discovered charred flesh right on the silhouette of one of the troops who had died. It was an experience I have never forgotten, and nothing if much seems to have been written about it and the fire. It was very emotional for me as well. Especially thinking that this was an Engineering Mess and these were my brothers. I can't blame *Nipigon* for requesting assistance after seeing that. After the cleanup, we had the unsavory duty of crawling into the problem JP5 tank and drying it out by hand. I am not claustrophobic but by now, a lot was going through my mind and I was bewildered.

Finally, it was over and we got the Duty 'tiff to inspect. We showered and he invited us to the Chiefs' Mess in appreciation. All present thanked us for a job well done with very nice refreshments and by the time we left, we were legless. It was an experience!! I was to meet Kenny "Satch" Salchert about that time too, and we have remained great friends since. He was a member of the ensuing Funeral Guard and in the aftermath, I think they all stayed pissed for their time in Guzz.

After departing Guzz' we made visits to Rotterdam, Zeebrugge, one other port and then to our regular berth at Jetty 0 in Slackers. On our return, it seemed to all of us that it was a "bad exercise." Sailors had died. Two from *Nipigon*, an ET aboard us in *Cape Scott* drowned alongside while one Cloggie was decapitated by a helo rotor aboard the Dutch frigate, *Karl Doorman*. As I say, such incidents are little known, but can you imagine what it would be like in today's communication technology and public awareness? A single death came as a result of the fire aboard the submarine

Chicoutimi and the whole world knew about it. For all who died in that period during the exercises, their remains are still in Europe and rest in a War Cemetery. God luv' 'em!

I never thought much about that time 'til I read what was put together regarding *Nipigon* and the fatal JP5 incident. In the many years that would follow, I became Chief ERA in that very ship but I avoided 12 Mess as much as I could. Go figure.....!!”

Meanwhile, back in the Royal Navy “Wait!”

Naval officers, in their exposure to both their captains and their men, must always maintain a standard of bearing that serves as example of their loyalty to discipline and duty to Queen and country. A popular fable serves as in illustrating that ceremony will always take precedence over reality. Aboard an RN light cruiser alongside a royal dockyard somewhere, ‘Prep’ was up on her mainmast indicating that colours were but five minutes away. The First Lieutenant had taken his position on the bridge to open the navy for the day when he looked up and noticed that someone was hanging from another halyard high above. He became somewhat inquisitive as the moments ticked away nearing 0800 but nevertheless, did not sway from priorities. The white ensign must be raised precisely at 0800. The bos’n’s mate was in proximity and stood by waiting to pipe “the still” at the order. He became very agitated, turned to the First Lieutenant and uttered nervously, “There’s some hand hangin’ off the halyard, Sir!” “Yes. Quite!” sir replied. . . and in a tone that escalated like a G.I. in maintaining attention to this very ceremonious occasion, **“Wait ‘til after colours are completed!”**

“I’ll be first! Now there’s a good Subby.”

More toward reality, there was a time when a flotilla of ships were at anchor in the Spithead off Pompey. They majestically rode with the gentle tide and warm summer breezes and were poised to receive Her Majesty, the “Queen Mother”, by helicopter aboard the senior vessel afloat, HMS *Victorious*. A number of sub-lieutenants were detailed off to take up position throughout the ship in order to visually sight the approach of a gleaming Wessex helicopter and its very royal passenger. No mistakes shall be left to chance. The anxiety of the ‘subbies’ escalated to the extreme

as each of them eagerly spanned the bright skies, all hoping that “I will be the one” to make the sighting first and that the Admiral, the Captain, and the First Lieutenant would surely ask the name of this very keen, observant, and budding officer. Shortly, the distant sound of a rotor could be heard. Then within seconds from a gun sponson positioned just below the island's bridge, blurted a loud boyish and very British accent in ‘capstan drill’ proclamation, **“Sah! Sah! I’ve sighted the Queen Motha’s choppa!”**

“Capstan Drill” leads one into the wrath of young midshipmen and the sub-lieutenants. . . the ‘snotties’, the ‘crabs’, and the ‘warts’, in describing the morbid outgrowth on the youthful face of nature. In the more modern and proverbial. . .with acne’d facial features like a goalie for a dartboard. All youths are they that their unbroken high tone of voice needs maturing. Men and boys would jump with straight legs from a capstan head. . . until the gruffness of voice was attained. The subby in the gun sponson had obviously, never found his way to the capstan aboard *Victorious*.

QHM berates submariners.

With a large dose of personal reluctance, it needs to be told of one of the most derogatory and inconceivable statements ever directed at the “Men of the Trade”. It was done so by a “Keeper of the Harbour” and its derisive intent to this day, remains as a slight by misconception in naval history.

A “Daring” class destroyer was inbound and about to enter Portsmouth Harbour after an eighteen-month deployment in the Far East. “C.in C. Home Fleet” and crowds of families stood on the jetty at the dockyard that lay some distance ahead on her starboard bows. The captain of the destroyer had an onboard medical situation and was unsure of what to do. He sent a signal by flashing light to the Queen’s Harbour Master requesting direction. The signal read; QUOTE I HAVE A CASE OF BERRI BERRI ON BOARD. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT UNQUOTE. QHM looked down the harbour and noted that on her port beam, the destroyer was just passing HMS *Dolphin* and her trots of submarines. With little hesitation, a reply by light from the dockyard tower read, QUOTE GIVE IT TO THE SUBMARINERS. . .THEY’LL DRINK ANYTHING UNQUOTE

Canadians in H.M. Submarines

Before any tales about Canadian submariners should unfold, it is best to describe how these earmarked individuals became involved in an element of the RCN that at the time, were dutifully cast from an anti-submarine navy into one with the opposition. The 26th of November in 1954 marked a day in history for the RCN where a total of nearly 200 officers and men as volunteers were to be trained for duty in submarines. A directive was issued that two officers and 48 men of all ranks drawn from ships and establishments across the country represented the first block draft of personnel that would undergo submarine training in the Royal Navy at H.M.S. Dolphin in the United Kingdom. On completion of training, they were to be assigned to duty in RN submarines, a great number of whom would serve in the newly formed Sixth Submarine Squadron based in Halifax. The squadron's purpose was to provide additional training facilities for the R.C.N.'s anti-submarine vessels, carrier-based air squadrons, and R.C.A.F. maritime air squadrons.

SM6 would at the start, be comprised of H.M. Submarines *Ambush*, *Astute*, and *Alderney* and extend to several other A-Class submarines on a rotational basis as time evolved. By the 1960s, the gradual emergence of more Canadian submarine volunteers provided that as three O-Class submarines were being constructed for Canada's purposes, preparation toward manning the vessels came through the supplementation of Canadians aboard British submarines in squadrons at Portsmouth, Devonport, Scotland, Singapore, Australia, and Malta. Meantime, on Canada's west coast, the former US submarine USS *Burrfish* was re-named HMCS *Grilse* and was to be manned by a completely Canadian crew on Canada's west coast. Following the mid to late 1960's as the three Oberon Class submarines *Ojibwa*, *Onondaga*, and *Okanagan* arrived in Halifax manned by those personnel from RN exchange on the Atlantic coast, a second US submarine (Argonaut) was acquired to replace *Grilse* in the Pacific and was re-named HMCS *Rainbow*.

In January of 1963 in relief, HMS/m *Auriga* prepared and sailed for Canada and the Sixth Submarine Squadron at Halifax. Her captain was LCdr 'Tug' Wilson. Aboard were CPO Brian Cox, chief elec, Mechanician John 'Ted' Toyer better known as "the mankey mech", and ME (1) Jim 'General' Grant who in later years, all transferred to the RCN. 'The mankey mech' was always easily recognizable. He had a rat's nest scruffy beard full of crickets and fleas and ashore, wore nothing on his tunic other than his 'dolphins, dandruff, and his D.S.O. Two Canadians, Lt. Nigel

Frawley, torpedo officer and Petty Officer 2nd class 'Art' Bodden the T.I., were also aboard. Lt. Frawley after going to *Opportune* as navigator, would as a Lieutenant Commander, become commissioning C.O. of HMCS *Okanagan*. The navigator in *Auriga* was Lt. John Coward who later as captain of a destroyer in the Falklands War received the D.S.O., became knighted, and as a Rear-Admiral was appointed Flag Officer Submarines in the 1980's. On retirement from the navy he became Governor of the Channel Islands.

"The traps are out of bounds!"

In one of her early patrols from Halifax, *Auriga* and company had experienced a blockage in her sewage system which resulted in a complete shutdown of the heads and its modest four bowl capacity. The First Lieutenant, the gingerbeer, chief tiff, and Ted Toyer, the mankey mech all mustered into a braindrain in order to come up with a jury rig until permanent repairs could be made good. Finally, it was decided that one of the traps would have to be removed from its seat within the boat and taken somewhere that it could discharge its content external to the pressure hull. Ted, being a very resourceful outside wrecker, soon came up with the idea that as the boat was going to be doing some surface running, he would wrestle the needed-to-be, stainless steel bowl up into the fin and secure it on top of the captain's cabin so that its discharge would gravity feed to sea via somewhere and anywhere within the free-flooding fin. The captain's cabin was a cylindrical compartment of its own that was external to the main pressure hull and positioned in such a way that it formed part of the conning tower with its vertical one hatch access to the bridge or the lower hatch access to the control room in the submarine.

The mankey mech took on this challenge and had nicely secured the bog onto the top of 'father's caboosh'. This seemed to have pleased everyone in satisfying nature's need however, the entire crew became so dependent of that single bowl, that the demand and traffic up the tower and past the skipper's door became hectic. There was a slide type sign arranged in the control room that read "vacant/engaged" as may be the case, along with a controlled issue of an RN pusser's paper supply as one would draw as he 'knotted up' the tower to do his job. Unlike the RCN's offering, this tissue was never considered functionally absorbant. It was quite conspicuous in that on one side, the grade was extremely rough, where the other was smooth and sheen. Everyone in the RN's Andrew agreed that it

was conveniently produced and supplied by the whittlers to service Jack on one side. . . and Jenny on the other.

Later in the day, First Lieutenant, Lt. Cassidy, had arranged his turn to use Ted's brilliant innovation. At the time, a good stern sea was running and because all submarine fins are usually damp and dripping with water, he decided to keep dry by wrapping a towel around his neck along with the only other article of clothing that he had on. . . an oilskin. As he clambered on top of God's cottage and took his seat with the oilskin carefully skirting the bowl, an ever-rising swell of tepid stern sea began to immerse both the bowl and the First Lieutenant. The level rose, but only as high to the restriction offered by the towel wrapped round his neck. The crest of the swell remained as it serged along at the same speed of the submarine and would for several seconds, until it finally ebbed away like a gurgling vacuum, taking nearly all of the flushed contents that filled his oilskin with it.

"The shortest dive in submarine history"

Gus Gardner, an ex-RN 'er who eventually transferred to the RCN tells of the story of how quickly a submarine can really surface. Off Bermuda in the late fifties, HMS/m *Alliance* was uncottered, DIW, and rolling about on the roof waiting for the crosswinds at Kindley to abate so the RCAF 'Argus' could take off and get on with 'cat-and-mouse' exercises. It was a very hot afternoon just after tot and dinner, where everyone on watch below was leaning and sitting and just hanging about until a crackle would come across ship/shore that affirmed the Argus was finally airborne. There was a large number of off-watchmen up on the bridge, tourists if you will, that were taking in the sun and having a smoke and a quiet laugh or two. The C.O. was in his cabin in the fin, and the OOW and lookout seemed to be the only two in the boat that were reasonably alert. Down below, it was hot and muggy and everybody was just existing as the heat from the shutdown engine room wafted through the boat. The outside wrecker was propped up against the diving panel, he too half dozey with tot, humidity, and yawning the boredom of it all, when the OOW's distorted and drawn out voice came down the voicepipe to the helmsman. "Helmsman . . . What's the time?" to which the helmsman who was also slightly out of touch, startledly replied with a holler, "Press the klaxon twice. . . Roger!" The chief of the watch sprang for the button and hit it twice, "A-o-o-o-gah" . . . "A-o-o-o-gah." On the second blast, the wrecker on

the panel pulled the D levers for the main vents, telegraphs went ‘half ahead together-group up, and all the masts went down. The boat was on her way. Within seconds they were dropping into the control room like tennis balls. Pitty-coom, pitty-coom, pitty-coom, pitty-coom, hollering and shouting as they dropped to the deck; “Oo’s the daft fukkin’ twit ‘oo pulled that ‘lark?”

Moments later, the vents were shut in a panic and the boat blew back up again. The story then goes on to remark that the crosswinds at Kindley never did abate that day but it did liven up the afternoon in “Appliance”, a.k a. “Alley-antsy.”

“Paul who?”

The crowd in SM6 were a naive lot at times, but then I suppose if you asked any Canadian who the labour minister was in YewKay, you’d probably get an equally ridiculous reciprocal reply. Paul Hellyer, the infamous defence minister of the sixties has gone down in military history as the man who unified the services and turned us all into ‘greens’. He was aboard *Acheron* on a day trip for familiarity. During the trip he had occasion to walk into the fore ends on a guided tour and with a beaming smile and loudly acclaimed to the compartment occupants, “Hi. I’m Paul Hellyer!”, when one of the fore endees reacted with, “So then. . . what do you do for a livin’, ‘moosh?”

Commodores and Subbies - something in common

About the tipsy killick stoker from *Astute* who was at the *Stadacona* wardroom partaking in an open house, “all ranks” Christmas party invitation. Through the wardroom doors walked a broad-ring Commodore and in the foyer, the submarine’s captain in the reception line helped in greeting the commodore by introducing the killick. The commodore extended his hand with an accompanying “How do you do?” The killick responded, “You looked pretty old for a ‘Subby!”

“Number Two Tube in the Action State!”

Able Seaman “Sticky” Sturgess was an RCN bunting-tosser who sailed in several RN submarines. Sticky had a love for motorbikes, and to learn how to ride one, graduated by starting off with a ‘moped’ . . . the kind with the pedals that you hire for five bucks a day in Bermadoo. When he was in *Sentinel*, the opportunity arose that the Jimmy allowed the crew to take extra kit aboard for a patrol that was going to hit two ‘jolly ports’. Sticky immediately decided that in order to find his way around the burgs’ they were to visit, he would take his transportation with him.

Before they sailed, however, Sticky realized that his moped wouldn’t fit down the ‘fore hatch of the boat and the only way to get round it was to disassemble it into smaller pieces. Carefully he disconnected the wheels, the seat, handlebars, and engine from the frame and soon found that every item would now fit through the hatch. In so doing, this whole evolution came to be a bit of a challenge, but an opportunity for him to benefit in his mechanical skills. For fear that the parts might get lost or damaged, he carefully arranged them into pusser’s gash bags, but space for stowage was still another problem. He went to the ‘scratcher’, P.O. “Jerry” Rudd and asked of the opportunity to stow the parts in the fore ends. He agreed that the request was reasonable and said, “Stow ‘em port side aft so they won’t get in the way.” Sticky did so by carefully placing all the bags in the prescribed corner of the fore ends and hung the frame from an LP air line.

After a few days dived, *Sentinel* was into a slack routine. The Jimmy then decided that it was a good time to ditch gash. As gash ejectors were not fitted in S-boats, the means of disposal would be via a torpedo tube. PO Rudd, and the tubes crew closed up in the fore ends and began to load # 2 tube with several days’ worth of carefully packed gash, to which underneath, were the moped parts. Needless to say, the gash was fired out of No. 2 tube that unknowingly, included Sticky’s bags of moped parts. It was the next day when Sticky paid a visit to the fore ends to see how his extra kit was doing. To his shock, the bags were gone and so was his moped, except for the frame still suspended from the LP line, above the gash stowage area. Jerry became very sad for Sticky so decided to turn to with his tiddley rope-work capabilities. He fashioned a shoulder harness so that Sticky could carry his moped frame when he walked about when they got ashore on their ‘jolly port’ visit.

Cabbage, Cabbage, and more Cabbage

Pony Moore was a three-badged killick stoker who came over from the RN during the 1950's. A bit of a "mess deck lawyer", with him came a lot of sly, dry wit and a little skull-duggery on many more occasions than just once. He spun of the time when he was aboard *Alliance* when running from SM6 in Halifax around about 1957.

As by now and as a reminder, the coxswain has complete control of rations, and the ordering thereof, from C.V.D prior to any departure to sea. Incumbent Coxswain Clements wasn't a bad old geyser and to keep him alert and in good stead now and again, the stokers might like to grade his thoroughness and sufficiency in the task of ordering the vittles. Never leave stores demands carelessly lying around the boat, aware that given the chance, quantities required can easily be distorted and even much out of proportion. Feeding a 65 man-crew per day isn't really tough arithmetic to deal with, and so the figures are otherwise easily manageable.

Lying vulnerably upon a passageway bunk outside the senior rates' mess was a harmless piece of paper that contained the listing of groceries for the next patrol. Pony was meandering by the bunk and had to have a look. Quickly perusing half way down the page, he spotted the requirement for 200 pounds of cabbage. As his penchant for bubble and squeak began to take charge, he read with interest of the groceries that were about to arrive on Jetty 5 the following morning so he decided to get his pencil out. He had added a zero onto the figure, 200. The next morning, two pusser's trucks from C.V.D. appeared on the jetty. One with all of the groceries and the other. . . with a ton of cabbage.

Football and Rugby

During my stint in the Fezz, it wasn't often that we had an opportunity to play a little sport. Among the 7th Submarine Squadron, it appeared that there were some very capable rugby players and it was decided to put a crowd together to play teams from ships in the surface fleet. We never won too many games but it was sure an adventure into the unknown and a reminder that submariners just aren't really in shape. Myself, along with Soapy Watson, and both being Canadian, there seemed to be an impression created as to how accurately and with much spiral-effect this much larger than a regulation-sized Canadian football could be thrown. We were hired on. Soapy because of his speed and aggressiveness became a regular and

I was kind of relegated to spot duty, and frankly, I didn't mind that and having my ears all beat to a pulp.

As a team, we had played *Bulwark*, *Cassandra*, and *Hartland Point*, but then it was time to play H.M.N.Z.S. *Taranaki*, the Kiwi frigate. The Kiwis would always have a ship on station in Singapore, flip-flopping back and forth between *Taranaki* and her sister *Otago*, but when it came time to field a rugby team, you could be assured that the whole opposition consisted of big, black-hairy Maoris.

We were about to commence play one afternoon when the referee, becoming impatient, repeatedly beckoned to our side to line up for the kick-off. **“Ess em Seven . . .Will you please take your positions?”** he continuously appealed several times until the team captain, Coxswain “Malnutrition” Mallows replied loudly and with some ill-ease, **“We ain’t playin’ ‘til that kunt speaks!”**, his finger pointed indicatively at this 6’ 8, 300 pound bearded native with hairy arms and legs like mauls and no doubt hailed from somewhere in the backwoods far from Christchurch.

The “Pets’ Cop”

Along with “Sticky” Sturgess aboard *Sentinel* around 1960, there was another Canadian submariner by the name of “Willy” Waugh. Willy had joined submarines right from day one and relates the time when the captain, LCdr Morrison, a bird watcher and pet lover, brought much esteem to the submarine service because of his warm acts of humanity.

Sentinel was operating in the English Channel near France and was soon to break off from an exercise after one more dive before returning to Portland. Just before she dived, a circling racing pigeon took perch on the boat’s periscope standard. The captain soon realized that the pigeon was obviously tired and had found a comfortable spot to perch and have a rest from his exhausting flight over the English Channel. After a period of time the captain thought that the bird had rested sufficiently and it was now time to dive. The “crowd” on the bridge attempted to whoosh the bird away. . .but he wouldn’t go. Then the captain thought, “We’ll dive very slowly and as the masts go gently under, the bird will fly away!” The boat finally dived and the bird flew off. As the boat came back to periscope depth however, the captain saw that the pigeon was circling the periscope feather. He would just not go away. Captains are good at making decisions and although this one had nothing to do with submarine safety, he quickly surfaced to see what the pigeon would do. When the tower was opened,

the captain had made the right decision. The bird came back to the periscope hood. The captain had re-joined the exercise and needed to get his dive in, so thought that there was only one respectable thing to do. They grappled the bird from his perch atop and took him below. Later, the captain had to send off a message explaining *Sentinel's* erratic activities in



Circled: top left, Willy Waugh, below him, RCN's Ron Hughes. Over the badge, "Pies" Loman

the exercise, added that now, he had a racing pigeon aboard. The next day, there was a group of people stood on the jetty as the boat drew alongside, the captain wondering who they all were. As he stepped ashore, he was introduced to the group known as the "Pets' Cop", a supporting organization of the R.S.P.C.A. who were deeply taken and impressed with the captain's compassions for fur and feathers. They had earlier been secretly notified by one of the boat's fore-endies named "Pies" Loman, so-named for having a passion for pork pies. A few days later, one of Britain's popular newspapers, the "Daily Sketch", was to display a group picture of *Sentinel's* submariners complete with the "Pets' Cop" policeman's

badge logo against the conning tower alongside in Portland.

Missing from the photograph unfortunately was the captain, LCdr Morrison. Customarily when a boat came into harbour for leave and maintenance, one person you'd never see again until the day you sailed the next time was the Captain himself. Such an absence exhibited well of faith and confidence in First Lieutenants and crews. . . throughout the submarine service.

The “Ex-boats”HM Submarines *Explorer* and *Excalibur*

From the past, it often remains enshrouded of the experiences and conspicuous deeds that Canadian lower-deckers have encountered and accomplished perhaps due to the RCN’s limited ideologies in decreeing of those duties and deeds. . .and it is unfortunate that many Canadians including those who were, and are even in the navy today, weren’t and still aren’t, aware of the contribution and in some instances the courage, that emerged through their presence. An example was a young killick sparker by the name of Jerry Sigrist. Jerry volunteered for the RN submarine service at the outset and through those un-sung sparkling years to follow in other submarines, commissioned HMCS/m *Okanagan* at Chatham as the PO Tel.



HMS/m *Excalibur*

Jerry began his submarine career by joining HMS/m *Excalibur* in January of 1959 and the uniqueness of short-lived *Excalibur* and her sister *Explorer*, made them both far apart from any other submarine of the day including the early front-running nuclear submarines.

The “Walter design turbine” takes its beginning from two WW2 captured U boats, 1406 & 1407, which each of these submarines were propelled with engines fuelled with very unstable hydrogen peroxide. U-1406 was handed over to the Americans, where although successful in getting her operational, the concept was quickly abandoned in favour of the fledgling nuclear propulsion system. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy re-named U-1407 and commissioned her as HMS/m *Meteorite*, and they too were successful in getting her to “work”, but “Walter’s” highly explosive peroxide-based fuel had yet to be stabilized and made operationally safe as High-Test Peroxide (HTP). In 1954 and ‘55, S30, HMS/m’s *Explorer* and S40, *Excalibur* were launched respectively. These two experimental submarines were to become the fastest in the world, but the advent and improvement to nuclear submarines quickly rendered them obsolete. Not only was the experiment considerably expensive, but the insistent problem

was the unstable nature of hydrogen peroxide combined with its bulk, a colourless liquid considerably more viscous than water and liable to explode at temperatures above 200 degrees F. Operating an HTP engined submarine was like driving a tank loaded with nitro glycerine across a battlefield. Because of minute oxygen content, the only way to fight a fire was to dilute the HTP with water and stabilize it. Fuel was embarked in large polyethylene bags fitted under the casing, external to the pressure hull. This arrangement constituted safety measures so that the fuel could be quickly diluted with water rendering it harmless in the event of a “spill” or other accident.

Nevertheless, the Royal Navy pressed on with the construction of these two boats (later and warily dubbed “Exploder” and “Excruciator”) so that they could provide training in high speed anti-submarine capability with its surface ships. In addition to turbines, they were also fitted out with a modern version of battery and main motors for use in normal diesel electric propulsion. As only one diesel engine and battery were fitted, a mere dived speed of 6 knots was attained under this condition which subserved an otherwise dived speed of over 30 knots in the turbine mode. The single diesel was fitted in the fore ends and took away from much needed space for living within. The term, “hot bunking”, was never more utilized than it was in the “Ex-boats.”

As Jerry joined *Excalibur*, he was assigned as the senior radio operator. That in itself was a major responsibility while already aboard were three or four other Canadians, lending further credence to their obscurity. By December, *Excalibur* entered refit at Barrow-In-Furness. Unlike the rest of the crew, and because of his familiarity with these experimental craft, Jerry ended up joining *Explorer* who had just re-commissioned and was destined for work ups in Faslane. He would remain there until the demise of the HTP boats which came late in 1961 while being promoted to petty officer earlier that year.

Jerry relates that while departing from Copenhagen following an R&R visit, a dead body was sighted in the water. After it was reported, it was stated that this was a bad omen which soon after, proved to grimly unfold. By nature of the HTP, *Excalibur* was not permitted to enter such harbours with such a fuel aboard, so was relegated to diesel electric propulsion. Shortly after the discovery, the diesel engine blew a piston and they were completely broken down. They then headed to nearby Gothenburg by main motors without battery charging capability and then wait for ten days until spare parts and/or a tug would appear to tow them back to Scotland. It was a bleak experience for as their visit was unexpected, the shore

authorities relegated *Excalibur* to a jetty far removed from civilization and naturally, the entire crew “broke” from “spending it all” in Copers’.

The next year, *Explorer* had the occasion to exercise with a ship off Campbelltown in Scotland. Running on the turbines was known as “fizzing” and the process emitted a great deal of carbon monoxide...normally dispensed harmlessly within sea water when dived. On this day, *Explorer* was “fizzing” on the surface, while experiencing extremely calm seas. Under these conditions, the captain decided to charge the battery by running the diesel as well as the turbines. The ensuing carbon monoxide was now filling the air, the same air that the diesel was sucking back into the boat via the “opened” conning tower hatch.

CO2 readings within the boat quickly escalated to a dangerous level so handsomely, the boat stopped DIW and opened all hatches to ventilate. While the crew escaped to the casing, many passed out. After Jerry had passed a signal to the accompanying ship about their dilemma, he was able to exit the conning tower with a collapsed mess mate on his shoulders. When Jerry reached the fresh air, he became very dizzy and had to fight for air for several minutes. The boat then proceeded into Campbelltown with several crew lying on the casing covered with blankets. They were all transferred to hospital and fortunately, all survived. Following a board of inquiry, it was learnt that had that exposure lasted for a short time thereafter, it would have been fatal.

Jerry today is on the National Executive of the Royal Canadian Naval Association, a member of the South Shore Naval Association and the Submariners Association of Canada. He resides in Mahone Bay N.S. He claims that there was as many as a dozen or so RCN ratings who sailed in the “Ex-boats” through their short lifetime. But he also modestly adds that he was the only one of them that sailed in both, and believes he spent more time in them than any submariner. . . in either navy.

The mail. . .really did go through!

Meanwhile, upon that vast ocean on the other side of the world, there comes a true tale that during the 1950’s, epitomizes a once very reliable and persevering Canadian Postal Service. It is modestly conveyed by a then, killick sparker named Stu Hall who one night over 50 years later, obscurely appeared at a Submariners Association meeting with what appeared to be a very, very old and very real coconut under his arm.

Stu had joined the submarine service on the first block draft to the R.N and interestingly, was aboard the submarine tender HMS *Maidstone* in Portland England at the time of the tragic 1955 alongside explosion and sinking of HMS/m *Sidon*. The mishap took the lives of 13 crewmembers, one of whom was RCN submariner PO2 Laverne McLeod.

In January of the preceding year, Stu was aboard HMCS *Haida*, enroute to Korea and like most naval vessels on their westbound transits, stopped in Pearl Harbor for a brief few days for fuel, stores, and a run ashore. Stu had always been fascinated with the exoticism, warm white beaches, and swaying palms of Polynesian countries and thought that he'd share his experiences in somehow including his father in partaking of his son's adventures in far-off places. Stu came from a little Ontario town known as Buckhorn, where mom and dad were still at home and incessantly dependent upon regular mail from their dear son. Stu was strolling along one of the Hawaiian beaches when he happened upon a recently fallen coconut. He picked it up and decided to take it back aboard ship. The next day, he wasn't too sure what to do with it and knowing that it was his turn to write a letter home, he instead decided to pull a dare and chuck it in one of the *Haida's* Canada bound mail bags. Surely, he thought, this would save the time it would take to fill in all the blank areas of those dreaded Canadian Armed Services letter forms that took sixteen folds, no enclosures, and the danger of writing upon the gummed surfaces of the sealing arrangements. Who invented them things anyways? Stu got out his white ink kit-marking pen, and after sticking on a couple of stamps that totalled just 24 Canadian pennies. . .mailed it. He was confident that this would let his dad know that his son was at least somewhere in the tropics, somewhere in the world, and that everything was fine and dandy. Well as a result, and in the year 2006 over 50 years later, not only did it speak well of the quality of ink in kit-marking pens. . .the coconut still clearly read:

Mr. Bruce Hall

Buckhorn, Ontario

Canada

. . .and on the other side of this hard-shelled produce from a palm tree, is Stu's naval address:

LSCR S. Hall

HMCS Haida

CNPO 5076, Victoria, B.C.

One can only imagine a dude of a Buckhorn postman in 1954 saying, "What in the hell next?" as he ambled up the front path of Mr. &

Mrs.Hall's residence conveying the successfully-arrived goods that then bore no street address or a futuristic postal code. Today, the ovate brown outer shell is still intact and should the holder shake it violently, the coconut can be heard still rolling around. Last but not least, but accompanying a remaining mutilated and illegible stamp, is a piece of tape where once was attached, a customs clearance sticker. "What an artefact for a naval museum!"

Gabby and the sea-goin' donkey

During the early 1960's, long-serving submariner, Brian Fisher was a young budding Sub-Lieutenant aboard the frigate *Sussexvale*. . . 4th Escort Squadron on the west coast. While paying a port visit to Mazatlan in Mexico, Brian was the 2nd duty officer in *Sussexvale*, secured between *Yukon*, and *New Glasgow* outboard. Late in the evening, a notorious three-badged and garbled up QM "Gabby" Hayes, decided to bring a donkey back on board. Sub-Lieutenant Fisher observed in awe on how this stubborn creature being so skillfully reined and led by Gabby, managed to come across *Yukon's* brow and now approaching *Sussexvale's* with little difficulty. Brian, much aware of his position of responsibility and authority just had to apply some form of challenge. "Able Seaman Hayes. . .where ya goin' with that donkey?" Gabby paused in surprise of the obvious and replied, "Takin' him aboard sir! What's it look like?" Brian, being very concerned for the well-being of this animal then asked, "What's he goin' to eat?" Gabby's intentions were honourable and forward thinking and made the assuring statement, "Well, there's lots of food in the galley sir, ain't there?" Brian, still a little unsure then inquired, "Where's he gonna sleep?" "Got it all worked out sir. The laundry flats!" replied Gabby. Beyond that response, Brian then realized of the potential of an on board dilemma and quickly kindled his last question in a last ditch effort in persuading Gabby, with the other ass, to do about turns and march back ashore. "What about the smell?" Brian asked with a chuckle. Gabby was quick to reply with assurance, "He won't mind sir!"

A crusty ole uniform

Although not nearly apparent today, one of the obstacles when proceeding to or arriving from sea on the ship's upper deck as cable party

or the casing party in submarines, is that all hands were required to “turn to” in dress uniform. The need for a display of efficiency and discipline was a long standing naval tradition where harbour movements were deemed by their lordships as ceremonial events and if anyone was seen to be exposed “on the uppers” in other than the “rig of the rag” as piped, meant severe doom to the intruder. And with toiling in an environment of the elements, tarred oily lines, salt, rust, grease, paint and all of those other seamen type things that go on in the world of seamanship, the condition of the work-dress uniform had deteriorated most rapidly. A very live example shared credence to the fact at the fate of our Brian Fisher once more. Some years later in 1966 as Lt. Brian Fisher had volunteered for submarines, found himself as the casing officer aboard HMS/m *Opossum* on a trip into the Grecian port of Corfu. This was not a bright warm and glorious day that one usually envisions in the country of Greece but instead, the rains fell greater than the rate of a Singapore monsoon. It was pouring.

The boat was directed by the local harbour master to do a Mediterranean berthing, and secure ‘stern on’, to the receiving jetty. The casing party was turned out in uniform work dress, which in submarines substituted the jumper with the traditional wooly-pully jersey. Not so for Brian the casing officer, as he was to provide a display of efficiency and discipline as inferred. Add that this time, his uniform jacket was not only permeated with the fodder derived and soaking wet throughout, but also casing grease and great doses of diesel fuel from sea time exposure. He would soon be due for an exchange when back in *Dolphin* but for the time being, the submarine must get secured and doubled-up as quickly and efficiently as possible.

On the jetty one could faintly see through the sheets of rain, an RN commander sporting a monicle no less, and reasonably protected from the downpour with the aid of a wanchai burberry. He would be the representative liaison officer on a jammy draft stationed in Corfu as Brian was later to discover. Well by the time the accommodation hatch had finally been opened and the crew fell out from “Harbour Stations”, he proceeded below to report the secured state of the submarine to the First Lieutenant, who by now would surely be in the wardroom having “gin & tonics” all round with the captain, the resident three-ringer, and the rest of the bunhouse. He cast the wardroom curtain to one side and entered the crowded compartment now standing in a ring of rainwater. Then he became puzzled as he felt something slipping down his left arm. Everyone gazed at him in amazement. To look at his arm to now realize that the stitches had come away and the entire sleeve dropped to the deck, two

rings and all. Then astonishingly, the other sleeve came slithering down to flop on the deck as well. The commander's monicle popped out while the skipper declared, "Give that man a large gin!"

Losin' your hook, back to gens'. . .the pain of it all!

Fred "Glutpiece" Glover, an ABWU, volunteered for submarines in 1965 and seemed to adjust to this new life in many more ways than just going to sea. He enjoyed the YewKay, everybody in it, and especially the RN and the submarine service. It didn't take long for him to meet a wee lass from Scotland, to marry a short time later and eventually bring her home to Canada several years later. But there was a significant incident that nearly short-lived his time in submarines. Because of the people, the opportunity, and "the need" that surrounded him, Fred managed to escape the pangs of reverting as a skimmer and remain in submarines for the rest of his naval career.

Fred was a brand new fore endee aboard *Opportune* running from the Pompey Squadron at Gosport. As the boat was to enter refit at Guzz' dockyard, he was shoved ashore into Spare Crew to await a draft to another running boat in the squadron. While he got ashore one night, having a few wets in a pub in Commercial Rd. in Portsmouth, he mouthed himself off into a big punch-up with some bootnecks. In the course of battle, mirrors, windows, and furniture got damaged and civilian charges were laid. The findings eventually found Fred up on the carpet in 'Electric Lemonade' in *Dolphin*. To much dismay, his hook was taken away with the accompanying direction that he was to return to the RCN and general service. Fred accepted that losing his hook was reasonable and he could live with that, but his keen indulgence had become rapidly entrenched as a submariner and the life therein, that he wanted nothing to do with ships, except be aboard the underwater machinery that sunk them. He reached for a request form and slapped in. It would read: **".....Request to be considered to remain in submarines?"** After the Commander had reviewed Fred's other background, he soon came to realize that his accomplishments and diligence in submarines were certainly worthy of consideration. The answer would be "Yes!", but it would come at a cost for which Fred for the time being, would not be aware. In losing his hook, he felt that his debt to naval society had been justified while the Commander reasoned that there just might be room for Fred to stay in the environment that he obviously wanted to cling to. "Right!" the

Commander concluded, “Master-at-Arms? You will contact FADO drafting to see if a sea-going “draft” can be arranged for Able Seaman Glover.”

While Fred remained standing at the “Ho” in the MAA’s office, Master would return sometime later with the startling, but very good news. “Roight Glova’. Pack yore bags. . . ‘ere’s a rail warrant for Helensborough. Get on the first train outta Pompey and report to the inboard Coxswain aboard *Maidstone* in Faslane. ‘E’s waitin’ for ya!” Fred glowered and thought, “I ain’t goin’ home! I’m still in boats” The MAA then said, “An by the look on yore face “Canada”, don’t you get too excited. Get yore awse over to see Peanuts in drafting. . .get yore draft chit and I expect ‘e’s got uvva’ things on his mind as well.” Fred did so and while the draft chit was being processed, a 40 oz.bottle from his NAAFI issue was produced and unofficially passed at the suggestion of Peanuts, the Drafty. . .for safe keeping and of course, services rendered.

Overjoyed Able Seaman Fred Glover arrived aboard *Maidstone* well past midnight the following day and reported to the inboard coxswain as he was told to do. Ironically, the coxswain’s name was long-time serving submariner, CPO Neville ‘Darkie’ Glover, who immediately took Fred under his wing. To find now that he was to board a waiting duty boat to take him across the Gareloch to AFD 58, a staunch token of gratitude was once again suggested as he presented the coxswain with a carton of wine-soaked, rum dipped Old Port cigars, about all that was left of his NAAFI issue. As the duty boat approached the floating dock, it was now clear that alongside was the singled-up, battery charging P-boat *Walrus*, obviously getting ready to sail. Fred was to discover that she was to do so at 0600, in the darkness, and only 4 hours’ time away.

By 0800, with the boat now dived and on the watch, Fred, shivering from the cold, found himself on watch at the helmsman’s position. The First Lieutenant sauntered into the control room and paused while glaring at Fred. “So . . .you must be Able Seaman Glover. Welcome aboard.” he said. “Thank you, sir. . .glad to be here sir!” as Fred mirthfully responded with chattering teeth. And then with a grin the Jimmy declared, “We are heading north under the ice on a 10-week sneakie. I hope you’ve brought some warm clothing with you!” Fred hadn’t, in suddenly realizing he was on a punishment draft.

How to wake up in a hurry

Then moving ahead to soon after *Onondaga* commissioned in 1967, the submarine was dived, “shut off for deep”, and in the “ultra-zonk” state. There was just the odd red light here and there and for the few watchkeepers that were up and on watch, the boat was in a hush state and all that could be heard was the odd ripple of water through the pressure hull and an occasional “woosh” of oil pressure in the ‘after planes’ ram. Malcolm Stocking was the after ends watchkeeper, alone as usual and had little to do except drink coffee, stay awake, and not make any noise. They weren’t even wanting to fire the “under-wunder gun”, the S.S.E. He became very bored and decided to do something to occupy his mind and have a little fun. “Glut-piece” was sound asleep in his pit in the ‘deep six’. The ventilation was already off, the lighting very low. Looking around the mess, Malcolm carefully broke out the top half of a ‘yellow peril’ suit and pulled the hood over his head. He then put on a set of safety goggles and a nose clip. He finished off by drawing taut on the hood looking much like he was ready to make an ascent through the escape tower. Then, to make it even eerier, he opened a tap in the after ends sink to get the effect of running water. In a hush, he moved aft into the ‘deep six’ and shone a red flashlight vertically up the front of his face to get those jack o’ lantern highlights and shadows. He turned to Fred in the top pit and touched his shoulder. Fred rolled over and through opening eyes said, “Wadya want?” Malcolm simply asked in a whisper, “Ya’ comin’?” Fred, in a start, thumped his head on the torpedo handling I-beam only inches above him and soared out of his pit, while his mattress, pillow, and skin-yarns fell to the deck as he ‘turned out’ in desperation.

Fred as the Coxswain.

Many years would pass and Fred was still in submarines. By now a Petty Officer, he was filling in for the Coxswain, and was straightening out some information on some of the crew. Fred was always alert to maintaining humour in everything he said and did and quite often as a result, things got overwhelming and would not get full attention. Fred came across a problem with a couple of surnames, trying to work out who was who on a duty watch list. LS “Collie” Vale was a sonar rate in the boat and LS “Roger” Vail, his antonymous counterpart, was a stoker. Sometimes Roger would reply to questions by not really paying attention

to the accuracy of his answer but not for public consumption, Fred was often the same. One day alongside, Fred noticed Roger just going by the mess door in the passageway. From his roost in the mess, Fred asked briskly, **“Vail! What’s your last name?”** He replied loudly. . . **“Roger!”** As quickly as Roger Vail co-operated with his reply, Fred said, **“Thanks Vail.”**

Submarines Are So Unceremonious

Apart from being proper, submariners have a way of jury-rigging and interpreting the BRCN's and pubs so that as long as marks of respect and drill for ceremony are conducted in a seamanlike manner, how the job discretely gets done is another matter. The mammoth ‘carrier, HMS *Eagle*, was the senior ship afloat on the Far East Station in 1965. On a serene Sunday evening, *Alliance* was in AFD 10, a floating dock moored directly astern of *Eagle*’s imposing girth. Above, on her flight deck at the ensign staff, was probably the largest white ensign the Royal Navy had on inventory. Her oversized Sunday ceremonial bunting proudly and lazily unfurling in the evening's spurts of breeze made our little one-breadth White Ensign on a broom handle look like a fathom marker on a lead-line.

From high above on her obscured flight deck from the tubs and tubas of the bootneck band, came the strains of “The Day Thou Gavest Lord, Hast Ended.” It was but moments to: “Sunset, sir!”. . . “Make it so!” an indication that shortly, colours throughout ‘ships in harbour’ would be lowered in unison, and the navy would be “closed for the day.”

The OOD in *Alliance*, went into a panic thinking that unless we do this right, some senior ‘three-ringer’ aboard *Eagle* will surely spot a regal discourtesy that might emit from this little high and dry submarine parked but a few yards away. “Quick Brown!” said sir. “Get up to the bridge and remove the broom handle from the hole it’s in! Do it cleverly so nobody sees what you’re doing!” Up to the bridge I went while the OOD took position on the casing to face aft and ‘chop one off’. Bunts’, on *Eagle*’s ensign staff, looked down and saw me and quickly realized the situation. Finally. The bootnecks had come to the strains of “The Queen.” At the right time, I saw a discreet ‘thumbs up’. I lifted the broom handle out of its’ hole on the top of the fin and smartly placed it in a corner that was out of sight and out of the way. I returned the thumbs up with a pinky/index spread of the fingers. . . the signal to, “Come round for a wet tomorrow.” He did.

“Where’s the Captain?”

The helmsman in a submarine is often caught in a crossroads of voicepipe information that flies from the bridge to the captain, or from the plot to the bridge, or from somebody wanting to either go up to the bridge or come down to the control room, that they often get caught up in the reality of what is to be said or what is to be done. And often when riders are aboard, no one else other than the Jimmy and the Grocer, really knows who’s who among the senior crowd that might be aboard for an enjoyable day at sea.

During a passage into the Clyde Estuary, a senior destroyer was about to pass down a submarine’s port side. The OOW who was in a frenzy, (realizing the destroyer was probably carrying a ‘three’ or ‘four-ringed’ skipper) began to think of marks of respect as only he and the lookout were closed up. Unlike ships, submarines are often ill-prepared for ceremonial occasions in that headwear for passing a hand salute, a bosn’s pipe, and somebody to blow it, are frequently ignored as a priority in conserving space and limiting necessities upon a very small bridge platform. The officer hurriedly passed on the voicepipe, “Control room, ‘bridge! Cap ‘n pipe to the bridge at the rush!” The helmsman pulled his ear to the lower end of the voicepipe and reciprocated with, “Roger, sir! Permission to make the pipe?” “Yes please!” came the anxious reply. Seconds later throughout the boat as well as from the bridge speaker came the hurried appeal, **“Captain Pipe is required on the bridge at the rush!”**

The Capstan, the Windlass, and the Whistle.

Supernumerary individuals often pass information to the OOW via the helmsman that is crucial to the operation of the boat, and sometimes a little wit can really bring out the truth about submariners and how much they really think they know their submarine. One can imagine the intense activity within the control room and the passing of orders and reports when preparing to back out from a jetty at Harbour Stations. The hydraulically operated capstan and windlass situated on the fore casing are bits of equipment that are paramount for line handling when preparing to cast off or if the need should arise in an emergency, “let go the anchor.” In rendering them operable, a copious supply of hydraulic oil under pressure is needed . . .and so that Pascal’s law and Bernoulli’s principle rigidly apply in the world of ‘fluid dynamics’, a return routing of spent hydraulic

pressure is necessitated following the capstan's 'paying out' and 'hauling in' demands for the head ropes and spring lines. Now that the submarine is backing astern and clear of the jetty, three short blasts from the air-operated whistle is sounded to alert all passing and approaching vessels. High pressure air, once having dutifully performed of course, shall then equalize and regenerate back into the common atmosphere.

So it goes that in order to allow for these functions of ship handling and navigation, the outside wrecker might creep up to the side of the helmsman and sharply declare, "Tell the bridge. . . Pressure and return opened up to the whistle!" Then it follows. . . "Bridge sir! Pressure and return opened up to the whistle." From the bridge. . . "Roger your pressure and return to the whistle." And then it really strikes home of "know your boat" by both, the helmsman as well as the Officer of the Watch. Thus, there needs to be some relief in sight for the poor ole helmsman. Verbal activities on the voicepipe do often subside in submarines. For example, while waiting on the surface for the next exercise to commence, he'll sooth his rancour with a taunting desire to see if the OOW is really paying attention to the exactness of his reports. Because of wet weather, it is natural that anyone on the bridge might consider the use of an oilskin to ward off getting soaked. The helmsman might inquire in startling tone, "Bridge. . . control room! One hand to the fridge with a bearskin?" or at other times, the OOW might wish to know of the coxswain's whereabouts. "Control room. . . bridge. . . Is the coxswain in the control room?" Negative. . . he's in the fridge gettin' hard sir!!" Now all this goes to show that officers on bridges seldom pay attention to that exactness. It's as truthful of the story I once read about where within, a bunting tosser on an S-boat had an additional duty on the bridge. To affirm that whatever shaft revolutions orders were passed down, he was to peer aft and note that the precision order, "Slow ahead port, half astern starboard." was what the propellers were actually doing. Dryly, he would report, "Both propellers dropped off sir!" The reply from the OOW, "Roger, both propellers."

A lady of luck aboard?

One day, the captain's wife, entering the boat through the forward loading hatch, was suddenly anxious to climb back up. Her husband, resisting her effort from behind with hands and her shoulders said, "It's alright dear. Keep going!" not knowing that she had confronted a naked

submariner taking a shower-each foot in a bucket of water, pouring a third over himself.

“Sinking ‘greyhounds’ is better than sex!”

One of the Brit’ P-boats from 3rd Division (North) was hot and heavy into doing attacks on a frigate in the western approaches to the Clyde’. After several runs, the captain had finally scored an exercise hit and the greyhound was deemed as sunk. He was jubilant of himself and exceptionally pleased with the efforts of the scrupulous attack team who as well, had been closed up at their stations in the control room for nearly two hours. Everyone revelled in their team contribution and as the captain completed a last ‘all round look’ through the attack periscope, he ordered the submarine to go deep as the periscope finally hissed to its fully lowered position. He turned to his First Lieutenant with a beaming smile while satisfyingly exclaiming, “Number One. . .that was better than sex!”

A few days later, the submarine went into a leave and maintenance period. During the month alongside, there was to be a ship’s dance organized where all of the crew and the wives and sweethearts would attend. Among this joyous crowd that evening was the ‘outside killick stoker’ who, on the day of the attack on the frigate, had manned the mast control levers, highlighted by his skilful response to the frequent and critical requirements for the attack periscope orders from the captain. Now more relaxed, and being only a few feet away when the captain passed the order to go deep, he had clearly heard his remark aimed at the First Lieutenant.

During the dance, the killick, who was now smartly turned out in his ‘collar and gold badges’, thought it might be a nice gesture to ask of the captain’s wife for a dance. He did. . .

and as they swirled out onto the dance floor, a mild social discussion began after brief introductions. “Luv’ly evening missus! Enjoyin’ yerself then? Good band, innit?” the killick assured while her reply came back in very posh grace, “Why yes of course I am. I think this is a lovely dawnce! The band is very good as well!” It then came to pass that brief, but more meaningful exchanges ensued as the music played on. After the set had completed, all couples broke off and returned to their respective seats. The captain’s wife, unlike others, headed to her table and her husband. . .and very evident at ‘full grouped up at 300 revs’. When she arrived, she briskly and loudly declared, **“James. . .we are going home!”**

Biff and the Bell

By 1987, the R.N.'s *Upholder* Class submarines were under construction and would relieve the P & O class boats as they in turn began to slowly disappear from service. As her time was also drawing near, submarine *Opossum* was running from the Pompey squadron at HMS *Dolphin*.

Geographically, H.M. Dockyard in Portsmouth is situated across the harbour from Gosport and Dolphin. Aboard *Opossum* was a young and budding, brand-new-in-submarines, junior stoker named "Biff" Mills. Young Biffy was not really the sharpest knife in the drawer and finding useful employment around the boat because of his limited abilities became a cumbersome difficulty for long-serving Chief Stoker "Pony" Moore. As was his painstaking daily duty, this time Pony gave him a job that would give him a little orientation with the Dockyard, taking a P.A.S. boat to get there, while increasing his familiarity with the naval stores system. Biffy was always willing to please and as usual, he was determined to do his utmost best for Chief Stoker Moore.

Pony went aft and found Biff leaning on the donk shop desk in the engine room one morning. He said, "Ah! There you are. C'mon Biff!" as he led him up top on to the casing toward the opened fin door. And like all submarines alongside, the sacred ship's bell is shipped to its davit on the fin structure just above it. Pony said to young Biff, "Now then! Pay close attention Biffy. I got a job for you with the ship's bell that means you have to go over to Dockyard stores over in Pompey yard. You shall take the P.A.S. boat over there from *Dolphin* Pierhead and I believe there's one leaving in about a half-hour, so be on it." Young stoker Mills looked at the chief, smiling that he would promise to follow his instructions right to the letter. "Right Chief. Got it! Then what?" he affirmed and eagerly asked. "The bell has a defect and I want it sorted out today." Pony clearly pointed out. The chief then grasped the bell clapper in such a way that his forefinger was curled around the clapper ball, then swung it gently toward until it emitted with a "**ding.**" Then he swung it to the opposite direction while his hidden finger dampened an expected "**dong.**" Pony then demonstrated this several times to Biff as repeated "dings" would emanate, but strangely enough, no "dongs." "Ya' see Biff. The bell has a "ding" . . . but no "dong." That's the problem!" he explained while continuing with the demonstration. "Now then . . .", he said. "Fill out a stores demand voucher and like a good lad, go get a bell that has a "ding" . . . as well as a "dong."

Young stoker Biff Mills filled out the stores demand, took the P.A.S. boat to the yard and was gone for six hours desperately trying to convince the multitudes of Stores Assistants that *Opossum*'s bell would "ding" . . .but wouldn't "dong". . .was defective . . .and he wanted a new one. He didn't succeed.

"Buckwheat" Harris - a Leading Steward

Buckwheat Harris, the underwater butler, was notorious and very well known in the submarine service, and especially among inhabitants of wardrooms. Being the only steward aboard, he maintained with confidence that he was placed aboard Her Majesty's Submarines for the sole purpose of looking after "Father", and there is much credence to the fact. He was a loveable rogue, and a character of characters among submariners. He was probably best known for his antics, but above all for his loyalty and dedication as Captain's steward to his many Commanding Officers who would amiably agree. The rest of the wardroom officers wouldn't, insofar as their own steward-assisted domestic keeping was concerned.

Aboard HMS/m *Tactician* in SM4, the Aussie Squadron, Buckwheat and his oppo, Danny Rasmussen the cook, were at loggerheads with the wardroom, and decided to go on the loose. Time had passed and Buckwheat had surrendered himself at the captain's plea. The penance for his brief trip "over the wall" was that he would be sent back to YewKay. . .and general service. Buckwheat did so aboard a P&O liner which was a very nice way to travel, and then reported to Dolphin Blockhouse for disposal to the surface fleet. Three more weeks had passed when a pipe shrilled throughout the lanes and buildings of HMS *Dolphin*. "D'ya hear there! . . . Leadin' Steward 'Arris. . .report to the Mawster-at-Awms, Alecto Colinade!" Our Buckwheat heard the pipe and trundled off to Alecto' in somewhat of an expectant quandary. On arrival at the MAA's office, "Master" thrust a signal into his hand and said with a hidden smirk, "'Arris! Read this lot!' He unfolded the message and noted that it was from submarine "Tactician" to "Dolphin" . . .Confidential. . . for Leading Steward Harris. It read simply: **QUOTE WE KNOW WHAT IT IS . . .WHERE IS IT? UNQUOTE**

Buckwheat, in his battle with the decision to return to gens', had inserted a nice-sized Spithead Pheasant (kipper) inside the hollow pedestal supporting the wardroom table. And all the while as Buckwheat was sailing home aboard a P&O in a lengthy passage, *Tactician* had been

equally at sea and dived, in warm tropical waters . . . often in ultra-quiet routine with machinery shut down, that invariably includes ventilation.

Buckwheat was visibly notorious as well. Each and every time he would proceed ashore in uniform, he would always wear his burberry as a cape, buttoned from the top only and not inserting his arms into the sleeves. This was not only his trademark, but it added to the means of transporting cargo. In one case, when he was aboard *Seneschal*, he very much took to a fine-tailored brown suit that the captain owned. Off ashore, went Buckwheat in his flowing cape where underneath, he was garbed in the skipper's finest haberdashery.

Near the same time aboard the depot ship *Maidstone* in Faslane, Scotland, the wardrooms, of all submarines alongside, decided to have a formal dinner in the wardroom. Stewards from each of the submarines manned the pantry that night in providing service to the uniformed diners that surrounded a table of candle-lit starched linen and the finest of silverware. Dinner progressed smoothly into the evening and while the plates and utensils from the main entree were removed by the stewards to the scullery, dessert was prepared for serving. Moments later, the servery hatch flew open and Buckwheat stuck his head out grasping at the diners' attention with **"Oo's fer fukkin' duff then??"**

On another occasion, a submarine's First Lieutenant decided that for the next patrol, the wardroom would have a special Sunday dinner at 300 feet. Buckwheat was to acquire a brace of frozen rabbits prior to sailing in order that he and the chef could serve up rabbit pie as the main course. Buckwheat became a little upset at having to skin and clean the rabbits and also felt disturbed that the bunhouse ought to be exercising the same menu as the rest of the crew. It was dinnertime on the Sunday and glasses of sherry had been drunk and cleared from the wardroom table. It was now time for the officers to enjoy their very special dinner. Buckwheat strode through the wardroom door curtain and thrust two pie pans upon the table with the accompanying greeting, **"Ere's yer fukkin' rabbit pies!"** Carefully laid out on the pans from right out of the oven were clacker covered pies with long ears protruding at one end and cottontails at the other.

Still in another boat, Buckwheat was challenged by the Cox'n while he was going ashore. **"What's in the bottle, Steward?"** **"Cough syrup 'swain. . . like it says on the bottle!"** Despite the label of course, it was pusser's rum. **"You can't always believe a label Steward. I'll take it and you thank yourself lucky not to have a fifty-pound blow under yer bonnet."** (punishment and fine) A few days later at sea, the senior rates' messman

was serving duff to among others, the Cox'n. He opened a tin of pears and proceeded to dish out. . .tomatoes, into the custard! Grinning from ear to ear, Buckwheat's face appeared around the mess curtain. . . "You can't always believe a label, 'swain!" Buckwheat had methodically steamed off and re-glued the labels down in tanky's store.

But returning to Oz', there was a time when he was directed to see a psychiatrist. He did, and then went to sleep on the couch. He came away with a piece of parchment that certified him as being sane, which he would happily produce at anyone's request.

Between Commander SM4 and the squadron engineer, there were four young children, and Buckwheat got detailed off to baby-sit them for which Buckwheat was not too pleased about. When the two commanders and their wives returned from their night out, the children were running around the front room in circles. The bewildered parents were quite amazed by Buckwheat's tutoring, as the children, beaming with smiles and puffing with gleeful exhaustion, were just at the passage of the Lobster Song's, **"We hit it on the back . . . We hit on the side. We hit the fukkin' lobster, till the bawstard died!"**

And as often as Buckwheat was hauled up on the carpet with bonnet in hand, he was issued yet another, fine and stoppage of tot for punishment. As the captain passed his judgement, Buckwheat hauled out his wallet and slapped his 25 pound fine on the table, while inquiring, "How much more sir, so I can keep me tot?"

Waiting for the boat

The little ports on the west coast of Scotland like Campbeltown, Rothesay, Arrochar, Inveraray, and others, have been havens for submarine operations for years. And many of their small single-wharfed harbour inlets are typical of each other in that often, there is insufficient keel depth to go alongside. As an alternative, a buoy or two is moored some distance from the wharves for boats to secure to for their brief stopovers, or in some cases, the transfer of personnel, for which the buoy at Rothesay became very useful on one foggy day.

Keith "Brum" Tovey had transferred to the Canadian navy from the RN as a Chief ERA much later in his naval career. Years before when Brum was a killick stoker, he was aboard HMS/m *Porpoise* running in the Clyde areas. He was coming off leave from Birmingham in England to join the boat when to his dismay, she had sailed from Faslane earlier in the day.

Alongside however, was HMS *Leander*, a greyhound frigate that was to shortly leave and later, rendezvous with *Porpoise* at nearby Rothesay harbour. Brum went aboard and identified himself to the first lieutenant who immediately agreed that they would take him along and transfer him. *Leander* eventually arrived in the harbour approaches to find that *Porpoise* was a little adrift but would appear in a very short time. The frigate edged to the buoy that *Porpoise* would later secure to. Brum was transferred onto the buoy, then the frigate quietly slid astern disappearing quickly into the fog like the closing of a book. As she did so it suddenly turned eerily quiet, he standing erect on top of the buoy with ‘steamin’ gear’ in hand. Brum expected that in only a few short minutes, *Porpoise* would arrive and it wouldn’t be long before he was back aboard and down below where he belonged. Well, the boat didn’t appear in just a few short minutes and as a half an hour or so had gone by, Brum was startled by the wing-flapping and banshee-scream of a shithawk making a two-point landing on the opposite end of the buoy. Brum quickly dubbed his new acquaintance “Fred”, and at least in helping to pass the time, he now had someone to talk to.

Brum and Fred were to chat for nearly an hour until finally, a silhouette of a submarine’s bows and an odour of diesel oil slowly emerged through the mist. From the cable party on the fore-casing could be heard the comment, “Well I’m blowed! Look. Somebody’s standin’ on the buoy!” and as binoculars strained from the bridge, a mysterious dark-grey image emerged of what looked like a lone matelot standing erect with ‘steaming gear’ in hand . . . on a buoy, . . . and talking to a shite-hawk. Now within feet of the buoy, it became true to disbelieving eyes that it was. Fred became discouraged and flew away while the scratcher and casing officer were chuffed. There would be no need for a “buoy-jumper to shackle on.”

George Sullivan

A very early product of the RCN’s submarine school in 1970, came a big lad by the name of Able Seaman George “Lerch” Sullivan (collision - RFA *Grey Rover*) . . . who because he was so big, had a slicked-back hair do and square head resembled the TV sitcom figure. George was a very intelligent and quick-witted personality. He was fun to be around, hardworking, and always had time to find humour and ‘take the mickey’ in any situation. He would remain in submarines for the bulk of his career and go on to become a Chief 1st class before he ever faded from “the

Trade.” George was to become a brilliant and career submariner who made it his business to get familiar with a lot more than he was required to know, not only in submarines, but with everything around him that included people. His brand of humour fitted right in and I was anxious for him to relate some of his experiences. George iterated . . .

Know Your Submarine

“I was doing my hydraulic system walk-through with a certain P2 stoker who, down in the AMS, was impressed to no end that a dibby-dab not only knew the systems well, but also knew the PSI operating range, the GPM output, and running RPM of both hydraulic pumps. The P2 didn’t talk to me too much before that day but sure did afterwards. His name was Buster Brown.”

Know your submarine, a le Max Legault

George continued: “The Canadian navy is unique that the numbers of people in it are relative to the ethnic composition of a “melting pot of nations.” Thus, many of the best joined it from the prairies, where their forefathers came from Hungary, Austria, Italy, the Ukraine, and even Scandinavia. Of course, there is a huge predominance whose ancestors originated from France. “Max” Legault was a French-Canadian radar plotter who was very keen about his new adventure in the submarine service. He was an energetic sort who had great initiative and was very determined to do well at qualifying in submarines although, a little short of perception of the English language.

Max was doing the electrical section of his qualifications when he approached a jacky master killick named Sullivan for some help. He was bearing down seriously on the battery cooling system using drawings and system handbooks. I explained how the system worked and told him that the only way to really learn it was to go down to the AMS, and physically trace the pipe runs through and then sketch the systems and valve connections. I said to Max distinctively, “There are two glands missing from the drawing. These are called mammary glands, and are found in the valve connections of the system!” I didn’t think Max would take me seriously, but because there were a lot of English words he really didn’t understand, he did. Anyway, I forgot all about it. Two days later, Coxswain

Ross Webb approached me and said, “You’d better get your ass down to the AMS and help Max find the mammary glands. He’s been looking for them for two days!” I strode away and chortled in realizing there was no language barrier after all.”

Bill Ritchie’s Certificate Four Quiz

“When I was a P1, I came into the senior rates’ mess one day in *Ojibwa*. I sat down while Bill Ritchie the Chief ERA, was quizzing Bill Bradshaw in preparation for his Certificate Four. For whatever reason, I used to read the submarine school training book when I had nothing better to do and over the years, I had probably gone through it a few times. When I was in *Margaree* before I went boats, I did the NBCD level II course where very few seamen ever came first in the course among ERs and Hull Techs, etc. The course was a month long and heavy into ship stability. I did come first and thought I should have been a stoker.

Ritchie continued his quiz with Bradshaw. “What’s peculiar about the forced lubrication system on the ASR V16 engine?” “Billy Boats” pondered and couldn’t answer, to which I said, “I know!” Of course, Bill Ritchie said. “Piss off and mind your own business, Sullivan!” I replied, “No! Seriously! I know! Doesn’t every dibby dab know?” Ritchie then said, “Okay smart ass. What is it?” and I said (this may not quite be right now) “The 13th bearing was scavenged or oil fed from the 12th bearing because it didn’t have a lube oil feed of its own.” Bill’s jaw dropped near six inches and said, “Holy fuk! He’s right!”

Bill then continued with his next question. “What are three factors that affect ship stability and what’s peculiar about submarine stability in comparison?” “Billy Boats” fumbled with this one too. I couldn’t resist it and so again I said, “I know! I know!” like a little kid in school class jumping up and down and waving his arm routine. Ritchie replied, “Come on George. Piss off will ya?” Again, I insisted, “Bill, I do know!” Finally, he said “Okay smart ass. What’s the answer?” I replied, “Metacentric height, righting arm, and righting moment. Unlike ships, submarines have an instance where they have no stability as the centre of gravity passes through the metacenter when either diving or surfacing.” Then Bill Ritchie threw me out of the mess.”

Bald spots, OOPS!

“We were deep in *Okanagan* around 0300 and the control room had gone to “black lighting”. I’m the OMC watchkeeper on the ‘planes after George Roach relieved me on “Scanner” sonar. My hour on the planes was over and I was relieved. Then I went back to relieve George. I could just make out his bald spot so I wet up my lips real good and gave him a great big noisy, sloppy and juicy kiss, right on the bald spot. As I drew back, I declared, ‘You’re relieved, big boy!’ LCdr “Cliff” Crow is the skipper who is also blessed with a bald spot too. Unaware was I that the skipper relieved George to go for a coffee or something while doing a quick ‘trick’ to keep his hand in on Scanner. He then turned around and looked at me strangely. I said, “Sorry sir! ‘Thought you were somebody else.” He got up, handed me the headset, wiped off his head, and never said a word while the rest of the sound room guys and the C.E.P operator were in hysterics.”

One All Around

“CPO “Jimmy’ Hinds was watch keeping on the C.E.P. for a couple of trips and the OOW didn’t smoke, so “one all arounds” weren’t piped too much. Jim used to go nuts.

We came into Halifax between trips and I used to have one of those old cigarette rollers which used to roll one long one and then you cut them into five. I made about fifty but didn’t cut them, so we now had foot-long cigarettes. I brought them to sea with me and when we were on watch and the OOW gave us our first ‘one all round’ I presented them to Jimmy . . . he was ecstatic! Three or four watches went by before the OOW caught on and finally banned the ‘super cigs.’”

Mobile Gas

“LCdr “Mike” Hurford was the First OOW and he just hated anyone “coughin’ in their rompers.” Somehow the crew found out about it. Vic Carter, Tony O’hara, Doug Cameron, and yours truly, figured out scientifically, that by using sound room chronoscopes and by turning on the sound room railway fan mounted on the forward bulkhead for exactly 42 seconds, it would deliver the “weapon” right out and around the after periscope. Once we got it down into a fine art and about two hours before

going on watch, we would eat lots of eggs, licorice, milk or whatever worked best at droppin' your handbag. As soon as Hurf" jumped on the roundabout on the after periscope, we would commence gas warfare. It got so bad one night, he jammed Carter's leave but relented once we got back alongside a week or so later."

Hatches. . .

"I'll be right back!"

"The popularity of a submarine being alongside on a port visit always lures a lot of curious and inquisitive people onto the jetty. We were in St. John's NFLD and I was a leading hand and 'on trot' on the casing around 1900 in the evening. Various people were asking me all kinds of submarine questions to which I'm responding with all kinds of salty and oily submarine answers. As the audience by now is really absorbed and I'm enjoying this, I park my arse against the hand-hold stanchion for going down the accommodation space ladder, my back facing the hatch. As the "old salt" stories continued, I wasn't paying attention to where I was standing as I stepped back. Then in mid-sentence, I suddenly disappeared . . . right down the hatch. I am now sittin' on my arse at the bottom of the hatch with my legs up around my ears and all the guys in the cafeteria rolled up laughing. I have twisted my knee and it hurts like hell. I try to convince one of the guys to go up on the casing for me at least until the current crowd on the jetty disappears, but submariners being a sympathetic lot. . . my plea falls on deaf ears.

I then come up with the bright idea that if I pour a coffee and go back up on the casing, the visitors will think we always go down hatches that way. It didn't work. I emerged back uptop to gales of laughter, and from the jetty as well. I then proceeded toward the fin, on the limp with as much dignity as I could muster, crawled up the ladder and into the fin door. I pulled the door to and continued my trot peering through the crack left open, wishing they'd all go away. Oh boy. Was I a hurtin' unit! Just like Reggie was in my next dit. . ."

Author's note:

In addition to "Max" Legault, Rejean "Reggie" Daigle, also an RP, had to be the most popular and well-regarded French-Canadian in the navy and especially in submarines. He was a devout native of Quebec City and spoke so respectfully of his sibs' and extreme love and regard for his

parents. He was short, had a little paunch, an immaculately groomed beard and considered ‘cuddly as a bear cub’ among his many girlfriends. When he joined the navy, he couldn’t speak a word of English.

Reggie had a fine personality, was hard-working, had expensive tailored clothes, a determined bachelor who enjoyed the bourgeois life ashore, and put simply, was fun to be around. He was humourous in his honest, natural way and took the navy, his job, and progress in learning to speak English very seriously. His choice of food and fare was a little different than most. When he was ashore, it was nothing but the best of wines and the finest of foreign cuisine in fancy restaurants. At sea, it was quite different. He had an addiction for shirt-lifters, hot pork and beans out of the can, and truly enjoyed the taste of ice cream by the gallon. Quite often when ashore, he would purchase his own personal supply of boxes of fudge sticks, ice cream bars or popsicles, to take to sea with him. Reggie would sometimes express his wrath if he was the last one to come off watch and chef had layed on beans for breakfast or lunch. As he sauntered forward through the bulkhead door (without even having to duck) to find that the beans were all gone, he would loudly declare. “Caulis. . . No fukkin’ bean! Tabernac...”

Also, because of his meager height of just over 5 feet, was presented with other problems. He was lucky for never being able to bump his head. But on the other end of the scale as navigator’s yeoman, could never reach the chart table well enough to do his radar plotting and provide timely assistance to the navigator like a good yeoman is supposed to do. During attack teams, an already congested control room added to another problem. The captain who would be constantly swingin’ around on the attack periscope, needed all of the space he could get but because Reggie and his stomach also occupied the captain’s usable space, there were constant body collisions and the stepping on of feet. Somehow, we had to get both, his arms and his shitbag above the chart table. He needed to be elevated. So when we got back alongside, we went searching around the dockyard until we found a compact sealed box made of hardwood that when stood upon would raise him off the deck by about 6 or 7 inches. We rushed it back aboard and showed it to Reggie. He then took it to his chart table attack position, adjacent to the periscope. Up he stepped and suddenly his shit-locker and elbows were resting nicely on the charts and the skipper could now have his free gangway for ‘attacks’. He would be very, very pleased. “The box” became so crucial to the intensity and integrity of future attacks that the captain ordered it as part of attack team requirements. It was to be clearly marked:

REGGIE'S BOX FOR ATTACK TEAMS DO NOT REMOVE FROM CONTROL ROOM

...with another short story

A pause for some skimmer diversion. Back in the mid-1950's, there thrived among the east coast fleet, CANCOMMINRONONE. . .as long as the acronym were for the Commander, 1st Canadian Minesweeping Squadron and short as the Commander was as Reggie. His African mahogany-built woodpecker fleet comprised of HMC Minesweepers *Gaspe*, *Ungava*, *Resolute*, *Trinity*, and Naval Reserves duty, *Quinte*. They all came under the charge of Cdr Carnell, RCN in senior ship *Gaspe*, who found much difficulty in peering over the windshields of the open bridge in order that he could effectively vanguard and direct his squadron of little ships. So to assist him in arriving at an effective altitude, he ordered up from the canteen, a wooden Coca-Cola crate for which he could stand upon. He was quickly and affectionately dubbed, "Coke-crate" Carnell as this vital piece of visual-aid carpentry was duly ordered, **"Not to be removed from the bridge!"**

...back to George Sullivan and his next dit':

Follow me, "Reggie"

On one trip down south, Reggie had gotten a really bad infection in his eye, to the degree that the skipper decided to go in and land him for treatment at Roosey Roads, Puerto Rico . . .and then go straight back out to sea again. We touched in alongside late at night around 2300, by pulling the bows in tight against the jetty. The plan was to only open the conning tower hatch and "Doc" Scott, the scabliifter, starts leading Reggie up the tower ladder to the casing. Reggie had great gobs of medical potions in one eye with gauze pads with really dark sunglasses holding it all in place. With that, he can't see very much and all the worse, from 'dim red lighting' throughout the boat.

Trying to get Reggie up and on the casing was difficult, but Doc managed somehow. Meantime, the skipper unaware that Reggie is now uptop, changes his mind and orders the accommodation space hatch opened instead. Doc was getting' hyper as always, and zips Reggie forward on the casing toward the bows, right over the now-opened accommodation space hatch. As he did so while groping in the dark,

Reggie immediately disappeared down the hatch with the resounding refrain of, "Caulis, tabernac! . . .you fukkin' stupide. . ." and a bunch of clangin' and bangin'. Eventually, we finally got Reggie ashore with lotsa bruises, a cut or two, scraped shins, a sprained ankle . . .and an infected eye. Definitely "Unfit Sea."

Misguided radar?

We were in the Mediterranean aboard *Ojibwa* and on exercise with the RN. We were shuttled off to some far-away corner of the exercise areas, piddlin' around for a couple of days doing nothing. C.O. Terry Jones decides, "To hell with this!", and so we surfaced for a couple of hours to have a BBQ. Halfway into a beer and a burger, this Russian *Krivak* class destroyer comes thunderin' over the horizon at a great rate of knots, steamin' by at about 300 or 400 yards down our starboard side. Standing on the casing, we could hear her forced draught fans and turbines, and yet, she was ten miles away so to speak. Joe Stuebner was one of the SN's on watch and thought it would be a good idea to "tape" this guy, so down below he goes. About a half hour later, he comes back up and says, "It was really strange that a ship could make so much noise that we could hear on the casing. . .but not a thing on Scanner!" Somebody asks him. "You mean . . .absolutely nothing?" To which he replies, "No! Nothing." Somebody else asks Joe, "Which hydrophone did you use?" To which he replied "Well the fin of course. It's the quietest." to which we all replied with some distant pleasure, "It sure is. . .seein' how it's about twenty feet above the waterline. Yuk yuk!"

Author: This reminded me of Lt. "Twitch" Tudor, when OOD in Ojibwa, high and dry on the Dartmouth Slips. It is reputed: "Let's have a "blow round!" he declares . . .so that the boat would recover maximum buoyancy when afloat. And so they did . . .with volumes of L.P. air emitting into the evening atmosphere from the ballast tank flood holes at the bottom of the boat. We all liked to think that the duty watch needed the practice in preparation for the undocking.

Miffed are we . . . Airdales

Sullivan continued: "We were working with a reserve A/S, P3C Orion out of Brunswick, Maine. On completion of the exercise, they wanted us to surface because the aircrew had never seen a submarine surface before. Although there was no requirement, and it was a pain in the arse, Keith Nesbitt the skipper, decided we would do so and stay on the roof until the next aircraft arrived "on task."

We surfaced and I was Chief of the Watch on the plot, handling communications with the A/C. He kept flying over top of us with our call-sign, "Coral Tree, Coral Tree, this is blah blah blah. On top. . .Now! Now! Now!" . . . to which I would have to respond. This goes on for half an hour and then he comes up on the radio and says his next run will be with his bomb-bay doors open. When he is "on top" once again, he comes up with, "Coral Tree! Coral Tree! this is blah blah blah. . . "On top" Now! Now! Now!", but adds, "My bomb-bay doors are open! What do you see?" I respond with, "Cobwebs!" He says, "Say again?" Again, I say, "Cobwebs!" He responds with, "Ahh. . . ehhh. . .ahhhh. . .Roger my cobwebs!"

The spare hand on watch has been watching this guy through the after periscope and right after my comment, he said, "My bomb-bay doors are closing and I'm turning away." as he disappeared into the sunset. We didn't get any similar requests from the next aircraft on task not forgetting XO, Brian Fisher's. . . "If you fly with your wheels in the water, I will sail with my fin out of the water."

Ray . . .a.ka. "Donkey-Dink"

"It's movie time in the fore ends. For whatever reason, Dicky Newman is laying on the seat locker in the centres, right beside Ray Middleton's bunk. This movie has a lot of scantily clothed ladies in it, and Ray is watching through the end of his bunk, his curtains partially closed. When it came to the personal equipment department, Ray was right up there with Trigger and Silver and all the other stallions, if'n ya' know what I mean. He has just been watching these gals bouncing around in their bikinis and being the young buck that he was. . . has created a major reaction in him. . .or on him. Anyway . . .the reel comes to an end, the lights come on, and Ray whips open his curtain to get something out of his bunk bag, when this un-godly monster flops over and on the deck plate right beside Dicky's

head. He was shocked but yet, so impressed? He falls off the seat locker on the deck. . . gets up . . . goes up the ladder through 34 bulkhead. He then entered C&PO's mess, muttering that, I've never seen anything as gigantic as that. It can't be human!" etc., etc.

Who wants coffee?"

"One night on the surface in passage routine, I was on watch with reduced numbers. Being less restrictive on the roof, I announced I was going forward to get the coffees for the watch. On the helm was LS Diplock, better known as "Diprod", who loudly responded to get my attention. "Oh George? Would you get me a cup of kye instead?" I dwelled for a second and turned toward the darkness of the helmsman's position and said in disbelief, "Oh yeah smartass! I s'pose if they had steak on, you'd probably want a goddam filet!" Diprod lazily shifted his gaze from the dim-lit lubber's line to my darkened proximity and opined, "Wouldafuk! . . .I don't like fish!"

"News. . .The pay raise is in!"

"It was pay raise time and we are at sea expecting the message to arrive at any time. We have all come off watch in the early hours and the control room is in black lighting. Chas' Hillier was in the cafeteria and we told him casually that the skipper left the pay raise message on the plot table in the control room. Charlie, wishing to be indifferent but eager to find out, meandered back aft and very nonchalantly, edges to the plot table. He then broke out his trusty little gold pencil light with the red slider lens cover and 3 ft of lanyard and has a little boo at the message on the plot table. After about ten minutes of gruelling persistence, he came back to the cafeteria and said, "Yup! I saw it but can't make heads or tails of it!" No doubt. . . it was a Foxtrot Victor message, a series of columns of numbers in groups of five which indicate depth and water temperature . . . a bathy message."

Career Choices

“Dale Cumming, a brand new P2 sonarman, was in front of LCdr “Bruce” MacLean (CO) as a requestman. His plea was for immediate release. He is doing very well in his naval career and captain MacLean felt that such a bright young man needed lots of encouragement and needed re-assurance as to the benefits of making the navy a life-long career. He spent a good twenty minutes telling Dale how good he was doing, how secure the mob was, what a bright future he would have, was a great credit to the submarine and that he would be making a grave mistake by taking release. He should really reconsider the whole issue, ad infinitum. After all of this, the skipper then decides to ask why he wants to get out. Dale went on to explain that his Dad had a fairly big farm operation out west which he is either going to turn over to Dale and his brother, or if Dale chose to continue on in the navy, he will turn it over exclusively to his brother. Therefore, Dale had to make a big choice. MacLean then reasoned, “Well Petty Officer Cummings . . . I’m sure that most farming probably isn’t as secure and financially lucrative as it is in the navy. He then inquired in passing, “How big is the farm anyway and what kind of money are we looking at here?” Dale replied in his sombre way, “Well sir. . . it’s only four sections, about 2500 acres, and overall, the operation is worth about 7 or 8 million dollars. Then a long pregnant pause issued from the wardroom. MacLean looked gobstruck . . . croaked a couple of times, and then out came a single mumbled word. “Approved!” “Application for release approved! Salute, about turn, quick march!” ordered George Sullivan, the senior sonarman, while Dale joined George snorting and chortling all the way out up forward. George of course knew all along on how big an operation it really was. He just did his duty as the divisional petty officer. MacLean asked of him afterwards, “How do you respond to that?”

Terror in the fore ends

“It was 0300 and everybody was turned in in the fore ends. Bob Mizuik is the fore ends watchkeeper, sittin’ on the pedestal by the SSE, sorting out and aligning hundreds of supply cards he has been working on for months. Meanwhile, Brian Cooper is kipped out in the top bunk on the starboard side with his head right under #2 main vent. He’s having a nightmare. He is dreaming that he is a kid playing ball in front of an old crone’s house.

The ball went through a window and so he sneaked up and put his head into the window to get the ball. He then looked up and saw the old crone standing there with an axe raised above her head. As the crone swings the axe, Brian sprung up in his bunk to avoid the swing and whacked his head on the main vent casting hard enough to draw blood. At the same time, he let out with an ungawdly howl. Bob, the watchkeeper, jumped straight up into the air and all of his supply cards trickled and wavered down into the oily and scudsy Q-recess bilge, below him. Three months of tenacity and determined work had all gone for nought. Meanwhile, awakened by Brian's howls, everybody in the fore-ends came hurtling out of their pits while Phil Rody, (little "r" . . . big "O.D" . . ."Y") the radio-lady, sits beside his bunk and twitches for about twenty minutes. "What next?" he asks.

Corner Brook Olympics?

"Phil and I were on our way back to the boat in a cab at about one in the morning. We are "floatin' the load." Meanwhile onboard the boat, Charlie Hillier has taken a civvie couple on board for a Cooke's Tour, and they are "floatin' the load" too! Then they step ashore onto the jetty and are standing at the edge, with Charlie pointing out main vents, etc. Then the guy on the tour loses his balance, grabs his gal for restraint, who grabs Charlie . . . then Charlie and the guy's gal end up in the harbour. Tony O'Hara is on trot, so he dutifully pipes, "Man Overboard." He then threw the 'horse shoe' kisbey which hits Charlie in the head and nearly kills him because it has a million coats of paint on it and weighs a ton. Pollard, a killick stoker, then comes up on the casing in response to the "man over" pipe. , jumps down on top of 4 main ballast tank and starts to rescue the girl, while Charlie is floundering around. Then, the cavalry arrives. Philberto and I. We jump down onto the tanks and Phil throws Charlie a heaving line and takes a turn or two around the bollard. The girl is okay as Pollard has her rescue well in hand . . . in fact, so well in hand that she is getting a little irate. He was sitting on the ballast tank with his feet just above the water and has the girl with her back to him, laying against the tanks between his feet. He then put his arms under her arms, meeting his hands in front. He then gets an all-round-grasp, firmly on her rather ample bollards, and pulls her out. When we arrive they are sitting on 4 MBT well clear of the water with her well snuggled between the stokers legs with her back tight against his chest, "stokes" still maintaining his assuring all-round-grasp. She insists, "I'm alright! I'm alright! You can let me go!"

But Pollard counters with, “No you’re not! No, you’re not! . . . but I’ll save ya!”

By now, Charlie is climbing up the heaving line held by Phil, who has to let go with one hand every two or three seconds ‘cause his glasses keep sliding down his hooter. As well, the girl is now on the casing, trying to get her bollards back into where they belong and her boyfriend on the jetty, is calling us everything you can think of. “Lousy sailors! Piss-poor seamen!”, while assuring us that we’re doin’ a poor job of getting Charlie out, etc. Then Phil got a little defensive and says, “Ya? Well then see if you can do any fukkin’ better?” while throwing the heaving line into the drink with Charlie on the end of it, just about out and onto the tank tops. . .when he gradually slid back down into the harbour.

Meanwhile, I am in hysterics. I mean, this is the funniest thing I’ve seen in a long time. Charlie by now is getting pretty tired so I get myself somewhat under control, jump down on the tank tops, work my way down to the waterline holding on to the gangway safety net and pull Charlie out. When we get below with Charlie looking like “The Creature From The Deep Lagoon” soaking wet with brown yucky’ water and covered from head to foot in wood chips from the paper mills of Corner Brook Harbour, he keeps on hugging me saying. “Thank you Ge-ooooorge! You saved me loife!”, and I end up almost as wet as he is.”

Hide . . . and Go Seek

“As coxswain in *Okanagan*, I had a few after-endies doing what I called, “the creeping secure.” They were “warmin’ the bell” and were securing and getting changed to go ashore, earlier and earlier every day . . . ten to twenty minutes before “Secure” and “Leave” were even piped. The next day at about fifteen minutes before secure, I sauntered back to the donk shop and noticed a young electrician coming forward through 103 bulkhead . . .with his civvies on. He saw me and immediately ducked into the ‘cage’ behind the auxiliary switchboard. I went on to the motor room and stayed right in the ‘cubicle’ talking to someone until secure, and then piped “Leave” throughout the boat from there. I waited for another ten minutes or so and then opened the cage door saying “Peak a Boo! Are we playing Hide and Go Seek today? . . .**OR WHAT?**” I then told the lad that this was so much fun, that he was to go back into the after ends, change back into his work dress and find a good hidin’ spot back there. I then

followed with, "I'll see if I can find you again in twenty minutes or so!" It never happened again."

Hot Pants

"The 'attack team' is closed up . . ." 'black lighting' in the control room . . .the 'attack' has been going on for quite a while, and everyone's dyin' for a smoke. The skipper, "Frank" Scherber, finally gives us a "One all round." After a couple of moments, all you can see here and there in every corner of the control room, are little points of red glow getting brighter and then going dim. But then we see a different kind of red glow. It is circular . . .and it's getting' bigger . . .and it seems to be going back and forth, and around with the attack periscope. "What was it?" we wondered.

We were to discover that young OS Dave Bryson had been sitting in front of the LOP adjacent to the attack periscope aimlessly puffin' on his fag. When the skipper came around bent over in doing an 'all round look', he stopped with his arse-end right in front of Bryson's moosh. The skipper had his 'poopie suit' on, with the belt flap gizmo (which none of use ever used) hanging down at will. Unknowingly, Bryson's 'ciggy end' had touched it off, and now we had "Father" sighted in the dark, and burning brightly. This was then pointed out to Bryson. He then sprang up and started following the skipper around the periscope while blowing on the burning spot, which just made it grow even bigger. By now, the whole attack team is aware of what is going on and are having an extremely difficult time maintaining their aplomb. Those in the sound room are bonkin' their heads on the sonar sets trying not to burst out laughing. Eventually, the indisposed skipper notices there is someone behind him . . . "blowjob maybe"??? Young Bryson then has to confess while extinguishing the class "A" smouldering fire by patting the burning circle out on the skipper's buns. For some unknown reason, we never got any more "One all rounds" for the remainder of that very long 'attack'."

"Stop Snorting . . .go deep! Who said so?"

"Another character was a young ruddy-faced and bombed out sonar rate by the name of Ernie "Zeke" Basford. Zeke was always a social type for often on his off-watch hours, he would play cards, make the tea, watch movies with the gang, and do all the things that best entertain his

messmates. Aboard *Okanagan* in the mid-eighties, there was also an RN exchange officer who must have been reared from the land of the bastards, needless to mention, nuclear submarines. His name and reputation just can't be recalled but some often wonder that if you were formerly at sea in what some minds perceive as a superior submarine and now you are cast to a diesel boat, some form of inner revenge must prevail for having taken a step or two backwards in an otherwise, budding career. More often than enough, when people have had experiences with dull and pompous ways, it's just as well that the unpopularity of the dismal just can't be remembered. Adding to his insipid personality was his regulatory methods of displaying his authority as an Officer of the Watch in a dived and snorting submarine served purpose in displaying that he severely lacked in common sense. It became a battle to be able to "pass aft" in the sometimes-busy control room to use the heads or "pass forward" to draw a meal.

Zeke, and the boys in the fore ends became so desperate to get to the heads to have a leak that might take as long as twenty minutes to get there and another ten to get forward because of the anticipated road-block. So they started to collect their piddle in pickle jars and passed aft later to dump it down the heads instead of having to snivle to the RN OOW in begging permission to: "Pass aft Sir?" Well the word finally got out about this unhygienic exercise and the law soon came down that the traps are the only place to discard. Now some days later, Zeke is breaking his neck and for some time, is stood in way of the forward black-out curtain while the submarine is snorting and the control room is in complete darkness. It would be so simple to inch through carefully, instead of having to wait for the OOW to reply, "Pass aft!" Meanwhile, J.J. Walsh is on the diving panel and can clearly see that Zeke is desperate while contemplating a long delay and at the same time, trying to adjust his vision to the blackness of the control room. J.J. quietly sauntered over to help out Zeke and offered the dim red ray light of his flashlight upon the deck that Zeke could now follow for his trip aft to get to no. 1 trap just a few feet back. The RN OOW saw this slight and immediately became frazzled that his pleasure had not been sought to allow Zeke's passing. After Zeke had drained down, he was now confronted with trying to get forward again when he approached the seated OOW from behind, intent of the state of trim and the depth-keeping of the planesman. With a cupped hand, Zeke whispered in his ear: **"Ten down...300 feet!"**

George Sullivan (CPO1 ret'd)

And after George's contributions, his recollections so vivid, is recognized for the respect he endears from all who sailed with him

“Argo, Argo, Argo, Argo.....!”

And here we were down south aboard *Okanagan* when Captain Geoff Meek was stretched out in his bunk at 05 dubs one morning while we were quietly working with ships above. *Annapolis* had a call sign whose identity was “Argo”, while our's was “Coral Tree.” Down at 400 ft, there was still a lot of time to go on the watch and the dreary repetition of sonar transmissions and sea noises riddled about the control room. Time was dragging and breakfast hunger pangs were beginning. The 2nd OOW picked up his ‘185’ underwater telephone and rattled, “Argo...Argo...This is Coral Tree...Coral Tree...Over!”, as the high volume of his voice slowly reverberated and echoed through the depths. An anticipated pause came as a result with absolutely no reply from Argo above. Moments later, “Argo...Argo...this is Coral Tree...Coral Tree...Over!” in a second attempt to raise the destroyer. Still no response. Another few moments passed when he tried once more. “Argo...Argo...This is Coral Tree... Coral Tree...Over!” Still there was no answer but suddenly and briskly, Father Meek came busting out of his cabin dressed in bare feet and his “pirate rig” bathing suit. He didn't seem very pleased as a result of the noisy and constant hailings that offered any acknowledgment. He picked up the mike and sharply uttered, **“Argo...Argo...Argo Fuk yerself!”** He slammed the mike to the deck and stomped back into his cabin to return to his Egyptian P.T. Then, within thirty seconds, the control room filled with great volume and echo. **“Coral Tree...Coral Tree...This is Argo...Over!”**

“Canada's guest.”

In 1971, when now LCdr Harvey Waddell was CO in *Onondaga*, the boat had just completed workups at Faslane, Scotland. Standard procedure in submarines both, in Canada, as well as in the RN or any other vessel for that matter, was to head for a jolly port to enjoy some “rest and a run-ashore” as a reward to the crew for a job well done in the work-up. It is questionable however why the inclusion of the term “rest” in this application, really needs presence. It is better redefined as staying power, for as soon as the plank was out, “the run was on” and would continue for

the duration of the several Sunday routines visit whether day, night , or caning a duty. For the most part, if the visit was interrupted with a duty watch was in many ways a welcome relief, conveniently providing “the runners” in restoring an ability by counting their dwindling gold, drying out a little, and of course top priority, getting a few power naps in before goin’ again the next day.

The submarine had chosen Hamburg in Germany for the “R & R”, and would spend five days alongside. As protocol requires, meant that an arrival reception would be held aboard the submarine where LCdr Waddell and the wardroom would host the Burgermeister and other local officials and dignitaries in the control room for a cocktail party. Among those dignitaries was none other than Admiral Otto Kretschmer, the former WW2 U boat ace, who in 1942, was captured at sea by the allies and was assigned to the Canadian POW camp in Bowmanville, Ontario.

Then Petty Officer “Gus” Gardner, was part of the side party that greeted the official party and their ladies standing on the jetty. On the casing stood Harvey adorned in his lonely CD, the very edgy executive officer, and of course the officer of the day who would see to it that caps and coats were tended to as the guests were invited aboard. In appropriate order, Admiral Kretschmer departed his wife’s side, and as he advanced across the gangway, “the side” was piped.

He looked magnificent as he saluted and strode in full uniform adorned with medals and the “Iron Cross” displayed on the ‘vee’ of his tunic. Enshrouded with the high pitched shrill of the pipe, one could only marvel at the thoughts that must have sped through the admiral’s mind as his eyes became glued to the “CANADA” flashes that adorned all of the uniforms on the casing, including “Gussy” Gardner’s.

With feet on the casing, salutes were exchanged and handshakes made, when Admiral Kretschmer was heard to remark in his conversation with Harvey in broken English, “Good morning captain. This is my first visit aboard a Canadian submarine. I am truly reminded of when I was an honoured guest of the Canadian government long ago during the war!” With a pause, Harvey nervously searched for a retaliatory and complimentary reply when he finally blurted out with, “Was Mrs. Kretschmer with you sir?”

“Attack team . . . close up! Raise the forward periscope.”

Harvey was much of an enthusiastic officer who like to keep his personal hand in but of all priorities, new that his crew of very good submariners should always maintain their fighting capability. The dormancy of an alongside submarine is often scorned upon where not only does the boat's mechanical workings and water-tight integrity degrade at the mercy of machinery and systems idleness, but also the redundancy of the crew in “keeping your hand in” and maintaining their “at-sea edge.” Such a static condition is even further intensified by an annual need for submarines to dock down in order to gain access for underwater maintenance and repairs. This was to be the case for *Onondaga*, (a.k.a. test weight for the synchro-lift) on an occasion during the early seventies. She went up onto the dockyard “synchro-lift” in Halifax and where keel blocks are positioned on rails, the entire mass was mechanically traversed into an integrated ‘shelter’ that completely housed the vessel from the elements for the ensuing work period.

The boat housed inside, the doors for the synchro-shed had now been shut for nearly two weeks and as usual, because of the nature of the beast in conducting maintenance and overseeing repairs of their kit, was that of the stokers and electricians. . . as usual. Harvey had slowly grown uneasy when one day, he decided that the Attack Team should have their skills retained and honed as the case may be, by running an all-out anti-surface attack exercise in the control room. So as not to interfere with on-board work progress, he decided to muster his combatant warriors together while the dockyard maties and the stokers and electricians were all gone inboard on their lunch hour. Systems and consoles were flashed and warmed through, and where Harvey insisted that this exercise should certainly include his attack periscope, he ordered that hydraulics supply lines were opened that would operate his mast when needed.

The attack would begin where Harvey ordered. . . “Stand by for a target set-up. . . T.C.C. and L.O.P... Raise the forward periscope!” Individual replies of acknowledgement and “Rogers!” abounded from varying locations in the control room while the hiss of the rising periscope sped on its vertical journey. As the ocular box began to emerge from the periscope well, an unusual shudder of the mast occurred while a very unfamiliar clamour echoed down through the conning tower from the bridge above. The periscope hood and top window had shot right through the roof of the synchro-shed.

The Praying “Trot Sentry”

In modern times, there are many ways in how one deals with sleeping on watch or some other dutiful position. Let’s not forget that the sharpness of the individual who has to. . .just has to, get those few moments of a power nap in to make him more efficient. He must do it discretely, but at the same time, be alert to situations surrounding him.

LSSN “Teddy” Haldane was standing his trot, well. . .sitting it in this case, during a cold winter night in Halifax. Submarines do have “submarine comforts” to help in warding off the elements, one of which is a portable trot shack that was craned on and off the casing when alongside. The black-painted windowed shack is similar to the size and confinement of a kipper telephone kiosk and its purpose is to keep the rain, snow, and wind out. What it didn’t do was keep out the cold, so a portable electric heater was installed that broiled everything from the waist down but did nothing to help the top end.

It had been a long, cold, and lonely three-hour watch and Teddy was into the last stages of his morning trot. The lolling din of leaking air from a jetty manifold with the whir of an exhaust fan running from the battery shop on the jetty was enough to lull Teddy off and on into “smalley kips.” He was sitting facing forward with his hands upon his knees and head slumped down so that his chin rested upon his chest. In a semi-conscious state, he could in the distance, sense cushioned footsteps on the casing edging toward the shack. One eye opened and head still down, he wasn’t to have anyone believe he was havin’ a little nap. . .especially if it were the duty officer. He uttered, “Amen”, slowly made the sign of the cross, looked up, and then loudly greeted the footstep maker with...” G’mornin’ sir! Up an around nice ‘n early are ya’?” It was the duty officer.

The Crowded Hotel Room

Jimmy “the Oink” Alberts was one of the stout-hearted stokers in *Ojibwa* and when the boat went into Corner Brook Newfoundland, everybody stayed ashore at the local Holiday Inn. The run was on, and now well into the night, the boys were having the time of their lives when Jimmy and a bunch of them decided to go get a pizza before going back to their rooms at the “Aich-I.” While the pizzas were in the oven, Jimmy decided to go to the heads. He went into a stall, sat down and quickly kipped out. When the pizzas were ready, one of the guys went to wake him

up by knocking on the stall door. Jimmy awoke but then decided to take off all of his clothes as it was time to turn in for the night. From the constant knocking on the door and pleas from the “waker-upper”, “Hey Oink! Wake up fer crissakes.” He awoke again impatiently and in the bollocky-buff, sauntered back into the crowded restaurant and inquired, “What da-fuk’s everybody doin’ in my room anyway?”

Pig Lloyd

Liverpool England aboard *Okanagan* in 1975. We were on a five-day jolly and as jollies allow, living ashore in a three-star hotel. It was the kind of a hotel that was very personal and as long as there was guest clientele at the bar, it would be open any time of day or night. There had been a good run ashore on “the first night in” that came on the heels of everybody checking in, having their showers and getting together to propel into the evening. Exuberance and anxiety were well displayed at check-in as a boisterous group of submariners and their hummy sea bags stood waiting for the hotel’s single lift to take us uptop to our respective floors. As it eased to the ground floor, the doors slid open. We were climbing aboard when “Patty” Patterson had noticed the regulatory sign about the rules of the lift: **“CAPACITY NOT TO EXCEED 12 PERSONS.”** Well Patty quickly announced, “I love doin’ tests. Let’s see now...!” He started to count heads and as number 16 finally got aboard, the doors closed. In a circle of grins and giggles, some nervous, everybody quietly expected that we’d plummet down to the cellar. As unknown luck would have it, the lift never moved, the alarms went off, and the doors wouldn’t open. “Now what?” among cries for help when suddenly, the doors slid open and this mass of hilarity were greeted by the gaffer and one of Liverpool’s finest. Off stepped four guys and their luggage, the doors closed, and the lift sped on its way as the rule really did apply.

By next morning, the gaffer began to enjoy our lot and the lift event had been forgotten through everything else that had gone on. We all went down to the boat for morning scrub-out and light maintenance and leave was piped as per Sunday routine. Then we all headed back to the hotel and decided to open the bar. As we arrived at the hotel, surprisingly the bar was already open and seated on a barstool all “dressed in drag” with a large dark and dirty, was none other than our donk-shop killick, Ron “Pig” Lloyd. The Pig had been on a good run ashore too, and somehow wasn’t missed down the boat when leave was up at oh-eight- dubs. Why and how

he ended up in drag is another question so we decided to find out why. As Pig was about to go into the explanatory details, his laughter took over and his ability to sit up in the barstool began to falter. Over he came from a height of about four feet and landed on the deck with both wrists bent from holding them limply as a drag queen would be expected to poise. Suddenly, he was writhing in pain. He had broken both of his wrists. Pig became totally incapacitated after a visit to the local clinic because his wrists were in casts and neatly secured from about his neck and would have much difficulty in looking after himself. When the news got back to the boat, there was no alternative but to fly him back home to Halifax.

The engineer officer was a man named Peter Reglar. Peter was an ex-RN, die-hard crusty submariner who had risen from the lower deck to take a commission just a few years earlier and then transferred to the Canadian navy. He too was to fly to Canada to either attend a course or for a compassionate reason, and the CO and XO quickly agreed that 'Engines' would have to look after the Pig during the trip. Carrying bags, opening doors, feeding himself, showing a boarding pass, lighting his smokes, getting them out, dressing himself, etc. were all the ordinary things that Peter would have to attend to. Well that wasn't to be too bad, he expected. After all, we are submariners and we must come to look after each other in crucial times. But then later, Peter soon began to realize that there were other needs to attend to on the Pig's behalf and in this case, some of the more dire ones such as going to the heads during the trans-Atlantic flight. The Pig was reeled in silent laughter. "Sir! I gotta have a leak." and later after Peter shook it off, tucked it away, and pulled up his fly, "Sir. . .this time I gotta have a dump!" The rest of that ablution can be easily imagined in the interest of post-discharge clean-up.

By the time they arrived at Mirabel Airport in Montreal, Peter by now was getting very bewildered. They had to lay over for the night for a flight connection to Halifax and Peter being no one's fool decided to put his very mechanical and resourceful abilities together. After they had settled in, the Pig once more said with a grin, "Sir! It's that time again." "Right!" Peter exclaimed. "I shall pull your trollies down to the short trail only. However, you'll note that I've secured a rolled-up bedsheet from the bedpost to the doorknob. When you're done, I want you to straddle that sheet, and mince back and forth over it very much like a drag queen would. Leading Seaman Lloyd!"

Ship's Head????

There was a time in years to follow that submarine *Onondaga* ran into another personal and physical ordeal that required the combined assistance of the stokers' branch, the resident 'scablifter' and the able assistance of a Sea King helicopter. All of these resources were to come to the fore to resolve the problem, but as all Chief ERA's are endowed with zeal, determination, intelligence, and pure strength, *Onondaga's* representative was to be no exception.

Master Seaman Mike Bidinost was an RP aboard the boat whose grey matter stowage facility shall we say, was extremely large. Affectionate nicknames were bestowed upon Mike like "Skul", "The Head", "Herman Munster", etc. because of the size of his bonce. The "whittlers" were called upon to have specially made hats and berets to the tune of 9 and 5/8 inches. The price for the acquisition was double, not to pay for the administration but rather, to provide for the high cost of textiles. In the meantime, inquisitive stokers dug out the machinist's handbook to determine whether this phenomenal dimension was 'across the flats' or of the 'whitworth' variety.

Before I get into two different crises, the milder one shall be given first attention. Mike lived in the after ends and was one of the fortunates who had the top, athwartships bunk. . .that no matter how much the boat rolled, you were assured of not falling out of if you weren't strapped in. Above all top bunks except those of the captain and wardrobe variety are fittings, cabling, and pipe-runs that are typical of any submarine's pressure hull deckhead. Mike was not to be short-changed in this area either.

He was turning out one night to go on watch. By taking the weight of his upper body to swing down onto the deck below, meant inserting his head up into the congested void above. Suddenly, this sharp pain emanated from his nape and noggin, and in the dim surrounding light, Mike could read the lettering of an aluminum tally plate that was staring him right in the face. H.P. AIR SUPPLY-AFTER B.I.B.S. HULL Vv. His head was trapped and in the vertical position, hung suspended away from the deck just inches below. Now the pain of holding himself off the deck with the strength of his arms began to join in with the hurt around his head. He hollered and panicked and the lads in surrounding bunks started to rouse. One of them rolled out, saw the dilemma, and started to laugh. **"Quick! Somebody help. You bastards! This ain't funny! Ca'mon! Help me, you fukkers!"** Finally, somebody grabbed the portable L-shaped hatch handle that is shipped when opening the upper escape hatch. With a

chuckle, he drove it up poor Mike's duck-run with a 'goose' that was unimaginable. Mike hollered and screamed with pain from all angles now as he wriggled and lurched from this rude intrusion. He then fell to the deck in a heap of arms and legs, none the less for wear and tear and cursing everything and everybody in sight.

But now the biggy, which also emphasises of the dimensions of Mike's pate. Some months later, the submarine was nearing Halifax harbour after a seven-week patrol in the Bermadoo areas. It was early in the morning on a fall day in 1985, and the hustle and bustle of preparing the boat for entry was underway. Mike had just come off the morning watch and decided that it was a good time to go and get a quick birdbath before the 'swain piped "Cleaning Stations." After all, . . . to go and muck up a 'hucked-out' and shiny washplace is certainly not in keeping with submariners' etiquette.

Mike got stripped to the waist and decided to give his hair a bit of a "Friday routine" so then by the time he got ashore and home with his lovely wife, he wouldn't be toting half of the hum of the boat with him. He inserted his head into the sink while trickles of rinse water washed the 'gunge' away. Then when it was time to withdraw it and give it a rubdown with his mankey towel, he couldn't. He suddenly realized that he had stuffed his mammoth bonce into a typical kipper-built, stainless steel, submarine domestic sink that features two taps, no plug, and a diameter much less than his expensive hat. He went into a panic as he twisted, and turned, and jostled, but to no avail. He plastered soap suds about his head and face and still, it wouldn't "pop."

The washplace was on the other side of the engine room bulkhead and that was a problem. Nobody could hear him. Both engines were running at 850 rpm with both 'screamers' in, and as he pondered in dilemma, all he could hear was the overwhelming roar of the donks' and the excited harbour-bound. loud cackle of the stokers on watch. He began to holler and shout at the top of his lungs as the direction of his vocal appeal could only be heard deep down into the choice contents of the sanitary tank via the sink's drain line. He hollered and screeched for five more minutes, when who should go by the washplace to the engine room was none other than Ron Kilodij, the Chief ERA.

Ron was a big man and very quick-thinking to boot. "Wot indafuk is goin' on in here?" as he glared at this body slunk over the sink with a tinny, and muffled, and panicky voice repeatedly hollering. . . **"HELP!"** Ron began to laugh and beckoned to the stokers aft to lean through the bulkhead door and "Come and 'have a bog at this one!" "Wot's goin' on Mike?" Ron asked. My fukkin' head's stuck. . . wot dahell does it look like?" he

replied impatiently. Then as the shit-chuckin' subsided, Ron suddenly realized that this was a serious situation. He thought quickly and said to a stoker, "Go and get some silicone grease from the motor room . . . hurry!" The grease appeared and Ron began to rub it all about Mike's head, and scalp. Still it wouldn't give, and now red lines, and drops of blood started to appear on his face and forehead as lumps of silicone, and soapy bubbles of water started to get into his eyes and ears. Now Ron quickly saw that there was no way this was going to work. He then shot forward to get the Doc piped to the washplace. "**Petty Officer MacLaughlin. . .J.R.'s washplace. . .Chop! Chop!**" Doc came barrelling aft to find the situation was beyond his medical abilities. He then went to LT. Hickey, the XO to report the incident. The baffled group all mustering at the washplace began to grow and grow, and now the skipper, LCdr "Jay" Plante appeared. After a quick conference on "What shall we do now?" transpired, the decision taken was to cut the sink away from its moorings complete with Mike's head inside of it and radio *Shearwater* for a "Medevac" helo to fly him ashore. Imaginations now ran rampant. Ron decided to break out the emergency oxy-acetylene kit to do the cutting. He would have to be careful, so he thought to wrap asbestos around his head to protect him from the flames. The Captain and XO reasoned, "It's going to be extremely difficult to get MS Bidinost through the control room and up the tower on a vertical hoist to the helo when it arrives!" Mike would be much, much taller now and head room was critical. An inverted stainless-steel sink with protruding pipes and fittings meant that although he was now fitted with a secure and protective helmet on his head, it would be safer to crawl to the control room for "the lift." "We'll need some men to support the weight of the sink while he's in transit too!" they added. Doc in the meantime, thought of ways to settle Mike's emotions as this whole evolution was beginning to turn into a major and very traumatic situation.

The helo was on its way, and Ron had prepared Mike by wrapping the asbestos blanket about his head. He held the torch igniter in one hand and the cutting torch in the other. He was very jittery, he began to sweat, and before he struck a spark, he thought, "There's gotta' be a simpler way. This is the shits!" Ron was big and so were his hands. Among other nicknames for the Chief, was "Sausage Fingers". He put the cutting gear aside and said loudly while the engines were still screaming away. "Hold on Mike! This is gonna hurt!" Ron got a full hold of head and snapped and pulled it sharply. "**A-a-a-a-r-r-r-gh, you bastard!**" cried Mike when suddenly . . .POP! . . .he was free. He rose from a stance that he had been in for over an hour. His face was red, bloody, beat up, bruised, and cut, but complete

with a grin. His ears were filthy and teardrops streamed from his bloodshot eyes. Mike put his arms around the Chief ERA, and said “Chief . . . I love you, I love you, I love you!”

Doc took over now to tend to a sore and crippled heap as Captain Plante radioed ashore and called off the wolves. As time went on and Mike was healing well and accepting his humiliation graciously, it was now time to chuck shit again. George Byzewski, who as “chief of the watch” was stationed in the control room on the surface as the boat was heading out of harbour on the next patrol. Mike was proceeding aft, not going to wash his hair, we hoped, and he self-assured. The second OOW on the after periscope was assisting the bridge with some navigational bearing information by microphone. In the process, he appealed for a bearing by uttering loudly, “**Ship’s Head?**” George in his sharpness, immediately pointed at Mike in his unawareness and declared even louder. . . “**There!**” To this day, Mike is fondly addressed and referred to as “Ship’s Head.”

“It came off in m’ hand chief!”

Tell you how you learn from your own mistakes and Bob Mizuik had his share. There was a time in a post undocking to load torpedoes in the after ends at N.A.D. It had been over a month since the after loading hatch had last been opened and for some unknown reason, it took the lift of the jetty crane to move the hatch handle to the open position. Later, the mystery came to resolve when Bob stepped forward and said he had cinched the hatch up on our last dive because it was leaking. I asked, “What depth Bob?” He replied, “Four hundred feet Buster!”

Bob was all so familiar with submarines and extremely familiar with the fore and after ends for that's where he spent all of his time. But by being a good submariner, he was always willing to help no matter where he was in the submarine. He was held up in the control room one night as the boat was surfacing. He was transiting aft after the movie in the fore ends and was positioned directly below the lower voice pipe cock. Bob, however familiar, wasn't too sure as to which way the lower voice pipe cock handle was to go to open it. At the order from the bridge, “Open the lower voice pipe cock!”, he guessed to swing it athwartships instead of fore and aft, and there was the two-foot handle in his hand at his side. Truly a case of assumption, and accountability. . . once again. And it took his burliness to do it as Bob was no weakling.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

SUBMARINE SEA TRAINING

I always estimated that until I joined *Protecteur*, the pusser still owed me about sixty-two tons of fresh water that I hadn't used in taking showers in submarines. Since leaving boats and being in *Nipigon*, *Skeena*, Sea Training, and departing from *Protecteur* a year later as she went into refit, I had managed to have my issue whittled down to around forty-one. And now, another surprise loomed. At short notice, the Chief of Staff (Personnel) in Maritime Command, determined that there was a need for some volunteers . . . and being one to begin with in 1962, I was happily returning to "The Land of Submarines", this time in Sea Training. And by returning to that realm, it is first, both timely and appropriate to pause and bear the conclusion of the plight and travels of the sod-turning shovel as I was to re-unite with Lucky Gordon, the most ingenious filcher of them all. . . By late 1980, it was time for the spade to take its' first confirmed ride in an airplane. PO Brian Cooper and a small but modest gaggle, belonged to *Onondaga* and were attending a weapons course in *Dolphin*. During the 70's and 80's, service air on Boeing 707's meant that anyone travelling to all points in Europe transited through CFB Lahr in Germany. Cooper and company were "showing off" the shovel and boasting of their accomplishment while yapping off about this prize that was totally unheard of within the air force. At CFB Lahr, the shovel was checked through as unaccompanied baggage but was then swiped by the AMU baggage handlers. When the Boeing' arrived in CFB Trenton, the shovel didn't show up on the luggage carousel. PO Cooper raised so much shite about this gardening apparatus being stolen out of bond, that the A.M.U. 'handlers were charged with tampering with baggage, the misinformed and authoritative elements of the military illustrating "wetness" through their lack of a sense of humour. They were then ordered to return the shovel to the rightful owners. . . who really weren't, were they? In the process however, two more tallies were added to announce the double commissioning. They read:

Nov 1980

**Removed to Halifax again. Fore ends HMCS/M Onondaga"
and . . .**

"Recovered by 2 AMU Lahr, Germany. Air movers of the world"

Soon after, HMS/m *Opportune* was to visit Halifax once again. The shovel had to be in the mess somewhere, to make it available for both view, and would-be appropriation. The night before the boat's visit had ended, it was decided to play the game by obscuring the shovel above the suspended ceiling in the mess. By now, RN-er George Galley was preparing to return to the YewKay as his exchange time was nearly completed. He had always maintained, 'As long as I'm aboard *Okanagan*, I won't 'pinch' it!" But through his own interpretation of he leaving, he basically "handed" the shovel to *Opportune*. When she arrived in *Dolphin*, another tally was attached. The inscription gave proof to the fact and where George Galley's home really was, but where the shovel's home wasn't: He had told *Opportune* where the shovel was. They stole it sometime during the night evidenced by the burglar's dusty footprints on a black vinyl chair cover and an ajar ceiling panel. But now, a technicality arose because for the first time, the wardroom became involved in abetting. The boat's first lieutenant had left his brief case behind in the squadron offices ashore. Still in the harbour approaches, a message was sent appealing for the brief case to be run out by an auxiliary vessel or flown out by helicopter. At the same time, the squadron returned with the reply, "Can do. . .provided the shovel is surrendered in trade." *Opportune* was not to be foiled, so they quickly went aft to the gland space and fabricated something with the weight and dimensions of a shovel that was wrapped in black, plastic sheeting. The trade was made, only to discover that when unwrapped, a bad facsimile had been passed. "Blackmail" had now joined "stealing" and "abetting" in the 'thou shalt not' commandments of the shovel's conditions.

May 1981

"Removed from Halifax again. Fore ends HMS/m *Opportune*"

Enter George Sullivan once again who was now the Submarine Squadron Coxswain. He attended a submarine Escape Cox'n's course and stole it from *Dolphin* after raising considerable upheaval about the shovel still being "locked up." It was then "un-locked" at his insistency, and later absconded with. He placed it in his garment bag and then carried it ashore via the duty P.A.S. boat to HMS *Vernon* on the other side of the harbour.

20 Sep 1982
"Re-re-appropriated CPO G. Sullivan
from C&POs Mess HMS Dolphin"

It had now been eight years since the Australians had their hands on the shovel and it was time for it to go down under once more, this time from Canada:

1983
"Inadvertently removed from Cansubronone by Ausubronone
personnel"

Then the "Shielas" got involved. . .they were right. . .they were sweet as a bun:

08 Sep 1985
"Filched by the Royal Navy's special breed of birds. The
wrens from HMAS Platypus, Association of Wrens, Sidney
Branch, Australia."

Followed by the attack team from *Okanagan* who did a little more than sink targets. The "Polish Prince", George Byzewski had struck:

10 Mar 1986
"Cut from HMAS Platypus by Okanagan command team"

From Canada back to YewKay via the work of Jack Kershaw:

Jul 1986
"HMS/m Opossum"

. . .from YewKay back to Canada:

Nov 1986
"Removed from Dolphin Mess Bob P. Rod L., Joe H. and
Spud T."

(Pendlebury, Lake, Haddock, Toole)

Now resting in the Senior Rates Mess in the Submarine Squadron, in the following year the shovel was well looked after by none other than Jim “Lucky” Gordon, the Squadron Coxswain. Up to the surface it was to go however since the old Atha-bee retrieved it from the “kippers” in 1963. HMCS *Iroquois* was about to sail on a 6-month NATO trip and Lucky was to be drafted aboard as the ship’s coxswain. Invariably, she was to stand “back-to-back” NATO’s, not returning to Halifax until March of the following year. The shovel didn’t. Lucky recalled: “There were several submariners aboard *Iroquois*, and nothing “EX” about them. They were aware of my history with the spade and custodian of the shovel as Mess Prez. Headed up by PO1 Larry Shneider, they had paid a social visit to old messmates at the squadron and while there, pinched it while nobody even suspected. So now my loyalties would have to shift. Now proudly displayed aboard *Iroquois*, my greatest fear was that the spade would be nicked by foreign sailors visiting the mess among those from other navies like the Portuguese, German, Dutch etc. It would vanish into obscurity or gone for a very long time. The popularity of the shovel became well known among the NATO Squadron and several failed attempts to “steal it” were encountered. Failed so by the distinction of my presence as custodian and with that, as the ship’s Coxswain and mess president, I determined to assign a ‘Shovel Sentry’, with the fear of God instilled within him. He was directed to station himself directly below the mounted spade whenever the squadron was alongside during port visits. That worked well until we entered Guzz’. Dockyard at Devenport in England. I had decided that while I was going to take some short leave ashore, I stood down the sentry in thinking that the squadron was aware of the iron-hand security of the shovel. However, lads from the squadron’s RN frigate HMS *Danae* and destroyer *Exeter* had provided forward intelligence to the RN submariners in Guzz’ who were well familiar of the glory that goes with ‘gettin’ the shovel back’. Now without a sentry, they smartly went to work to later have it transported back to Dolphin in Gosport.” The next tally read:

18 Mar 1987

“Skimmed from Cansubronone mess by Iroquois renegades”

Stokers John Clahane, Micky Despaties, “Black Mac” MacDonald and Ronnie Miles, were on an ASR1 Engine Rebuild course. The shovel now once more locked up at the mess in *Dolphin*. They borrowed some tools from CPO (RN) Allan Jackson. During an afternoon, they were left all alone in the mess playing snooker. They removed the shovel and took it

to “Ginger” Laver’s home ashore who was on RN exchange in *Dolphin*. Into the next week they made and presented a replica of the shovel to the mess during the Thursday raffle. . . just to make sure that everyone involved with the pinch got proper recognition. The boys thanked Allan Jackson in particular.

17 Jan 1988

“Easy come, easy go, back to Canada I did go.”

R.Miles, M.Despaties, R.Macdonald, J.Clahane.

Dolphin 22/26A

The S.R.’s of HMS *Dolphin*, had in their midst another prince one evening, Cdr (RN) Prince Charles who presided for a celebration. You can bet that the tallies on the shovel got blue-bell’ed for that occasion. For the first time, an inscription was attached that had nothing to do with theft. It read:

1988

“Mountbatten Night”

in the presence of H.R.H. Prince Charles

W.O.’s & C.P.O.’s Mess HMS Dolphin

Charles then headed back to the palace but in keeping with the Honour of Royalty the temptation must have been torturing. Then a month later, the sem-I’s got into the action during a visit to Block House at HMS *Dolphin*:

14 Mar 1988

**“Siezed thru trickery and daring by Flynn and Riley,
CPOs of USS Skipjack SSN 585 U.S. Submarine base,
Groton, CT.”**

(Tally has 2 USN CPO anchors and dolphins in middle)

Across (or under) the Atlantic it went to the good ole’ U.S.A. and the home of U.S. Submarines. Then the other prince, human eye-chart George Byzewski, got back into the act in making *Skipjack*’s pinch and landing it ashore, very brief and short-lived. He told of his deviousness and how the

perils of shovel-stealin' can sometimes be physically dangerous. George explained:

"At the time I had a little thing going with the manager of the CPO club (The Goat-Locker) at the submarine base in Groton, who I had met while on a Mk.48 torpedo course down there. Once I heard that the shovel was mounted on a bulkhead in the club, I drove back down to Groton for a long weekend and a visit. A little thievery and hanky-panky were on my mind. The spade was bolted to a bulkhead outside the bar. I went to work by loosening the bolts a turn at a time over two days so then early on the Saturday evening, I got a hold of the shovel with little problem while the bar-keep was doing his cash prior to getting his relief. I escaped the mess via a side door but in the fading light, I hadn't noticed that in the parking lot outside, there was some excavation going on in making pits for new light standards. In the "heat and panic" of my getaway, I stepped out the door and fell straight down into one of the pits. Shovel still in hand, I managed to survive. I went back to the Club later that night to be met with howls of "foul" and "skullduggery." Fair game that it was, I succeeded. I had the "Golden Fleece" and it would be on its way. . . HOME!"

Another tally was added:

24 Apr 1988

"Shovel stolen but not forgotten"

CPO2 Byzewski G.

"Stolen back from rotten Groton"

(Groton, Ct. U.S.A.)

. . .then back down under:

1988

"Removed from Cansubronone to aussies again"

(happy days)

. . .then back to sea:

1988

"Out of Australia back to HMS Dolphin by HMS/m Onyx"

. . .then a lone wayward matelot went to the mess for a pint:

02 Oct 1988

**"Set free to run back home to Canada from Dolphin
by "Tramp" P02 Yemen"**

...a few months later in Halifax, two thefts in one day:

Mar 1989

**"Out and in same day. Stolen by USS Norfolk.
Due to their carelessness returned by Sticky & Des"**

Now the MUPPETs got into the act and it got contaminated:

15 Oct 1989

**"Captured by HMS/m Warspite"
"taken away across the brow,
and so I rest on Warspite now."
D.Kingston**

...until a couple of skimmer submariners from the Canadian destroyer *Ottawa* paid a visit to *Dolphin* from Portsmouth Dockyard:

21 Oct 1989

**"It's ours now with eyes agleam,
t'was stolen by Ottawa's O boat team"
W. Broyden, B. Carbray**

The shovel-figurative George Sullivan was still lurking in the wings. He was in the "Fort Fumble" career shop at NDHQ, and while on a visit to Halifax, convinced mess president (Des' Desprey) in a proposition. George relates: "Des'! Lend me the shovel and I will get Prime Minister Mulroney to endorse it." . . . thus, acknowledging that the shovel at least, had been to the nation's capital. "Once done, I will return it immediately!" affirmed George. He then went on to say, "Des' wouldn't buy this at 1130 but by 1630, and beau coup pints later, I had him convinced and he passed it to me. It took a great amount of will power to maintain a sincere look upon my mug and not burst out laffin'. I held on to it for about eight months just to get Des' sweatin' it a bit. He used to call me about every

two weeks after that wondering how I was, how things were going etc. never having called prior to the loan by the way. Then he would slip in a quiet and shifty query, "How's the shovel, George?" I always wanted to say, "What fukkin' shovel?" but never did. Then I'd say, "Oh, you know Des'. These things take time!" Anyway, I did go to the Prime Minister's office with a letter, outlining the history and significance of the shovel, and a request that he "sign" the shovel. The first time around, his office didn't respond guessing that I was some kind of a nutter or something. I went again a second time. Although I couldn't get "Liein' Brian" to agree, I did get a letter from his office in acknowledgement. I finally and personally took it to the Ottawa AMU, sighted it and loaded it aboard a *Shearwater* bound Boeing. Lucky Gordon met the plane in *Shearwater* and returned it to the squadron mess! The new inscription read:"

Dec 1989

"Conned for the prime minister's signature"

"Subronone will accept any old story,

to get the shovel a little more glory.

However as much as I really did try,

the old prime minister just wouldn't comply."

NDHQ Ottawa CPO1 George Sullivan

The next theft is not recorded. The shovel then got back to YewKay but then into the hands of the sem-I's once more:

23 Mar 1992

**"Swiped from Dolphin CPOs USS Bergall Alexander,
Jennerly, Simons, and an unknowing female. Make your
opportunity and seize the moment"**

A couple of lonely kippers were in Norfolk U.S.A. on a jolly. They spotted the shovel in the CPO Club where it was displayed on *Bergall's* behalf:

May 1992

**"Spirited off USS Bergall (from Navsta Norfolk mess) for
HMS Dolphin"**

W.O. Tim Greensides and Dave Bird UKsubcams

. . .and finally:

Apr 1993

"Home again. Jim Hewitt, Dave Vrooman"

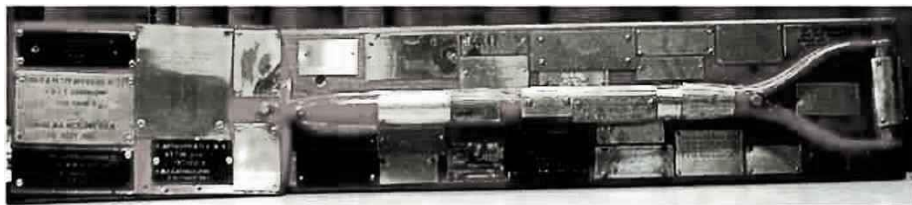
April of 1993 was to become the last recorded theft but mysteriously, it did end up in *Dolphin* once more.

Times were changing and people were either getting lazy or the perks and convenience of getting a tally engraved in a pusser's machine shop for a packet of fags was growing history. By 1995, HMS *Dolphin* saw the laying up of the Upholder Class submarines, the last of the RN diesels, and invariably, the base no longer carried a need to provide submarine support and training capability. In the true spirit of "swiping the shovel" among submariners, and skimmers now and again, the Mess Committee of the day was concerned that it might no longer be held in "abeyance of the conditions." Fear was that the shovel might end up aboard anything, in any navy, anywhere in the world and the symbol of crafty and daring history in navies that continued for over thirty years would vanish from the earth. Thus, the shovel was returned to Canada and rightful custody assumed by the senior rates of the First Canadian Submarine Squadron. The squadron was to soon demise and in support of the decision at *Dolphin*, the Squadron Senior Rates' Mess in Halifax determined to have it laid up in the Maritime Command Museum. This occurred in January of 1996, a time when the many 'very proud of their accomplishment' stealers, brigands, burglars, expropriators, abettors, deceivers, finks, and the well-informed of bygone years were no longer in their respective navies and had gone into retirement. They would all agree in disappointment that this was the wrong decision . . . but a modern navy and its sailors are much purer today and stealin' ain't on the agenda. . .or else! So, at the museum the shovel was to be locked up in solitary confinement for what maybe appeared as a life sentence.

There was a flicker of hope however. It was learned that one day soon, a new Chiefs & PO's mess would be built to combine with a renovated Wardroom and replace the old mess on Barrington St. In order to re-kindle "the spirit of the shovel", the author, while assembling the facts as has been read, lobbied with the "guard of the day" that when the sod was to be broken said, "Giv' us a shout and I'll muster the paint and bodies!" (That was to mean a cast of several 'retireds' could be gathered to impart their

personal accounts in the “tales of the shovel” in qualifying it to return into an operational environment) There was no shout, and by the year 2003, a not-so-well-advised Base Commander at *Stadacona* received word from Ottawa that funding for a new mess had been approved. As construction was to begin, the implement was briefly released on curfewed parole from its cell in the museum. It was summoned with little fanfare, and for a brief moment, the user and a few bystanders were left in the dark about the stories that trailed the shovel. This was the device, viewed by many Chiefs and Petty Officers, as precious in comparison to the Stanley Cup or Olympic Gold, that had more sea time than any sailor in any navy. While never standing a watch, it sailed aboard more than 21 different ships and submarines, in some more than once. In passing lighthouses aplenty around the world or proceeding to the darkest depths, it also amassed its share of flying hours by spanning the Atlantic and the Pacific several times. Then only whisked away into captivity, locked up and hidden in darkness, while ‘the keeper of the key’ remains obscure of all of the facts. If that shovel could talk, it would insist, “I am the most historical sea-going artefact in the Canadian Navy. . . , and others too. “As I ‘Rust in Peace’, come and get me oppos!”

Well, they did. Wirey old retirees from the East Branch of the



The Shovel at Journey's End

Submariners Association of Canada took steps to have it released and returned to the Submarine Senior Rates Mess in HMC Dockyard, Halifax. Today it is the grand centrepiece on a bulkhead displaying submarine memorabilia maintained by the Association. Laid up forever for those of yesteryear to marvel in the memory and for those of today, honour its presence and symbol. Just like a beautiful bunny in a Playboy Club. . . “Look, but don’t touch!” The accompanying tally plate reads:

**THE GARDENING TOOL THAT TRAVELLED THE WORLD
1963-2003**

**AS DID MY HANDLERS, I TOO HAVE RETIRED. PLEASE
RESPECT MY PRESENCE AS I RUST IN PEACE. Dolphin 68 (e)**

Code 68 (e) which prescribes upon invitation, 'M.R.U. I don't want to come' (M.R.U.: Much Regret, Unable)

“ . . .and now Sea Training. Back down the boat we go!”

Canadian submarines were about to embark in conducting their own work-up programs. . . something that I had always felt that with a little innovation here and there, we could have done so many years before hand. Finally, we were forced. There came an urgent need within the Command to do it in anticipation of the R.N.'s near-redundancy in conventional submarines and the ever malingerling, new submarine acquisition in Canada.

By leaving *Protecteur* prematurely, I was to combine in a 6-man staff in forming the Submarine Sea-Training Group, the SSTG. As earlier indicated, I would happily re-unite with Jim “Lucky” Gordon and now also Brian “Ben” Hills. Lucky, had been coxswain in a couple of boats, in Squadron, as well as presently in *Iroquois*. He like me, took the nod as well. Ben, as the “double-hatted” incumbent surface sea-training Chief ET, who little-known, and a rarity, had sailed in all five of Canada's modern-day submarines from *Grilse* to *Rainbow* and the three O's. What he was well-known for though was his participation in a lot of hairy and humourous escapades and brought with him, a mound of background. . .with a lot of personality. What a mass of experience we maintained! As well, the group would include long serving submariner PIRP John O'Dwyer. John of course had not held any senior positions or been exposed to sea training duties but was to be invaluable as both, a provider and a conscientious safety number.

The fledgling SSTG was to be headed by an Aussie exchange officer named LCdr John Diercks, a former submarine skipper and a prince of a man. He was a brilliant and charismatic officer who was very adept and highly experienced in submarine tactics and we were to quickly recognize that he was heavily dependent upon the advice and support of chiefs and petty officers when he needed it most. He would solicit for input regularly, and then listen intently in order to form a sensible plan. There came a little gravy with him too. After the work was done, he was always up for a “run shore” too. Finally, and earlier established in the initiative, there was staff officer named Andy, a former RN lower decker. By the time we had arrived on the scene, he had already inaugurated tasking time-lines and scheduling. We were to soon find that when we started to inter-act with

the boats, Andy had a tendency to spirit the draconian methods of sea training supremacy which was certainly against the grain of a recently innovated and otherwise well-received sea training doctrine. But between Lucky, Ben and I, that was to be easily curbed as occasions were soon to arise.

Through a direct' from the admiral himself, we had lots to do. In limited time and dead-line fashion, our mandate was to amend and update the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) and then construct a seven-week work-up program that concentrated on 4 weeks of 'sea-safety' and 3 weeks of 'at sea operations'. These challenges came as a doubled responsibility for we had to convince the admiral, as well as the submarine crews themselves, that the Canadian submarine service had the ability and infrastructure in co-ordinating our own work-up programs in meeting the needs of the future. We were to manage to do so successfully, where from a just a few days at the outset, and after much insistence in defining "Fleet" verses "C.O.'s" standards, John Diercks finally uttered in his broad Oz accent, 'Now I think I know where ya' comin' from chief!' We began running early morning and impromptu emergency evolutions aboard alongside and docked-down submarines, much the way that ship exercises were conducted in following the requirements of SOPS, and maintaining a fleet standard. Here it was to be again. We worked hard, spent long hours, had a lot of fun. . .and played hard too. That's when Brian inherited the name "Ben" after the infamous Ben Johnson of the Olympics in Seoul.

A return to 'Bagels' and Faslane

As part of getting up and running, we took the opportunity in comparing styles with the R.N.s sea training staff by joining submarine *Opossum* for a deep-water clearance trial and short 3-day workup. At the Clyde Submarine Base in Scotland, we, and especially Brian, became exalted having learnt that fellow-Canadian, Ben Johnson had won his gold medal. Brian certainly took to loudly bragging of the accomplishment in luring the Brits' in little to say in offering any recognition or congratulations.

We boarded the boat and some of the familiarities of former RN submarine work-ups quickly returned. By 1988, I had been on the receiving end of three of them, and little seemed to have changed. Poised on the casing were young crew members detailed off to carry our bags below, as was the custom of forced respect toward the RN's ST staff. We colonials opted to look after our own belongings "thank you", knowing

full well that if they were passed to the lads for striking them down, they'd end up at the bottom of an overly lashed down and "secured for sea", squashed pile somewhere in the fore ends, that by the next morning, you'd have one hell of a time trying to find your toothbrush and another pair of socks. We were to manage well and if anything fair could be said after doing that trip in *Opossum*, I personally think that the methods by which we were going to conduct Canadian work-ups became an assurance. By now, I was truly aware of how work-ups and the application of its intent, might be more realistic and conducted as one of a learning curve. Add to that, the findings of the Falklands War, Operation Corporate from my former surface sea training experience.

For the first two days at sea, we were to not become involved in any of the evolutions, but merely observe the procedures. It didn't take long to assess the outcome. Jacko' was the ST staff Chief ERA and I would follow him everywhere he went. Very, very knowledgeable he was, and extremely humourous, as he mused with smoke machine "Misty" and an obsession, "What could we do now to piss 'em all off?" Fires, floods, air bursts, hydraulic failures, electrical emergencies. . .we ran the boat through the gauntlet and the kippers still did things the old way. Through that repetition, I quickly assessed of the artificialities in the execution as well as the crew's remedial action. The most glaring was a fire exercise in the after ends. With me following close behind, Jacko' had warmed up "Misty" and as we entered the compartment where a few of the lads were all sitting down to a cup of tea. He declared, "Right you lot. There's a fire in 'ere!" adding fact to the statement as copious quantities of smoke issued from the machine. Caught napping and in extreme hesitation, what to do now? Then Jacko' in an encouraging tone, prompted them to evacuate the compartment, isolate the bulkhead, and make a report to the control room. There was no rapid response. As the bulkhead door was slammed shut and the bulkhead isolated, reports were finally passed where an attack team would be preparing to re-enter the compartment to expectantly deal with the fire. Meanwhile during this period, Jacko and I sat alone in near obscurity amidst the thick smoke. He pulled out his "blue liners" and said, "'ere Buster. Let's 'ave a fag while we wait for 'em!" Some five minutes later, the bulkhead door swung open as the attack team was to re-enter to do what one would expect in the business of dealing with compartment fires. Don breathing apparatus, find the seat of the fire, determine the class, put it out, search for casualties, curb and clear smoke, analyze the atmosphere, overhaul the compartment of surrounding hazards, and post a re-flash sentry while readily passing reports on the action taken. This was

not to be, as smoke raced forward into the adjacent compartment while the first man of the attack team entered with but a portable extinguisher. I then went into further disbelief as Jacko' declared at the top of his voice, **"Roight! Fire's out lads. Fire's out. Return your gear."**

By day three, we joined the ST staff in the fore ends for a final de-brief on the exercises overall where on completion, a much anticipated "SAT" would be declared, and the boat would surface and head into Rothesay for an over-nighter. The next day, we would disembark *Opossum* to the "James Bond", and head back to Faslane.

On the previous de-briefings in *Opossum's* fore-ends, we were welcome to attend and observe, but not offer any comment. But this time at the conclusion and final de-brief, the Commander Sea Training opened the invitation. "Well now. We haven't yet heard from our Canadian friends, have we now? Any comments, gentlemen?" I dwelled for a moment, caught the eye of a shy and grinning John Diercks, and then raised my hand. "Yes, chief! What have you got?" CST asked. With a combined level of confidence and assurance, I affirmed, "Yes sir. . .thank you. If you don't mind, I think your exercises were a pile of rubbish!" CST in his retort, "Ahem. I see chief. What makes you believe in that assessment?" . . .where I responded most confidently in detailed explanation of the deficiencies of what I had observed. I capped it off by confirming my belief as I had encountered in ship sea training. The safety requirements of work-ups must meet a "fleet standard." Not that of the Captain's, or anyone else's, as was still evident as the norm' in RN submarine work-ups.

The emergence of "Ben"

Well as we stepped ashore in Rothesay, 'the run' was on. We immediately holed up in a B&B along the waterfront with the Brit sea trainers, who by the way, had earlier accepted our de-briefing comments gracefully. Brian and I were housed up on the top floor of this quaint four storey inn where we stowed our sarnies in the bottom of a chest of drawers. They were put together by the boat's chef so that we'd have at least something to eat after the cafes all closed.

We left our bags on the two beds and quickly RV'd in the bar. The run went on as Brian sang C & W songs like "There's A Tear In My Beer", and "Pop A Top" while dancing with a few wee hens that happe'd by into the wee small hours of the next morning. . .but getting to surface on time

and get back aboard *Opossum* was to be a difficulty. We were half an hour adrift having to wait for Brian to get organized and muster all of his belongings. When we got aboard, we had learnt from the looks, comments, and tee-hees aimed especially at bleary-eyed Brian, that Canada's Ben Johnson had been found out of his use of steroids and was stripped of his Olympics gold medal. Brian's recourse was to be simple by re-evaluating his assessment of Johnson's brief period as a Canadian and international hero. "Aw, that goddam Jamaican anyhow!" Jacko' quickly bounced back with, "Righto then . . . Ben Hills. 'Ben' it is and 'Ben' it will be!" where after exclaiming, "Crikey! I must've gotten into some green fukkin' beer last night too. I've been fartin' like a brewery 'orse all mornin'!" . . .and Ben and I still wonder if those forgotten sarnies were ever located, especially when guests seldom if ever, take use of a bottom drawer in hotels and B&B's.

Work-up in the south

Once back in Halifax and by year's end, we had planned and had in place, a mid-cycle work up program. It would be conducted aboard *Okanagan* but uncharacteristically, away from northern waters in and around the operational areas off Puerto Rico. The method by which we conducted this first ever Canadian work-up was greeted with erratic anticipation from three sides. First and foremost, ourselves, then by the insensitivity to submarine operations of the 'skimmer oriented' Commander Sea Training, and moreover, the crew of *Okanagan* itself. We began the first few days alongside U.S.N.A.S. *Roosevelt Roads* with shore-side lectures and briefs on basic fundamentals by the crew along with a series of slow-time applications of drills and recovery procedures aboard the boat. We eventually 'casted off' from the jetty at midnight, to anchor in the inner harbour in order to evaluate and assist the crew in response to Operation Awkward. It would be a long, intensive, and very uncomfortable night. The boat went to a complete "shut down" in order to counter the threat by reducing noise and hull openings for watertight integrity. The temperature and humidity climbed rapidly as a detachment of the USN's "SEALS" took to the water in acting as the enemy in attempts to attach limpet mines to the pressure hull.

Well into the exercise, Andy Deacon had determined that as the divers were breathing on Airless Packs so as not to divulge their presence through air bubbles emitting to the surface, he had rationalized of a way that just

might detect their presence. As the divers were swimming freely at a minimum depth of 15 feet, all one had to do was deploy a thermal image camera (T.I.C. camera), aim and pan it toward the water and in the general vicinity of where a diver may be. Then by way of the camera's versatility, one could visually ascertain and locate a diver through the heat emissions of the Airless Pack. How innovative and clever we thought of Andy, as the U.S. Chief, i/c of his proud, precious, and stealthy SEALs, paced back and forth on the fore casing all pissed off and embarrassed that we could locate his divers with such simple means. We were to find out a little later that it was not Andy who came up with the idea but instead, one of the boat's young fore endees who was among a group that Andy was monitoring during the operation. Andy was all right though as he was capable of smiling at his own eagerness.

***“TRUE SUBMARINERS LIKE THE IVY CLINGS,
TO OLDEN TIMES AND OLDEN THINGS.
MAKE NEW, BUT DON'T FORGET THE OLD,
'CAUSE THE NEW IS SILVER AND THE OLD IS GOLD.”***

The program continued for the next ten days and the crew was responding well. They were a little leery of our presence at first, but soon began to realize that we weren't being ruthless by shovin' them around and beatin' 'em up through all hours of the night. . . every night. To them now, it all appeared to make good sense. As re-kindled sea trainers, a little scratchy we were at first as a result of a paltry bit of intimidation from a few seniors who thumbed their noses and were discretely critical of the re-emergence of these so-called “rusty ex-submariners.” That wasn't to last long. The outcome proved that we were certainly capable and above all, safe. The evolutions that we initiated were realistic and were structured parallel to that “learning curve.” As each unfolded and now un-announced, the complications arising in recovery action grew more and more intense and people readily began thinking on their feet. It all made complete practical sense while the opportunities to rest and recover were plentiful and received as most fair.

By the end of two weeks, we had completed the safety portion of the work-up and the boat would now enter the operational phase. After surfacing in the blackest of nights near the island of St. Croix V.I., COMEX saw the retrieval of two secret agents discharged by Zodiac from the ocean-going tug, auxiliary CFAV *St. Charles*. The two agents were none other than Sea Training CO, Cdr Tony Delamere, and the CO of SM1,

Cdr Ken MacMillan. They had been waiting ashore in anticipation of meeting and boarding the boat to join John Dierks to monitor and assess the operational phase. They had been staying at Frederiksted's infamous Great Dane Hotel for a couple of nights and had a small rental car at their disposal. How nice!

Once aboard and immersed into the un-air conditioned dim-lit sweatbox of a submarine, I soon happened upon "six foot four" Tony, awkwardly jammed into a crevasse and bent into the shape of the pressure hull in attempts to stand out of the way outside the wardroom door in the passageway. As I wriggled past him to get back aft, he whispered, "Hi Buster. My gawd! How in the hell do you live like this?" As it was his first time aboard a dived boat, and in tropical waters at that, poor Tony had finally come to realize that work-up conditions in submarines were a far and distant comparison from a blacked out nevertheless, airy destroyer's bridge and pilotage. With my familiarity of Tony, what impressed him most was the exhibition by the entire crew of cohesion and teamwork at its very best, without any quibbles within such adverse conditions.

Overtime pay???

Well with our work done, it was time for Ben and I to disembark. As Tony threw these car keys at us with instructions that when we got ashore, to drop the vehicle off at Christiansted airport and 'island hop' by a pusser's Huey helo to Roosevelt Rds. to join the skimmer sea-trainers the following day. Ben and I were also already booked into the Great Dane as Delamere and MacMillan and were to enjoy the comfort of it for the balance of the reservation. . .for which the twenty-four-hour period only had about nine left. So while the Zode' stood off until told to come back alongside, we got aboard and the two civvy crewman took to paddling clear of the submarine. Soon after, we could just make out the sinister outline of *Okanagan* disappearing from view as she dived to get on with her ops'. As the periscope feather finally faded from view, Ben and I sat back with our feet up and enjoyed the relaxation of fresh air and the warm night, but more significantly that our work was completed and the weight of responsibility and concentration had drained away. Time to play, when "Hey presto!" . . .I heard "P-s-s-t, choo" . . . "P-s-s-t, choo" . . .the effervescing sound of two cans of beer being opened. Ben's 'tachee case had more than a shaving kit and hummy nicks in it. The two crewmen continued to lazily paddle away on a course that now revealed *St. Charles'*

running lights at a range of about three miles. At the same time between each and every stroke, a Newfie accent comment was heard. "Wot's dat stink 'Orace? Lard Jeez' smells loik rawtten cheese!" "Dunno Clarence. I keeps getting' whiffs a diesel hoil too. Mebbe da 'Charles is leakin' fuel out 'dere. Prob'ly I guesses! Yes bi' . . .nuttin' new 'ere, eh 'Orace?"

Well by the time Ben and I had scuppered our beer, the mini-voyage now seemed to be dragging on and we were anxious to get ashore. Turning to Ben's ear, I murmured, "Why don't they start the goddam outboard' Ben?" "Beats the hell outta me Buzzy!" he replied. Then I heard some faint exchange between the two crewmen. "We's gettin' in close now Clarence. Wot's the toime?" Horace turned to Clarence and replied, "Getting' near about tree a klawk! . . .Dat oughta be enough to get our overtime. . .yes bi'!" As *St.Charles* was closing to within 500 yards and now in earshot, much to our surprise, the outboard' sprang to life. We whizzed across the distance in about one minute, finally climbed aboard to finish the journey and alongside Fredricksted jetty in all of about ten minutes flat.

No ice. . .a habit. Save water

So here were Ben and I who hadn't washed in over a week, stinkin' to high heaven in work dress, standin' on the jetty lookin' at each other. "Where to?" Hotel of course. . .to drop our bags and then see what's still open. By the time we had arrived at the darkened hotel, the outdoor bar was closed but we could hear reggae music in the not too distant. We rolled back out into the street to find a cozy late night junkanoo bar. We stood with our tongues hanging out while the native barkeep lady insisted that she couldn't serve us our order for two "rum and cokes" because there was...no ice. Repeatedly, she kept saying "No ice!" "Sorry. No ice!' As we equally repeated in assuring her in saying, "We don't care if there's no ice. Just give us two goddam rum and cokes." She kept coming back with a pearly grin with, "No ice!" . . . "Sorry no ice!" Well, it only spoke of the necessity that rum and coke in the Caribbean just ain't rum and coke if ice ain't in it. Then in came an over-familiarized frequent customer, brandishing a bag of ice cubes. We finally got our drinks.

The early morning had worn on and we finally got our swedes down. We surfaced at 10 AM in plenty of time to get out to the airport, return the car, and find the Huey. We finally got our showers and now it was time to jump in the car and get a little something to eat. We drove but a block and spotted an open-air café on the sea front. After we sloshed back our goat-

burgers, Ben insisted we take some photographs with the aid of a couple of passing tourists. He had purchased a throw-away camera, and anybody's guess on Ben was right. Once all the film had been exposed, he threw the camera away. . . with the film still in it. By now, we had just 40 minutes left to get to the airport and return the rented car. We headed for the curb and I began a desperate search for the keys. Then I spotted them. . . still in the ignition of the locked-up car. What to do now, when Ben began to dump all over me. "Wait!" I said. "Look what's comin'!" As this island gentleman drew nearer, I thrust myself upon him. "Hey buddy! Worth a couple of bucks if you can get into our car?" Within thirty seconds he had gotten it open, took the two dollars and as he ran up the street, we heard him emphatically shout, "I hope that's your car mawn! I ain't goin' ta jail agin!"

Well with all of these interruptions, we finally arrived on the tarmac a half hour adrift. The pilot seemed a little excited at first but concluded that it was all in a day's work so a late departure wasn't a serious matter. We got aboard in the back seat, buckled up, and within moments we were airborne. Now thinking that in just twenty minutes or so, we'd be down on the ground at Roosey, in time enough to join the skimmer sea-trainers at a pre-planned beach party on the base, but that was not to be. How about over two hours as it turned out? The two-man crew decided that they'd zoom over all the sand beaches of the Virgin Islands at low altitude, in order to do some bikini, or hopefully, topless sightseeing. There was more to follow as they popped open their cans of pepsi and strained in spotting for sharks. Much, much later when we were to finally land, we ended up at a one foot altitude hover doing a helo-wash, to get the sand off in prep' for a visit by a U.S. immigration officer. By five o'clock, we had finally made our RV with the skimmers and the party continued into the wee hours.

A run in "Old San Juan"

About a week later, *Okanagan* returned to Roosey Rds. Ben and I had access to a pusser's station wagon so we planned to meet her and take the staff up to the digs ashore. It was an early February evening darkness. As the boat doubled up and got the plank across to the jetty, John Diercks, Andy, Lucky, and Johnny O'Dwyer bristled toward us in the waiting vehicle. Lucky was very quick in insisting: "Let's get the fukoutta here!" As we drove away, it was just as quick in having it explained that things

had not gone so well in the ops phase but there were unknown reasons that the boat should invariably, receive a "SAT", regardless of any shortcomings. This did not sit well with any of us. It was plain that SSTG's observations were not well received by the boat's skipper. A resolve was finally arrived at a month later, in Marcom headquarters at Halifax. The SSTG decision had eventually stood as our insistence upon Tony Delamere the Commander, was finally agreed to.

It was time now to vent off and get a little time ashore. We unanimously decided that a run into old San Juan was in order. Ben chose to be the designated driver that night but later, became rather sorry that he did. On the way into town, Lucky and I, seated in the back of the wagon, were daunted with loud repetitious comments from Ben. The guy directly behind us was driving with his high beams on and the rear-view mirrors' reflections were blinding Ben at the wheel. Smartly, two, three. . . Lucky and I hauled down our drawers and stuck our stern sheets flat up against the wagon's rear window. Immediately the high beam went to low, while now job completed and dress corrected, two great unmistakable hairy bum outlines silhouetted the dusty rear window like giant decals.

We got into town and headed for a disco joint known as Laser's. What a surprise in finding out that the bartenders and waiters were all snappers. Asked what the good refreshment was, came with the inviting reply, "Why, Thexth On The Beach of courth! It'sth a grea-a-at drink. Try one on uth!" Well while beating out the rhythm by playing the bongos on the rows of laps of all the seated parties waiting to dance, we drank our thexthy concoctions and howled the night away.

Andy, all dressed up in his kerchief'ed 3-piece suit, was now getting to the point of exhibition. His old ways and days as a killick bunting tosser were returning, that now completely shunned his stature and presence as a naval officer and a gentleman. He decided to stretch out on his back on the cobble stone street while murmuring the tale of his attendance at a fleet football match in Pompey years before. "Oi 'ad just been released from cells in *Victory* barracks and 'eaded to the pub with moi' mates. After a skinful, we awl shot off to the football pitch to watch *Aerial* play Pompey barracks. When we arrived, I felt this great big spew comin' up. So I let it go. "Orrors, it landed on the commodore's missus dog, just crouched beside 'er." Then she said, "What is the meaning of this? What do you have to say for yourself?" as hubby commodore's eyes so too widened in disbelief at the pitiful and dishevelled dog. . .all covered with a techni-coloured yawn. Andy, in continuing his repertoire sighted, "I 'fawt fer a

moment and all ‘oi could fink of to say was”, “**I don’t remember eatin’ that?”**

Well we finally arrive back at the base in the early dawn-lit morning. As we got out of the car at the Chiefs’ quarters, poor ole Andy was just tuckered out and couldn’t be moved. The drive across the base to the O.Q’s (officers’ quarters) in Bundy was just too far to go, so we left him in the car in the parking lot while his bald head, leaning out of the open window, was at mercy to Puerto Rico’s answer to the mosquito, the “flyin’ teeth”. . . the dreaded Mee-Mee’s. His head was painstakingly sore the next day, in more ways than one.

Trustworthy Ben had borne the events that we were eager to get to that night, ensuring us all of our safety and security throughout. After a couple here and a couple there, and as the tempo had accelerated, Ben’s tongue had begun to hang out. He wished he hadn’t offered to be our guiding light and that his amended wish was that he’d have gotten in on the action instead. He said to me a few days later. “The problem with the designated driver routine is that it ain’t much fun. If ya’ ever get sucked into doing it, you gotta get some enjoyment. The next time I do something like that, at the end of the night, I’ll drop you bastards all off at the wrong barrack blocks!”

After a few days of wash-up and prep for the combined sea training staffs in returning to Halifax, we flew back to *Shearwater* in a pusser’s Herc’. Once back at the office, we were to set plans for a following work-up. In the meantime, Andy got drafted to Fort Fumble up in Ottawa, where he was relieved by a wizard of a man named Lt.(N) John Currie.

A rabbit!

It didn’t take long to appreciate that John was certainly an asset to our cause, he being highly swept up in both operations as well as sea safety. As young as he was, John had considerable experience in both Canadian and Australian submarines and was later, touted with a future opportunity by transferring navies and taking command of one of the future Aussie “Collins” class submarines that were in 1988, being laid down and constructed. He was also one who took great stock in closely working . . . and playing with “chiefs.” Adding credence to the fact was his resulting display of distinction and pleasure at the Chiefs’ mess in *Shearwater* one night in the spring of 1989. Another work-up began, this time *Ojibwa*, where we would join her alongside at Boston. Now underway and slowly

progressing north when just a few miles off-shore from Halifax, we were flown ashore by helo to *Shearwater*. This was done in order to make bunk space for the night but return again early the next morning to resume the work-up. Once on the ground and booked into cabins at *Shearwater's* Warrior block, we would quickly abscond to the mess. As John Diercks lived in nearby Colby Village, he decided to take a cab home for the night, but lone officer, Lt. John Currie remained in our midst. It just wasn't right to leave John fair on his own. As we were in at-sea work dress, displayed on our shoulders were the appropriate ranks for entry to the mess. . .all except John with his two-ringed "slip-ons." That was to change rapidly before we entered. I removed my inside shirt rank badges to displace those of a now instantly promoted Chief Petty Officer 1st Class. . .John Currie, the youngest looking chief in the navy. Then as we stepped up to the bar in ordering our quaff, the bartender glowered by the physical evidence of this super human, rapidly moving, brain-powered intellectual of a submarine chief while acclaiming, "Yours is on the house, chief!" John was overwhelmed with pride and eminence at having been accepted into the only mess in the navy that you must earn your way into. He was now, one of us. When we "vertrep'ed" back aboard a surfaced *Ojibwa* very early the next morning, a groggy, little bit under- the- weather Chief Currie still had his C1's rank badges up. Today, I retain his aging and discoloured lieutenant's "slip-ons" as a 'rabbit' memento.

It was during that work-up when the boat encountered some serious potential of flooding when we inadvertently hit bottom during a "planes jam" drill about fifty miles off Halifax. Later conceded that as the exercise was over-corrected for and should have been conducted in the distant but more favourable extreme depths off the continental shelf, would conflict with *Ojibwa's* positioning in relatively shallow waters that otherwise provided resources for other exercises with helos and surface ships. When I would get the high sign from John Diercks, I would initiate the un-announced drill by proceeding to the after ends and switching the after planes to "local rate", thereby depriving "primary control" from the helmsman in the control room. I would then take the after planes to "full dive", to assimilate that the planes had jammed and the submarine was progressing to a ten-degree bow-down angle. The means of recovery are that both main motors are then switched to "Group Up, Full Astern together" in attempts to reverse the angle of the submarine while the planes invariably remain jammed at "full dive." Once the submarine approaches "midship bubble" and the angle goes off, the propellers are immediately

stopped, trim adjusted, and wishfully, the boat remain (0 deg. bubble) while the planes are restored to capability.

The boat's Chief ERA, 'Brum' Tovey, remaining ever suspicious of my movements throughout the boat, would follow me about so that he could stay abreast of what might happen next. He, in this case aware that I had gone aft, had almost immediately arrived at the scene by the time the shafts had reversed direction and altered speed. I handed him a piece of hand-written paper that declared: **"A PIN ON THE RETURN MOTION LINKAGE FOR THE AFTER PLANES RAM-SERVO UNIT HAS SHEARED."**

The underfoot propeller noises were now deafening and the compartment began to shake itself silly with clangs, shudders, and earthquake like vibrations. Brum grasped for the tannoy and reported the fault to the control room while with shafts still feverishly churning astern, the submarine was now passing through 0 bubble and beginning to take on a very sharp stern down angle. Suddenly, the whole after ends erupted as we struck bottom. A horrible spine-shattering hit that caused the boat to careen upwards, then drop once more with an even louder clang. We had hit bottom and what we had hit twice, was undoubtedly a huge rock. **"Safeguard! Safeguard! Emergency Stations. Emergency Stations. Shut down all bulkheads. All compartments check for flooding!"** came the nerve-shattering pipe across the intercom that mingled scaringly among the surrounding noise and vibrations. All hands in the after ends scattered in every direction, searching and listening for the dreaded inrush of sea water. Within all of the turmoil, Brum then glared at me and said, "Boy this is fer fukkin' real! How'd ya do that?" he, referring to how the evolution was initiated with so much reality. That comment had eased the situation. There were no leaks or inrush to be found. We surfaced sometime later knowing that no internal damage had occurred. Now it was time to go alongside and get some divers over the side. Later, as the boat docked down, it was immediately evident that the otherwise robust rudder was severely damaged with two large gaping ripples on its trailing edge. These corresponded with the two huge thumps we had felt and heard while the submarine had engaged the rocky sea-bed with a force like a giant vertical hammer.

Command Chief mebbe?

By 1989, the SSTG had established itself in convincing fashion. Results were, Vice-Admiral “Chuck” Thomas, himself the man that we had to earlier convince of our safety and efficiency, declared that the Submarine Sea Training Group be awarded the Maritime Commander’s Commendation. And because we were well established and plans completed, essentially the work was done. So what next if opportunity should come my way? It did, but briefly as hopes were dashed. I received word that I was selected to be interviewed for the appointment of Command Chief Petty Officer.

As a P2 outside wrecker in 1971, I had the privilege to meet a certain chief petty officer by the name of Doncaster who was not a submariner. We were getting ready to sail eastbound to Gibraltar aboard *Okanagan*, and while much preparation and work was underway, he came aboard the boat to simply say, “Hello!” to all the hands. He accompanied Ross Webb the coxswain through the boat. Since that day, I had become absorbed by the fact that within the privacy and confines of his personal staff, the Admiral embraced the assertion that there was a need for wisdom and seasoned advice from coal-face experience that stemmed directly from the intimacy of the lower-deck. Only a senior chief petty officer could provide that and currently, it was in the name and personality of Chief Doncaster. From its inception in 1966, he had become the second Command Chief Petty Officer personally selected by the Admiral. In anyone’s opinion in any naval rank, it was regarded in the navy as the most prestigious appointment and the distinguished responsibility accorded to Chief Petty Officers First Class. And the fact that he was a former Chief ERA made all of us of the engineering branch, most proud and intrigued by his edict as a chief petty officer and advisory to the Admiral. But as a P2 in 1971, my future was a complete mystery knowing that by remaining in submarines there had to be another pinnacle to reach in the profession of working underwater for a living.

So several years later, here I was being interviewed by Vice-Admiral Thomas, the Maritime Commander. I was among a “short list” of chiefs to be interviewed in relieving Command Chief Terry Shergold who had opted to take a commission. The fallout seemed that there was a mysterious and consistent voracity for Communicators, Signalmen, and seamen in general, to be appointed as Command Chiefs. I went away somewhat sad of the fact that although the Admiral passed on his “ataboys” and ‘don’t feel too bad about it”, a great sailor and signalman named Ray Soucie had

gotten the nod instead. But I wasn't too sure of how I felt. From Robertson, apart from Doncaster, then Puddifant, to McKee, to Fillion, to Shergold, and now Soucie, the nudge always went toward those who were definitely NOT from the clanky branch. Did "we all chuck up" we guessed as it seemed apparent?

Within a very short time later however, Ray would step into retirement and once again I was on another "short list", this time with successor Vice-Admiral George. I was, and once again, received accolades for my presence and persistence but a very good Bos'n (and an extremely good chief) Jimmy Carroll was to occupy the CCPO desk in the Admiral's suite. I returned to SSTG and prepared for another work-up and take a little leave. The emotion of it all was starting to drain me and I was to find later, that the quest would further unfold.

Terra Nova

The Gulf! . . . One helluva water hazard.

The onset of the so-called war in the Persian Gulf, came as a sudden awakening for the navy in 1990. Canada's politicians had decided to jump on the band wagon in making their claim against Saddam Hussein wishfully certain that the navy's resources were worthy and capable in making a contributing stand with the allies. Maritime Command, and its dockyard in Halifax, were a little shaken by the announcement but typical of the reaction, matelots and dockies joined forces and became relentless. HMC Ships *Athabaskan*, *Protecteur*, and *Terra Nova* were the old girls "fingered" to go and in anticipation, armament equipment destined for the new frigates under construction was now dispatched to Halifax. This would aid in getting the ships fitted out and ready to sail half way round the world in just two short and busy weeks. And through lesser priority, submarine sea training work-ups were to become intermittent during these preparations.

I had taken that well needed leave, and with the family, drove to Maine for a few days. Before I had left, there was feeling throughout the command that anybody might be needed at a moment's notice. As a sea trainer, I made sure that if there was a recall, I could be located. The inevitable occurred, and within an hour after the telephone rang in the hotel room, we were in the car and heading home. Hastily we went, and driving conditions were good. By the time we were nearing Sussex in New Brunswick, there came a flicker of flashing lights in the rear-view mirror.

I was pulled over by the RCMP and howled at for doing 110 km/h in a “90 zone.” Dealing with this mountie was like talking to a slab of stone. “Where’s the fire?” he asked. “In the Gulf!” I replied. With a smirk he countered with, “What golf?” Now he thought he was dealing with a smart-ass. I wanted one thing only. . . to get moving again. I waited anxiously for him to re-emerge from his cruiser with the ticket. He finally did, and in approaching my opened window, he said, “In the forces, huh?” “Not really!” I replied, thinking he had taken a turn. In keeping with my self-built traditions, I wanted to gather this ignorant man’s attention by making one thing clear with one word. “Navy!”, I said. It still didn’t register. Now I was witness to a lengthy one-way discussion about how many guys he got today, the dangers of speeding through an uncontrolled access highway, and “I know it’s warm and dry, but don’t speed on my highway!” Dealing with a mobile mountie who seemed totally oblivious to any international crisis but well-versed in his duties at handing out tickets and what corner store got knocked off in Sussex last night, told me of an imbalance within our country’s cause. After the longest twenty minutes that I can remember, my parting shot to the invulnerable constable was, “I find it hard to believe that you and I work for the same boss!”

The next morning, I reported into the office and immediately found that because of my time in sea training in working up ships, there was a need to assist the sea-trainers who were spread thin through three ships. The plan was to exercise the ships’ companies and help prepare them for inevitable war during the first leg transit to Gibraltar. A/S escort, HMCS *Fraser* was to sail in consort and would act in a support of the 3-ship task group until arrival at Gibraltar. Once through “the Pillars” and into the Med’ at least to us the sea trainers, was an unknown. The main corps of the staff including the Commander and the E.O. Brett Dutnall, (son of Ken from Singapore days) were to ride *Athabaskan*. As she was senior ship, she would carry CANCOMFLT, Commodore Summers and his staff. *Protecteur* in the meantime had gone through a large exchange of crew and there would be much emphasis toward ship famil’, firefighting, and chemical warfare training. . .and being a large ship, that would need a considerable amount of staff also. However, *Terra Nova* while having to remove her AZROC mount and adding CWIS, 40mm bofors and AA missiles, was to remain relatively consistent with her crew. As such, there were only four sea-trainers sent to her consisting of the Combat Officer, LCdr John McInnis, CPO1 ‘Joe’ Chiasson the shipwright, the Chief Yeoman, and myself. It was a challenging event. Like submarine sea-training and very-unlike ship sea-training, there was to be no engineering

officer to respond to. I liked that. As we boarded *Terra Nova*, it was easy to see that our work was to be straightforward. As John was the sole officer, I quickly suggested that he had enough on his slate with sorting out the wardroom, so “Leave us to it down below sir, and we’ll see you in a few days!” That, as an intriguing surprise, was to be the case.

We sailed on a beautiful day in August and for the first time that I could ever remember, the whole city of Halifax showed moral support for the navy. People were on the wharves, docks, and Point Pleasant Park shoreline to bid us all farewell. The feeling within the ship was so very uncertain and the knowledge of when the Task Group was to return home was anybody’s guess. . .if ever it would. Meanwhile, it was a proud moment for these three ships, plus consort *Fraser*, and the anxiety to get on with the task and deal with the uncertainties was on everybody’s mind. But for the moment it was time to reflect and relish in the encouraging cheers and well wishes.

I stood at the guardrail on the quarterdeck beside Joe. I welled with a bittersweet tear. It was difficult to be humble. And just to sweeten the send-off while off Chebucto Light, a high-speed modernized “cape islander”, sallied down our starboard side several times. Upon her foredeck was a young lady scantily dressed in a bikini, negative ‘upper hammock’. We marvelled! She marvelled! We thought, “you lucky bastard later tonight...the guy driving the boat.” What a classic send-off!

Terra Nova’s coxswain was a former submarine RP and good chum of mine named CPO1 Fred Childs. Freddie always had that assuring smile about him remembering well his determination, hard work and friendship from days in *Okanagan*. You could easily bet that the ship’s company was going to be exposed to a very mature method of leadership and if you weren’t prepared to pull your weight, Fred had methods that could embarrass you into doing things. The Chief ERA was Mike Tracy who was strongly supported by George Cormier, the Chief ET and former sea-trainer. The Chief Gunner was the big, strapping Jerry Decourcy who would lead well alongside the seamanship dexterity of a chief bos’n’s mate named PO1 Chris Lang, I/C of boarding parties. Along with Gordie Melrose, the whittler, and the vast experiences in chem’ warfare of CPO Corkum, “Corky” of course, it was obvious that a good nucleus of strong chiefs was going to make this uncommon method of working-up, a very challenging experience. A very practical approach to the task immediately began. Mike came to me and together we agreed that as a rule, engineering drills on the



machinery plant was going to be difficult to do because of the constant need to keep the SOA. I assured him that we were not going to have boilers blacking out and lube oil failures that would cause us to come to a screaming halt. . .for exercise, for exercise! “We’re gonna have a lot more than a bearing lube oil failure on our hands if a fukkin’ great missile comes barrelin’ through the engine room!” I exclaimed. “Instead Mike, we’re gonna work on getting out of a burning, smoke-filled, sinking ship the quickest and safest way we can.”

It didn't take long. On the very next morning, I personally made exits up the escape ladders of the machinery spaces but came to a grinding halt as I reached the compartment hatch on the deckhead above. There were obstacles and deterrents. The handwheel was red hot as were the ladder railings. It was difficult to see the “arrows” which told the escapee in which direction the hatch handwheel was to be operated to release it. Not to mention the gunge and crap that filled the coaming as I eventually opened it. . .worse, it was fouled by having a leg of the ascending escape ladder in the main cafeteria leading to the upper deck, wrongly positioned on the engine room escape hatch. Although there was no interference, similar conditions existed with the adjacent boiler room escape hatch. Considering all of these factors, there needed to be a streamlined and watch-confident method of exiting the machinery spaces in the event of a catastrophe.



DDE 259 - HMCS Terra Nova

Four fire retardant “water-gel” blankets had been added to *Terra Nova*’s damage control inventory prior to sailing, and whichever Marcom NBCD staff officer provided the authorization, didn’t do the same with

instructions on how to use them or where they should be strategically positioned. Maybe it was just as well that experience and initiative should take priority. . . from the people that anticipated in having to use them. No staff officer had ever steamed the spaces and therefore, wouldn't be customarily aware of the threat that a burning, damaged and flooding machinery space may present. We from the navy, all remember the *Kootenay* explosion, and if those poor souls had had such protection, they might be still around to give advice. In bearing witness to the ones who were lucky to survive and would see another day at sea after all, I will never forget a stoker named "Dinger" Bell. After he had gone through hell in the healing process both mentally as well as physically, he was such an admirable but unquestionably, a very audacious man. He worked hard and played very, very hard. He deserved the joy of the latter. He became a submariner in *Okanagan* and it was with an element of pride that you would have the opportunity to serve, as well as go ashore with him. His multiple scars and raspy voice were grim realities of the fear and terror that he and his shipmates experienced. At times after a few tipples, he would utter of the hell. Climbing the engine room ladder in acrid black smoke with melting layers of smoldering skin hanging from his arms like icicles, all this while unavoidably hearing the screams of dying men below him somewhere within the black, choking smoke.

In *Terra Nova*, simple math' had it that there were four men in each machinery space watch but with only four water-gel blankets. If both compartments were affected by the same explosion, there was another obstacle however fundamental. The length of the blankets were almost sufficient that they could safely enshroud two escapees on a near vertical ladder, provided that the second escapee was close behind by no more than two rungs behind the first escapee. "Stay close. Don't worry about where your gasping-for-air nose ends up!" said the first escapee to the second. And finally, holding the blanket would also provide insulation for grasping the ladder railings. We concluded that two blankets would be positioned at the machinery consoles in both the engine and boiler rooms. Further, 'whipping' the hatch handwheels with cod-line provided more insulation for the hands and repetitious visits to the hatch position would certainly accustom the user to which direction they were to be operated. The machinery space watchkeepers went to work. When being relieved, they would exit via escape hatches. Bunk counterpanes became the practice blankets and constant use of the hatches made them progressively more operable by design. Familiarity increased in that if the compartments were

filled with black smoke and/or the lights all went out, confidence with the process gave a man a chance.

A lot of other initiatives went on too. We determined that bulkhead door curtains were needed to curb fatal and toxic smoke that would ensue from below decks fires. These were fabricated by a ship's bos'n, who would at one time be identified as a Sailmaker because of his mastery at the sewing machine. Within 24 hours, we could now isolate the transverse w/t bulkheads of major compartments on the Burma Road while allowing people to transit from one interior compartment to another or if need be, the entire length of the ship. Damage Control teams were assigned to messes that were in close proximity of their action stations which increased gas and w/t integrity close down time considerably to the maximum damage control condition, Zulu Alpha. The lads were even advised to turn in with their laggin' on to save time dressing, to eliminate the congestion presented in doing so, but more importantly, body protection from potential heat and flame. In the meantime, the stifling heat in the machinery spaces was becoming a concern as we steamed beyond the continental shelf and into the Gulf Stream. For many years, I have been an advocate that when on or surrounded in warm sea temperatures in Her Majesty's sultry & sweltering engine rooms, tea and hot tea only was to be the choice of beverage. Water, soda pop, limers, and milk certainly had no place here gained from my experiences in the equatorial waters of Singapore for two years and plenty of trips to the Caribbean. The trick we had learnt was to raise the body temperature with hot tea, thereby decreasing the gradient between ambient and body temperature. Sort of equalizing the old bod' let's say. Coffee would likewise work, but savour the taste of a good old cup of 'rosie-lee'. Well as previously accounted while shutting ventilation fan "M" openings for condition Zulu Alpha for gas-attacks, the ambient temperatures of the machinery spaces would soar to unbearable levels. To read a thermometer at a very humid 125-130 degrees F. on the engine room console platform was evidence to the fact that the stokers who had to man the spaces were limited to 15-minute watches. In order to monitor the efficiency and turnovers, I remained in the space for almost 50 minutes while each watch relieved. . . constantly replenishing with tea to avoid dehydration. And not to forget of the engine room presence of used tea leaves with "Duds' first aid remedy" for burns from days long ago in *Micmac*.

Meanwhile Corky, as the highly trained expert in chemical warfare procedures, turn-stiled the entire crew through in donning 'gas suits' while going through the precautions and measures for protection in anticipation

of Saddam's "gas-attacks". The buffer, Chris Lang did likewise in his exclusiveness. He had managed to organize the various boarding parties into worthwhile and effective teams in matters of small-arms training, self-defence, boat-handling, and seamanship. And close sea-training partner Joe Chiasson became increasingly concerned about the lack of a more direct escape route to the upper deck. As a very practical and experienced Chief Shipwright, he had many pre-conceived and sensible ideas that were put to good use. The captain, Cdr Andrews, then agreed to the Joe's recommendation that a W/T escape hatch be fitted in way of where the AZROC mount had been removed in Halifax with a "Kootenay hatch." All of these activities were underway during that brisk passage to Gibraltar. By the time we were in hailing distance to the 'Rock', the Task Force encountered their first anti-aircraft exercise. Deep below at the after section base, one could hear the roar of French Mirage fighter jets as they soared over the ship in simulating air attacks. Edginess turned into a major concern when a fighter or two had made their very low altitude fly-over, a voice crackled over the intercom "On top now! On top now!" That was assuring but what was despairing is that the announcement came several seconds after the jet could be heard overhead. "What the fuk's goin' on up there anyway?" spoke of all eyes and heads looking nervously at the deckhead above, simply overlooking that light was travelling faster than sound. The atmosphere became quickly unnerving and began to eat away at the confidence that had developed. What was it really going to be like in theatre?

The next day *Terra Nova* entered Gib' harbour because of a turbo-generator problem facilitated by the extra time needed to ship the escape hatch that was being airlifted from Halifax. The task group would remain offshore for further independent exercises until the following day.

On arrival our small but forthright foursome, that included John McInnis, quickly got ashore. . .to get out of the way. The first place we headed after getting barrack rooms at HMS *Rook* was the bistro bar at the Queen's Hotel. . .old stomping grounds from *Okanagan* days. The next day, the remainder of the task force came alongside and the bustle was to continue. Seemingly, however, little old *Terra Nova*, with generator repaired and now having the hatch fitted, was left out of all of the activities. "Just as well!" said the crew. "We're confident again. Officers don't hear right." they concluded. We sailed two days later to do a brief exercise just inside the Mediterranean. Beyond that stage, the three ships would proceed through the 87 mile @ 6 knots Suez and onto the Persian Gulf. Our job completed for as much as sea trainers could contribute to, was over. Later

and well after midnight as ‘darkened’ ships, *Athabaskan* and *Terra Nova* would respectively go alongside *Protecteur*’s port side, the intent to disembark the entire staff from the three ships via jackstay to consort *Fraser* on her starboard side. There were very uncertain feelings among the crews and sea-trainers alike on that very dark night. There was a feeling that we were deserting them to fend for themselves. Now well-prepared for what may ever happen from here on in, posed questions that had no answers. They were now truly, and aggressively ready, to sail into the unknown.

Once aboard *Fraser*, we re-united as an over-loaded but complete sea training staff and although it was 0200 in the morning, sandwiches, beer if you cared to, and a generous bathing of hospitality fell upon us. *Fraser* and her ship’s company had been unsung in all of the preparations, having provided her maximum availability and personnel for many extra duties in support of the three-ship flotilla now quickly disappearing into the moonless night. We reversed course to return to Gibraltar to quickly understand of the relief of Frasers’ and their many commitments they had made in the previous three weeks...even the standing of duty watches and volunteering a flash-up watch in *Terra Nova* before sailing. The captain was Commander “Jay” Plante, another former submariner. He ran his ship in such a modest and humble way that the services he and the ship’s company provided to the task force went unrecognized. Always available and without delay, as a radar target, a vessel to train the boarding parties, a ship to approach for jackstays, act as an anti-embargo merchantman, deliver the groceries, take the mail. . .and offer a very wide berth when told to do so. Not too shabby!

We were transferred ashore by barge and landed back at the ‘Rock’ by noon the next day. *Fraser* then steamed westbound for Halifax with a brief fuel stop in Madeira and some well-earned rest. After a night ashore in the alleys and bistros of Gibraltar, we were to fly to Shearwater via Herc’. It would be a long and gruelling flight, anticipating strong headwinds.

As soon as we had gotten up to cruising altitude, the A/C commander, a grizzled old-timer of a major came walking aft from the cockpit. Typical of any air force transport plane, the engine noise was deafening and where some of us in the distance could read his lips in welcoming us all aboard, he then leaned and bent toward some of the guys up front. Suddenly, eight people including the major and seven chiefs grouped up around a strapped-down CHAKON whose flat surfaced top stood waist high. A bridge game readily ensued that was to become the longest standing up game of cards in military history. After many, many hands of bridge, we were by now

somewhere over Sable Island when the major (who didn't win the bridge game) finally returned to the cockpit. We had been in the air for ten hours and were now making a descent for Shearwater.

Once home again, I returned to SSTG while anxiety prevailed in wondering how those three ships' companies would fair. It would be about a month later when I received a note in the mail from Customs and Excise in Halifax. There was a parcel for me being held in bond. Inquisitively, I made my way to the down town offices on Quinpool Rd. and directed to open this parcel before acknowledging receipt. The return address read HMCS Terra Nova and I became both excited and perplexed. As I fumbled through tape and spare gear packaging, much to our collective surprises that now included the customs officer, my hands were to emerge with the wardroom tea pot. A note inside read:

Dear Buster,

It seems that since you left the ship, nobody can make a good cup of tea like you. We thought that this would be more useful to you than anybody else in the cafeteria, so have a very Merry Christmas on us.

Yours aye, Fred Childs and Mike Tracy

I was overjoyed, recalling the situation aboard after sailing from Halifax. Wetting tea in *Terra Nova* lacked class and imagination. Plunkin' a tea bag into a cup of not yet boiled water, just didn't cut it. I looked for a tea pot but none was to be found until the chief steward intervened. He later came back down below from the wardroom pantry with a sterling silver bone-handled 40 oz. tea pot, RCN Stock No. 545 0355 complete with a dated pusser's RCN "scar." Along with hallmarks, it was also hand etched with "HMCS Cowichan" on its' base. . . ascribing to the stores issue and return cycling of the recent west-coast based destroyer *Terra Nova*, that came out of refit while wooden minesweeper *Cowichan* might have entered one. The chief steward accompanied the hand-over declaring, "Here chief. They don't drink tea uptop in the bunhouse!" When sizing the event, evidence that this piece of prized silverware had been in the navy since way back in the fifties or sixties, and the finest ever, cup of tea emitted from it. . . as it still does today, as we our family, gather round our dining room table in retirement.

CHAPTER TWENTY

COMMAND CHIEF PETTY OFFICER

Operation Desert Storm was yet to ensue as SSTG Coxswain, Lucky Gordon stepped into my office a few days just before that Christmas in 1990. He said, “Buzzy! I just got a call from Commodore Westropp’s secretary. She said the Commodore wants to see you at 1300 today.”

Commodore Westropp was the Chief of Staff (Personnel) and I became a little bewildered yet again. So much like I did as earlier recounted in 1967 when I was told to report directly to a Commander. The same sort of curiosity began to overwhelm me as I prepared to tidy myself up good and proper for this time, a Commodore. As soon as I arrived at his office that afternoon, with a smile he beckoned me in. He didn’t hesitate for a moment by looking at me while quickly bubbling out with a question that was unbelievable and above all, so seemingly aimless considering my background and by now, the many years that I had weathered in the navy.

“Chief Brown! Do you think you could handle the Canadian Forces Chief Warrant Officer’s job?” Astounded and puzzled, I replied, “What’s goin’ on sir? I don’t know anything about tanks and airplanes but I can sure do well at lookin’ after the navy!” Well after a little bit of more discussion, there seemed to be a missing component or two here. Never before had anyone gone directly to the top NCO appointment in the Canadian Forces without having been at the navy, army, or air force command level as a preliminary. But as it was the navy’s cyclic turn, present Command Chief Jimmy Carroll was as it appeared, not an option. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Jim was invariably contemplating the idea of retirement instead.

I went in to see Jim in his nearby office after that brief meeting with the Commodore and explained what we had discussed. Immediately, he briskly went out of his office as if he was on a mission. As I was to later discover that by quizzically refraining of the Commodore’s invitation, I had unknowingly helped Jim in settling and making up his mind. No doubt he had gone in to talk to the Admiral himself. He would now head for Ottawa and continue as the Canadian Forces Chief Warrant Officer while interviews would be set for a new Marcom Command Chief Petty Officer in three short weeks to follow. Thus, here I was to go again among four candidates, this my third time in making a run at the job where good friend Marc’ St. Georges was to come out on top. “Oh well!” By January of 1991,

Jimmy was to take a brief course in language training and relieve the CFCWO, John Marr, Marc' would be the Command Chief and with all of this, I returned to the concentration of submarine sea training.

“Startin’ to feel it....”

We were scheduled to do a training run with *Ojibwa* and during that trip, I was suddenly awakened to a reality that I had never even considered since returning to boats. No longer was the anguish of bumpin’ your head and the pain of bangin’ your shins a mild tribulation that at one time like any submariner, I could shake off almost instantly. My God didn’t it hurt these days and on this particular one, Ben was standing in the motor room cubicle as I was going forward. As I came through the bulkhead door, my head was up too high and I thumped it hard on the coaming. After doubling over and groping to the deck in sheer agony, Ben said to me, “Buzzy! D’ya know what? How’s it feel to be the oldest bastard on board?” I became absolutely stunned while my eyes watered from the smart. I was speechless, dumbfounded, and now the pain became more of a torture. I had to think about a few things because going on 51 years old, is just not conducive to aiding to any comfort at sea in submarines.

And then shock and sadness hit the fleet. In just one month almost to the day, Command Chief Marc’ St. Georges had suddenly died through heart complications on the eve of visiting *Margaree* over in Amsterdam with the NATO Squadron. Everyone was shocked.

“If you still want the job...it’s your’s!”

While Marc’ had died, Vice-Admiral George was soon scheduled to pass the command to Vice- Admiral John Anderson, and it is here when I received a fourth call to get my frame up to his office once again. As Anderson was to take over in a few months to follow, George offered to let him make his choice. Now for the fourth time, in “best bib and tucker”, I would amble into the well-appointed surroundings of the Admiral’s office to be greeted by both. Immediately, I was to be re-introduced to Admiral Anderson, for whom I had the occasion of serving under when he was Squadron Commander (Captain (D) of the First Escort Squadron, of which *Skeena* was a part of, and I was her Chief ERA. After handshakes all round, Admiral George passed the discussion to Anderson. “Well Chief

Brown!’ he said. “I know you’ve gone through quite a tempest at being Command Chief.” He looked at me with a sincere smile and then simply said, “If you still want the job. . .it’s your’s !” I thought for a brief moment, and even this time, without another dreaded interview, somehow I didn’t feel so sure. “I need to think about things for a bit, sir. I need to speak to my family.”

I had been through a roller coaster of emotional turmoil in just 18 months but this time it dwelled heavily. In the minds of a maligned few that would opine “foul”, of being graced with propellers on my lapels was one aspect that I could shrug aside. And invariably, feeling like a bridesmaid, the prospects of not having to contend with a “short list” would overwhelmingly erase that reserve. My family and I agreed. . .and by the next day, I passed my response to the Admiral.

Back to sea...aboard everything

As soon as I assumed the appointment, serving Vice-Admiral George was certainly a memorable experience. There was much to do and there would be many challenges. It wasn’t going to be easy. The navy was yet to undergo more increasing change. There was re-organization, total force, gender orientation, new ships entering the fleet, dress issues, strict tobacco rules, and with change, the need for attitudes to accept it. There was lots of grumbling as we also entered the period of personnel reductions, unknown job-security, budget cuts, and the ever- increasing potential for low morale.

It was 1991 and multiples of visits and inspections were the prime focus of Admiral George prior to his departure as the Maritime Commander into retirement. He had absorbed the responsibilities and met the demands of Operation Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf, and now that the ships had returned, the navy had done its job most professionally and the Admiral had very capably seen to it that it did. By the summer, the Change of Command Ceremonies were conducted on a beautiful day in HMC Dockyard where the recently commissioned ‘first of class’ patrol frigate, HMCS *Halifax* served as the focal point for the occasion. There was a huge crowd that included The Lt. Governor of Nova Scotia, the Mayor of Halifax, the Chief of Defence Staff, General De Chastelain and many other dignitaries and guests. Accompanying the CDS was Jimmy Carroll, who by now was comfortably installed in his new appointment as the CF Chief Warrant Officer. Of course, Jim had been the Command Chief to Admiral

George during their visits to the Gulf War theatre of operations and it was fitting that he be present for the ceremony. It was my honour and distinction as the Command Chief Petty Officer to present the Admiral with “his flag” as it was hauled down from the frigate’s mainmast for the last time. It was passed to me in the hangar from the signal deck, and it was to be a proud moment as I stepped down onto the jetty and marched toward the waiting Admiral to pass it to him.

Admiral John Anderson had now assumed Command and within days, I was underway and much travel began. I kept thinking back to the likes of Chief ERA Doncaster and how he went about his business. To be seen and spend as much time at sea as possible. I was to do so almost constantly, the difference being that unlike sea training, I would make it my mutual interest to get aboard every ship and submarine in the navy to see the troops, no matter which coast or where they were. Aboard *Gatineau* in Turkey, *Skeena* from Antwerp to Portugal, *Regina* and the sweepers on the west coast, Somalia in *Preserver*, *Nipigon* from Hamburg to Rosyth, Esquimalt-based east-bound to the Red Sea, *Restigouche* at Norfolk, Virginia, or even St. John’s Newfoundland in *Ojibwa* in recalling just a few. It didn’t matter. It was my premise to have one foot in the messdeck and the other in headquarters.

London, Upholder, CFB Lahr and Nipigon

By this sub-title, what could they possibly have in common? It was 03 May 1992 on Battle of the Atlantic Sunday when “The Sailor Statue” had just been unveiled in Halifax. On completion of the emotional ceremony at Sackville Landing, Jimmy Carroll and I were to fly out that evening and head overseas. Jimmy had visits to make with the soldiers in CFE Lahr in Germany where I was destined later, and once at Heathrow, I would join Admiral Anderson in London the next day to visit with the CF Liaison authority, Captain Ted Davey and his staff.

Watch for Twiglets

Just a few days before that trip, I ran into an old submarine winger in the dockyard named Buddy Thomas. Buddy a former sonar rate had been out for several years by now and had taken courses and graduated to a Ship Master’s ticket on Auxiliary craft. We had a quick exchange and where he

had learnt that I was going over to YewKay, he said “Buster! Do me a favour. There are these things called ‘Twiglets’ over there that look a lot like pretzels. If you happen to see any, would you get a couple of packages home for me?” Well, I had done a few favours for a lot of people before but it seems that the simple things in life are sometimes more important to deal with than the necessary. I said to Bud, “Okay Buddy. I’ll keep an eye open for ‘em. H-m-m. Twiglets you say, huh?”

So now in London at CDLS, the once-upon-a-time HMCS *Niobe* where I met the quiet LS George Stark nearly thirty years before, we were to spend two days with briefings as well as talking and briefing Canadian matelots stationed overseas. We then proceeded by train to Portsmouth to visit FOSM at HMS *Dolphin*. This came at a time when Canada was looking at several possibilities of replacing the O-boats, and the opportunity arose by going out to sea in the newly commissioned HMS/m *Upholder* that in a few uncomfortable years later, was to become HMCS *Chicoutimi*.

At that time, the decision to lay up the *Upholder* class boats had not yet been made and interest just might be aimed at having that class of submarine built for the Canadian navy. We sailed for a long day trip and familiarly, I spent all of my time with the Outside Wrecker going through the boat in order to get a feel for this yet to be proven class of submarine. As the ‘first of class’ with several more yet to be commissioned, there appeared to be a lot of nagging glitches that still had to be sorted out as the class fore-runner. One thing I did take note of was, everything seemed easy to get at in terms of maintenance and repair. That might have been the scary part as the boat seemed to be very labour intensive in these early stages. As the visit to *Dolphin* and the ride in *Upholder* concluded, the Admiral and I parted company while I would journey on to CFB Lahr in Germany to have a visit with the large support crowd in navy blue. By now, Jimmy Carroll had already come and gone, my curiosity increased as to wherever he might be now.

At Frankfurt Airport, and as earlier planned for, I was met by old winger Joe Smale from *Protecteur* days. Joe the Whittler, was stationed in a small logistics unit attached to the US base at Heidelberg and among well over 135 supply, medical and admin’ lower deckers based in Germany, as the senior CPO2, he was their representative. Once I retrieved my luggage and cleared immigration, we started off on the long trek to the airport’s parkade. What a parkade it was, as it consisted of 5 or 6 levels. Joe had forgotten to look back after he had arrived. He and I spent almost an hour in attempts to find his car.

Whittlin' vittles at their best

A frantic hour rushed by but after a successful hunt, we journeyed to Heidelberg and joined Joe's wife Wendy for lunch at their haus. We then continued on to Lahr, my never appreciating the long distance to go until we finally arrived after a 5-hour drive on a very congested autobahn that slowed and sped up continuously. I was scheduled to brief all the sailors the next morning, so for the meantime, there was to be a little activity at the mess that night. The senior cook was P1 submariner Shane Irvine who I had also earlier sailed with and would in time, become Coxswain of the ill-fated boat *Chicoutimi*. When we arrived at the mess, we were joined by more whittlers, Gordie Melrose from Gulf War *Terra Nova*, Barry McNeil, and another old friend from the "scribes" branch, P1 Ad' Writer, Eleanor Clark.

Our duty is to sample.....

Shane immediately informed us that on this night that there was to be an official mess dinner held for about a hundred diners, they being the 8th Canadian Hussars. The dinner tables and seating had been all arranged in a large room that was to be cordoned off with a folding accordion type wooden partition. On our side of the partition, a table had been set for six. Joe, Gordie, Ellie, Barry, myself and at the head', Shane the host. His pretence was that we should engage in sampling the dinner courses and beverages prior to the mass of hungry diners on the other side of the partition so that they would be ultimately assured of the finest of fare. (it had familiar tones of the Millionaires' Club in *Stadacona's* A-Galley) After all, these tankers were paying for this fine cuisine that was yet to be served from the resource of their own pockets. We began with a fresh garden salad, Coq'uil St. Jacques and buttered rolls with fine white wine, determined "Okay!" Then the mess diners were served. Our table then proceeded with Chateaubriand with red wine. . .and then we determined, "Okay!" so that the soldiers could now be served theirs. While they partook in their entree, it was now time for Shane to have served to us, copious amounts of Black Forest cake of course, followed by a cheese, nuts and grapes board with both white and red wines. We then again approved "Okay!" of these servings for the pongos to engage in while now a decanter of port appeared on the table. While remaining seated, we would have a naval "Toast of the Day" while the drowning out of the loud noise

of chatter of the unsuspecting on the other side of the partition, were now just starting to eat their duff. By the time the folding partition was reopened and the Hussars all retired to the main bar, we, and our dining venue had completely disappeared and retired to our ante-room, the Stag Bar.

An argument with a tank

Later that evening we had learnt that there had been a bit of a prang-up right outside of the main doors to the mess. The story went that a wife of one of the tankers had driven hubby to the mess so that after the mess dinner, he wouldn't have to drive home all garbled up. The anxious couple appeared rather early prior to the reception while environmental preparations were still underway for the evening's events. One of those preparations included the opposed positioning of two Leopard tanks so that their elevated gun-barrels would form a natural arched entrance for the soon-to-arrive armoured Hussars at the adjacent main gate leading to the mess. As the tanker and his wife had arrived, the Leopards had not yet taxied into position, but while the wife had spent a few moments talking to some acquaintances in the mess, they since had. She then left the mess, jumped into the car to return home and hurriedly made her exit at the gate. In speeding away, she failed to realize that where just moments earlier there was an open roadway, but now a 40-ton Leopard tank had filled the void. She drove right into the tank. A little scratched pongo paint here and there and it never even shuddered, while the front end of the car was a complete write-off.

Hamburg and "ole' ships, 'Nipigon"

By noon the next day, I had completed the briefs with the matelots. We all joined in for lunch at the bar but then by 1300, it was time to get going. Barry was to drive me to the train station and it was close. . .so close that we had to race to the next station as we saw the train pull out of town. I was to move on to Hamburg to join *Nipigon* in the NATO squadron and ride her to Rosyth in Scotland. *Nipigon*, among those few ships that carried females, had appropriate numbers and by the very 'early nineties', women among ships' companies were limited to just 5 per cent but *Nipigon's* included a quarter of her complement who were female. Thus, a greater

demand and dependency existed among them, unlike a ship with lesser numbers where physical tasking was often and easily substituted with male capability.

The coxswain was another “ole’ ships” from *Skeena* days in the name of John Martin. Marty had joined the ship at a time when the female composition was not working so well for a number of reasons and he saw to it that it had to improve. He did so, and the results were quite obvious. There was a feeling of high morale and accomplishment among them as I spent considerable time in conversation in discovering “How it used to be” verses “Now”, and the changes made since John Martin had taken over as the coxswain.

As I recollect in my time at sea in the navy, I had encountered a lot of heavy seas and storms, including the one in the North Atlantic of ‘59. And in my recollection, this one was one rated right up there too. The North Sea was boiling and stayed that way for the entire transit and exercise period of six days. The in-company exocet armed Leander frigate, HMS *Phoebe*, had taken on some very serious structural damage and had to break off and head into Rosyth prior to ETA while the remainder of the squadron completed the scheduled exercises. However, battered and beat up, we finally arrived at Rosyth. I was to get ashore and head for Edinburgh and the three-week itinerary had really tired me out. There I would stay overnight and catch an early morning flight to Heathrow and connecting flights to Toronto and Halifax. I was weighed down with a lot of kit on that trip because of the magnitude of events and locations. Civvies, uniforms, work dress, steamin’ gear and all the appropriate caps, berets and footwear that went with the different rigs.

Twiglets.....got ‘em!

It was by now noon on that day, and I had noticed that there were some nuke’ submarines refitting in Rosyth ‘yard, so I certainly had to wander into the senior rates’ mess at HMS *Cochrane*. Sure as hell, I ran into some old submarine mates. Handshakes and hugs all round, the pints flowed and old stories abounded. An hour had passed and it was time to head out and catch the train for Edinburgh. I was just finishing off my pint when my eyes caught upon a display of bags hanging behind the bar: TWIGLETS. “Twiglets! You got Twiglets.” I said to the duty barman. I then went on to explain about Buddy back in Halifax and his craving for this rare confectionary item. And as there was only 2 or 3 bags left on this display

card, he then declared, "Let's fix Buddy up!" He went around the rear of the bar and shortly returned with a complete display card of twenty-four packages of Twiglets. So as everybody became amused with the offering, they all decided to autograph the back of the card. . .never ever having met Buddy. My problem was how would I get them back to Halifax without bending the card and crushing them all. So into the vertical "don't-fold" flight bag they went, suspended from a wire hanger alongside a complete uniform, a mess kit, and a set of uncreased civvies. With a little bit of smiling persuasion, the bag would be hung up in the executive class closets of connecting airplanes as yet to be boarded. "Oh Buddy. . .the pain of it all!" I eventually arrived in Halifax and after a few days, went to visit Buddy up in the QHM offices to make the surprise delivery.

I stood at his office door brandishing the card of Twiglets in their abundance. Overjoyed I was of the double bonus in snaring personalized greetings from submariners across the pond, but I was to be just as quickly disappointed. Buddy was getting older and maybe a little miserable I supposed, and had forgotten some basics about the brotherhood and sincerity of submariners in not recalling of the hilarity and the effort of it all by just saying, "Oh..... Thanks Buster!"

The '*Iroquois*, two Auroras and an Orion

Another memorable but tedious trip was a visit to *Iroquois* during the war on Bosnia. I would travel in my own car to Greenwood, fly to the US Air Base at Sigonella in Sicily aboard an Aurora, Air Italia to Naples, by car to Bari Italy on the other coast, and finally aboard a Sea King helo to join the ship on patrol in the Adriatic.

After 3 or 4 days on ops', *Iroquois* then proceeded out of theatre to take some R&R in Palermo. The transit took us south of "the boot" and then north through the Messina Straits between Sicily and the mainland. Skippered by the jovial and fun-loving Commander Lenny Edmonds, it was most intriguing and a rarity to observe the serious side of this man when and where it was needed most. In the darkness of the pilotage, he would be sitting in the captain's chair and not uttering a word. Eyes into the darkness and the countless channel buoys and sea traffic, one could only imagine of the potential for collision or grounding that were going on in his mind. Young and tender Officers of the Watch in the learning stages and under the guidance and tenacity of their captain . . . indeed were they doing it properly as my mind fled back to sea training days with Gary

Garnett as well as Hal' Davies and Albert Tanguay aboard *Protecteur*. It was assuring to see a man with a jovial and care-free reputation. Hard at work with the use of his senses only went to prove that the element of playing hard and working even harder, is Lenny Edmond's contribution that keeps the navy on course in maintaining its pride and vigilance.

“I will return!”to Anzio

Once at Palermo, it was late that evening when I boarded a ferry that would do an overnight crossing to Naples on the mainland. I had gone full circle in one week. From there, I got on a train that would take me to Anzio. . .for my second visit with dad at his grave side. Stepping off the train at nearby to Anzio. . . Villa Claudia, thoughts raced back to the days in *Skeena* when Randy Tyler and I rode the train from Kiel, my first time visit ever. Dad's grave had been well kept and it was assuring to know that the groundskeeper had kept his word in 1983. A miserable day it was as the rains became relentless, but once the visit was sufficient, it was time to head back to Sicily.

It would be two days later on a Friday that I was to leave the ship in Palermo and make my way to Sigonella. Once there, my flight would be aboard a U.S.N., P3C Orion that had completed several patrols in the Adriatic and was destined for Maine, U.S.A. I would then transfer to a Canadian Aurora that was returning to Greenwood on a jammy “rabbit-run” from Boston. The flight would arrive on a Sunday and allowed that I could drive to Halifax from Greenwood and in time for the 0800 Monday morning briefing and Admiral's meeting with his chiefs of staff that I always attended when in town.

On the morning of departure from Palermo, I was to learn that two killicks from the ship were to urgently return to Halifax for compassionate reasons, and I was asked to help in getting them home. The cost and congestion of commercial flights in order to get from remote Palermo to Halifax was not practical and had it been, very time consuming. So for those reasons, a request for space for two extra matelots on the Orion and the Aurora was granted. Now it was my absorbed task to den-mother these two fellows' home because of their unfamiliarity with Italian, Spanish and American geography, the use of transient quarters, and the regulations in flying aboard A/S patrol aircraft as passengers.

The time had come and a car awaited us on the jetty. Before we stepped across the brow, I paid a quick visit to the C.O.'s cabin as a courtesy. I

knocked on the door a few times until I heard a hoarse and dragged out, "Who is it?" Realizing now that I had probably woke him up from a late night hooley ashore, "Chief Brown sir." I said. "Came to say g'bye sir!" The door opened and there was Lenny, with a smile and bleary eyes. "Gotta go, sir. "Have a couple of your lads with me. I'll make sure they get home." "Thanks, Chief!" he said. "It's important that they do . . . 'n have a safe trip." he replied, while I mused at the state of Lenny but how well-deserved a run ashore he must have had. That spoke well of the confidence and ability within this man.

It would be a long and hectic drive to Sigonella where I was to learn that the two travel mates I had absorbed had never once flown in a pusser's airplane. At Sigonella, we were to find out that the Orion was to depart for Maine the following morning and we were to be at the ramp by 0600. Now we had to gear up accommodations fearing that my two companions might just get lost, so I had to wangle a way to get them both into E-9 VIP quarters for the night. At the chance of U.S. accommodations personnel not being familiar with rank equivalents as well as Canadian naval uniform insignia, the two killicks would be my assistants as E-8 chief petty officers and no further questions would arise. And to help get their minds at ease, they were graciously accepted into the CPO mess that evening for a brew or two. Off to bed they went with a few down their necks and now there would be no slack hammocks in the early morning . . . as I knew where I could find them.

We arrived on time and an unanticipated wait had begun. Flight Lima Charlie 84 reserve naval air crew of Patron 8 Squadron out of Brunswick Me. had been on task from Sigonella for over three weeks over the Adriatic and was extremely anxious to get back to the states. We were to fly out by 0800 but learnt that there was a hydraulic leak on the bird and the flight would be delayed. Well, typical of anything that flies, just like the old Argus'es and Auroras held up by 'cross-winds' at Kindley in Bermuda, the wait got strung out until we boarded at 1400. Then we were to find out now that a fuel leak was discovered during pre-flight checks. Procedure in the U.S. A/S Naval Air arm is that the crew is not ground-supported in that after completing 12 hours of either flying or doing maintenance or repair within their capability on the ground, they are restricted from flying until after an 8-hour crew rest. Where the tasking commenced at 0800 that morning, the anxiety of LCdr Roy Peterson and his crew to get off the ground before 2000 was looming.

By 1950, we were finally taxi-ing out onto the runway and were airborne just a few short moments later. Finally, we were on our way, but

were now buffeted by 165-knot headwinds. The best we could do then was set down at the USNavsta in Rota, Spain. The time of touch down was 0030, now Sunday morning, and with an hour's time change, we had been flying for five hours in logging such a mere distance.

On the ground, we were met by the Command Master Chief of the base who having received word from Navsta Sigonella that a Canadian E-9 and two E-8's were aboard, graciously handed us keys to transient quarters. The two killicks were gobsmacked once more as they entered to enjoy the surroundings of VIP perks for a second night in a row and all the while and in earshot of any of our American friends, I would refer to them as "Chief." We got turned in by 0130 after what was a very, very long day. It had seemed like an eternity had passed in the waiting and waiting all day, while surviving only on junk food out of the "Ghee-Dunk" in the hangar at Sigonella.

Sundays can present little support

The next morning, the a/c commander had called for a 1300 departure that, with the time change, would put us down in Brunswick, Maine sometime in the late afternoon. All aboard and set to go, LC84 now sped along the runway, the crew more anxious now that the USA was only hours away. Everything seemed normal when suddenly the flaps went down as all engines strained in reverse. The airplane rattled and shook as a loud and piercing voice came across the intercom: "**BIRD STRIKE!!!**" Now at the full extent of the runway, LC84 then did an about turn and began a long taxi back to the ramp. Once there and shut down, an overall visual inspection began. Feathers, blood and bird entrails were immediately seen that had entered an engine intake. Further along however, an eight-inch crack was found on the radome, the nose of the airplane. It seemed that a flock of sea birds had crossed the runway at take-off and one had struck the radome and careened into the intake. Well getting the engine sorted out was almost routine procedure but changing out a radome was an entirely different matter. It was a Sunday and like most navies unless they're at sea, in the air, or at war, the people in them are usually closed and gone for the day, especially if they're in shore jobs in barracks and in this case, a naval air station.

After about an hour, the duty maintenance chief was finally located. He appeared on the tarmac to eventually determine that there was a spare radome on the base. Now more time would elapse in the painstaking job

on this Sunday, of getting a storesman to release it, finding a forklift and a driver to deliver it, and of course a mobile crane and crew to take down the old and lift up the new. By 1500, a small convoy appeared from somewhere within the depths of the base, but as the replacement radome came closer in view, the a/c commander declared, "Shit! She ain't mod-ed. We can't take it."

Although interchangeable, he was referring to two so-called "bug eyes" that were fitted to the existing dome, where the only one on the base, the 'would-be replacement' . . . had none. What to do now as he would not be authorized to accept the radome without the modification. As the crew went into a huddle, the two killicks and I drew back and out of the way. A few moments later, heads remained slumped while sad faces spelt that the plane was going to be delayed until a mod'd radome could be flown over from the states. . .and that might be days. I then slowly approached the a/c



*Crew of LC 84 changes out the radome at Rota, Spain
On the right, "arms folded," the E8 Killick observes.*

commander while he looked at me as if he were about to apologize. I said, "Not mod'd eh sir?" That's right chief," he countered. "Can't take it on. . . gotta have the mod." "Well why can't you dis-connect the bug eyes and

take ‘em with us?” He looked at me and said, “That’s why we have chiefs, don’t we Chief?”

Finally, at 1800, with everybody’s fingers crossed and their bods buckled up for take-off, the new radome and the rest of the plane went racing down the runway once again. In the cockpit were a happy and anxious bunch of fliers. . . and the two amber bug-eyes tucked in back aft somewhere. Once at cruising altitude, we were to discover that the headwinds were still strong but had decreased to 125 MPH. It was to be a gruelling 11-hour flight to Brunswick that later eroded with pangs of hunger. Unlike Canadian aircraft that are supplied with nutritious box lunches, nobody stocked up on extra junk food from the hangar ghee-dunk at Rota. But after a very rocky ride and many cat-naps, we were finally down on the ground where the Aurora from Boston had long ago arrived, patiently awaiting LC84.

Right on time

Within 30 minutes we were airborne again and the CWO flight engineer was an old friend named Frank Balogh. Frank was a classmate on the Chief Warrant Officers Course at CFB Borden in 1986 and on this short-haul flight over to Greenwood, he insisted I sit in the ‘jump seat’ in the cockpit.

By 0300 on the Monday morning, we finally touched down to be greeted by the customs officials. Everybody aboard the plane including the two killicks were waved through the barrier . . .everybody except me who they decided should have a complete spot-check. “Why me?” I wondered, as the time to get to Halifax, deliver the killicks and then make it in time for the Admiral’s 0800 meeting was beginning to dwindle. So by 0400, we were off the plane, had cleared customs and were now driving out of the gate. The killicks were so glad to be getting home and the anxiety for their reasons to be, was bittersweet. I managed to deliver each of them right to their doorsteps in Dartmouth where I bid them each good-bye and good luck. By 0730 I was in the rush-hour traffic heading across the McDonald bridge for the dockyard in Halifax. Just a few minutes after the meeting began, I was given an elbowed nudge by CdrPickford, the EA. “Hey Chief. . .wake up! . . .Jet lag?”

Chief first . . . then the Admiral

In paying a visit to the destroyer HMCS *Kootenay* on the west coast in 1994, I accompanied Vice-Admiral Larry Murray aboard a Coast Guard helo in Victoria for a trip ‘up-island’ somewhere near Campbell River. We landed upon an elevated helo-pad on a small island where the ship was well across the inlet, visual at about three miles. Spiralling down a long run of wooden steps led us toward a small boat dock, we were then to board *Kootenay*’s Boston Whaler and head over to her. On the dock stood a 3-man, Coxswain and boat’s crew awaiting the admiral’s arrival.

The procedure regarding the boarding of ship’s boats, zodiacs, duty boats, and all small craft and tenders, stems from a tradition that through the course of time, evolved into a regulation and a mark of respect. Sometime in the early 18th century, the Admiralty had determined that: “Juniors enter a boat first and leave it last so that the seniors shall not in any way be wetted or incommoded, as so often occurs when lying alongside in rough weather!” So even today, meant that lower-deckers board a boat before a commissioned officer but only proceed ashore after the officer was finally ashore and conceivably, not “wetted or incommoded.”

Well, the method by which sheltering admirals from the elements as defined in the Admiralty’s yester-year reasoning was certainly qualified. The then unforeseen characteristics presented through the advent of 20th century boat propulsion didn’t play a part in arriving at the 18th century ruling for boats alongside. On this day, there was a real stiff and chilly breeze and it was evident that at a speed of 15 to 20 knots, somebody was going to get awfully wet. . .not I, as a one-time submariner trained in the skilful art of keeping the water out.

Once firmly on the dock salutes were exchanged and life-jackets were issued to the boss and I. Then donned and in accordance with the custom, I was immediately welcomed to step aboard first. Aware of what might just happen, I briskly made my way aft to the windshield canopy of the sheltered steering position. The admiral was then piped aboard and now with a bit of an unsure look on his smirkful face, the bowsman invited him to take up the most comfortable seat onboard . . . an ‘open to the weather’ deck locker positioned directly in front of the canopy. He then turned and looked at me through the windshield with a look that spelt out, “Chief! I’m stranded. What will I do?” As the whaler sped away from the island, almost instantly and at every dip of the bows, ‘the greenies’ started to come over and abruptly halt upon the admiral. As I peered forward through the

windshield, the outline of a human shape had begun to develop on the glass for every square inch of his clothing was sodden . . . even his socks. Later, as we boarded *Kootenay* and the “Still” was piped, typical ‘no fuss’ Vice-Admiral Larry Murray maintained a congenial smile and downplayed the ordeal like “This happens to me every day!”

Many other experiences, adventures and incidents I would encounter as the Command Chief. I joined Gatineau in the Black Sea, did another trip to Lahr that followed with picking up ‘ole ships’ *Skeena* in Antwerp in the NATO Squadron and headed for Oporto in Portugal. During the Somalia crisis, I accompanied Vice-Admiral Peter Cairns. After London and Nairobi, we flew into Mogadishu. While there, I boarded and rode *Preserver* to Mombasa. Having intersected the Equator in what may have been dozens of times in submarines in the Far East, the demands of dived operations precluded the opportunity for the custom of ceremony. So as an uncertified ‘Shellback’, I finally received my “Crossing The Line Certificate” Having met him as submariners in Malta in 1965 and sailing with him in *Onondaga* in later years, re-uniting with Admiral Peter Cairns as his Command Chief came as a complete delight and an honour.

1995 had arrived and so did the time for me to step down as the Command Chief and enter into retirement. On one very unforgettable occasion, I was to visit the crew and join the tanker HMCS *Provider* in the Western Atlantic. I would spend some time with the west coast crew while on Task Force exercises with both east coast U.S. and Canadian ships. *Provider* was eastbound on her way to Halifax from Esquimalt and in order to get aboard, I flew out from the NAVSTA at Norfolk Va. by Sea King helo. In stating why the visit was unforgettable, it may be better described as amazing. It came as a result of the extremes that the Canadian Forces sometimes go to in order to honour the Charter of Rights with equal opportunity and encompass people in the service who are from other components. From within this limited few, an incident arose which included someone who was completely oblivious to the ways of mariners and their intensive need for safety and routine precaution at sea. During an overnight transit in heavy and blanketing fog, *Provider* was preparing to receive Task Force ships requiring fuel. Because of reduced visibility, the ship’s very audible and deep ‘key of G’ groan of the fog horn blasted away at 30 second intervals. Suddenly, the telephone rang on *Provider*’s bridge that was hastily answered with the greeting: “Bridge, Officer of the Watch!” at which time, a broken French accent retorted with: “I am very tired. Is it possible to stop making dat noise please? I am trying to sleep.” The voice belonged to an air force blue-clad uniformed female Warrant

Officer whose recently arrived onboard duty assignment was that of the Chief Steward.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“Clear up decks. . .return gear!”

The pipe that is so well-received as an indication that the day shall soon be done as will these chapters conclude through tying up all the loose ends. Clear and secure the upper decks and all compartments. Paint brushes, chipping hammers, long toms, buckets, and anything else that moves and was ‘signed for’. The only bits of kit that never got secured were the stokers’ tool boxes. As most who weren’t of the largest branch in the navy would expect but never admit, the tools of the trade would remain in use until the job was done and everybody else had already secured for the day. Lending credence, Admiral Jellicoe and his impressions at the battle of Jutland: **“The prelude to action is the work of the Engineering Department!”** However, “Secure” for most then, was to be just a few fleeting minutes away.

A little bit of Lore

.....that historical maxim:

“Unless we know where we’ve been, we won’t know where we’re going!”

Saluting the quarterdeck...

In my early years in either the R.N. or the R.C.N., I often wondered why I was given a bollockin’ from the odd Officer of the Day here and there for not saluting the quarterdeck when proceeding ashore. I had known since the time I had joined the sea cadets that there was never a need but for some unknown reason, it seemed that everybody did so for reasons I suppose, that would keep the bosses off your back. Through time that evolved into routine, the whole navy collectively did so and it grew into a fallacy as a regulation. And then one day, I finally found a piece of information that told of the real truth.

The hand salute is required only when stepping aboard in order to salute the quarterdeck, or as earlier known as the poop deck from Roman times. Poop extends from the word “puppies”, where effigies of saints (puppets) were placed in that part of the ship at launching for the first

time, and therefore a salute to the after end of the ship became the custom. In modern times then, a senior officer who salutes when proceeding ashore has led to confusion as a requirement for all personnel who leave the ship. The Officer of the Day in response to the disembarking of the senior officer is merely returning the salute.

And once ashore, in saluting, it should never be forgotten that in paying respect to a commissioned officer, in passing or otherwise, is paying respect to himself; for if he is ashamed of his duty, he must be so of his profession, and therefore should not be in it.

A play on words...

It is generally well-known among commonwealth navies that on the 21st of October in 1805, Admiral Nelson led the Battle of Trafalgar aboard his flagship, HMS *Victory*. Not so generally well-known was a technicality that arose in the method by which he was to encourage his men into battle. The great Admiral was to hoist the signal that read: "England confides that every man will do his duty!" Due to the many signal flags that were needed to spell out 'the hoist', the word "confides" was substituted with "expects." "Confides" requires eight signal flags where the word "expects" only needs three.

.....on ships' names too.

In earlier passages, I touched on the names of Canadian naval vessels in illustrating how deep-rooted Canadian history really is. The precision required in undertaking the task of providing names is not as simple as going through an alphabetical index and just selecting them randomly. Take for instance, that all of the (once "River" type as per the class in the Royal Navy) former Prestonian Class frigates were named after towns and cities across Canada. But nowhere in the country was there a town or city called La Hullose and Lanark in Ontario, which is a county. The precision required that when these vessels were to be christened during WW2, the namings for the city of Hull Quebec and the Town of Perth in Ontario both presented difficulties. It was seen that in the United States Navy, there was already established a U.S.S. *Hull* and so as not to conflict with WW2 allied strategy, the RCN consulted the City of Hull Quebec for the answer. The Mayor in return offered that this fine brand-new

frigate be named H.M.C.S. *La Hullose*, which in English translation means “The Lady of Hull.” Similarly, as the Town of Perth Ontario was the designated name, the Royal Australian Navy’s, H.M.A.S. *Perth* preceded any possibility for a ship named *Perth* to join Canada’s growing fleet of warships. So as to appease that population and the Town of Perth, located in Lanark County Ontario, yet another frigate was christened and commissioned as H.M.C.S. *Lanark*.

Why four???

Some of the most amusing experiences that I encountered when accompanying the Admiral as the Command Chief were each and every time that we boarded ships. Whether it was from the jetty, by jackstay from another vessel, a ship’s boat or by helicopter; it is the custom that when the admiral boards for the first time, he is ceremoniously piped aboard by a “Side Party.” The Side Party consists of four personnel, each in custody of a bos’n’s call, who at the order, “Pipe!”, will pipe in unison, “the Still” which brings the entire ship’s company to attention as a mark of respect to the senior man of the navy. Beyond the pipe and until front salutes and handshakes are exchanged, and the admiral proceeds accompanied to the captain’s cabin, only until his general presence is vacated, the “Carry On” is then piped that directs the ship’s company to face forward and stand down from attention. It would be at this juncture where I could now approach the Petty Officer Bos’n’s Mate in charge of the “Side Party”, he himself a working number among the four. Nine out of ten times, I would get a similar answer to a question I would raise that was always aimed with a look of curiosity. I would ask with a grin, “Why’s there four of ya’ in the Side Party, P.O.? Why isn’t there three, or two, or even five, or six...can you tell me? I’m just a stoker!” He would look at me rather puzzled and explain, “Well that’s the drill chief. It’s the regulation. . . I guess. It’s in the drill book...isn’t it?”

Nowhere is it laid down that I could ever find, but after searching for the reason many years ago, I found it in a dusty, ‘er salty, old dog-eared manual that was lying underneath my B.R.77 (Engineering Manual). I recall that an explanation read along the lines of, “A four-man side party consists of their combined strength to sufficiently hoist from a ship’s boat, an officer seated in a ‘bos’n’s chair’. The declaration, “Captain coming alongside!” When prepared to do so, the order then follows: “Hoist him in.”

Well, having observed the similar responses of nine petty officers who at least attempted in some form of explanation, I need to recall of the tenth. He was probably an ex-submariner who re-mustered from the stoker's branch whose response was, "Ya' got me chief! Who gives a shit?" He might be right I would often wonder in bemusement, but then we in the navy should never ignore our steep customs and traditions and the reasons why we do things the way we do. That way, there remains an immortal purpose.

The Wardroom

In the modern-day navy, the term 'wardrobe' is often applied to the officers' mess in ridicule of our sea-going leaders, while others on the lower deck may refer to it as the 'bunhouse' or 'wierdhouse'. Bunhouse is derived from the daily execution of stewards laying out for questionable consumption, tea and sticky buns at 1600 daily, no matter at what distance or depth the ship or submarine was from civilization. Needless to say that the weirdhouse merely reflects of the attributes of the inhabitants therein. In somewhat of a surprise, the term 'wardroom' comes from 'wardrobe'. The wardrobe was the name applied to the compartment usually amidships within ships of sail that was utilized as a store space for the trophies, treasures, prizes of war, and other booty captured from foreign and pirate ships on the high seas early in the eighteenth century. As such, ships would arrive at their homeports in Britain and the prized cargo was landed for onward transit to the naval authority. The wardrobe then became a void but very useable compartment within the ship, until such time as the process would repeat but in a very long time to come. As officers did not have a communal opportunity nor place to gather sociably, they, in their resourcefulness and prerogative, began to do so by occupying the wardrobe. This proved to be very popular both strategically and sociably to the extent that the Admiralty declared regulation in providing the officers with. . . a wardroom.

Pusser's Binders

Food at sea in ships of the Royal Canadian Navy was usually abundant enough but there were no better treats than Newfie Ice Cream (cracklin')

with copious amounts of ‘binders’, that helped bridge the gap until the next meal. Different cheeses abound throughout the world, but none can compare with that nippy pale-yellow cheddar that came in ten pound blocks dubbed as pusser’s binders, where matelots with their seaman’s knives would chop off a chunk or two and devour the take while still searching for more. ‘Binders’ was such a popular commodity that matelots would take it ashore and either give it to the wife or use it in trade as the case might be. No one seems to know where such a cheese could be purchased ashore and for this reason, the mystery continued as to where it came from and above all, who made it. The story goes that the navy and the railways had something very much in common years ago. . .and it had nothing to do with the similarities of the lettering initials of the RCN and the CNR.

It appears that during a very cold winter in the early fifties, a certain supply officer was aboard a CNR passenger train heading through Quebec when the train became stranded in a huge blizzard. The passengers were taken off the train and were taken to shelter in a nearby nunnery. As they arrived, the nuns had prepared hot soup and sandwiches but added to these welcomed needs were large quantities of cheddar cheese that were dispersed among the weary travelers. This cheese tasted so good and the supply officer asked of the Mother Superior for its origin. The senior nun became fluttered with such favourable comments and was quick to humbly react. “Mon dieu monsieur capitaine. Why. . .we make it right here. . . in da’ sisters’ home!” she replied with a measure of abounding confidence. The supply bob quickly jotted down a few notes with a view that the bosses on the C.N.S staff in Ottawa would surely be impressed with the opportunity of regularly supplying the navy with an abundance of very good cheese. It was also well supported by the fact that the ensuing costs would be quite minimal. They did, and within weeks action to procure in supplying HMC Ships and Establishments was issued. Meanwhile back at the nunnery on that cold winter’s eve, senior representatives from the train crew were in local earshot. They were to agree that this very special tasting cheese just might have its place accompanying fine fare and silverware upon the starched linen table cloths aboard the fledgling dining cars of the CNR. And so the story unfolds as to the origin of pusser’s binders and yesirree. . .why a hairy bag always preferred taking a pint of rum and a CN train when he was going home on leave.

The RCN – We're not good with our history

The first seaborne helicopter

Now in her prime, the Prestonian Class frigate HMCS *Buckingham* a.k.a., the “*Digby Flyer*” or the “*Galloping Pig*”, was once called upon for a unique role in addition to her popularity of taking *Cornwallis* new-entries to sea for their first whack at doing so. Recently converted from a River Type frigate, in 1956 she was fitted with a form of flight deck on her typically long aftercastle and quarterdeck. Once that had been accomplished and apart from an aircraft carrier or the icebreaker *Labrador*, it was time for her to receive the first helicopter to have ever landed aboard an RCN escort vessel. Initial trials commenced with one of the RCN's carrier-borne H04S-3 Sikorsky helicopters and Harbour Trials, the ‘*Bucky*’ spent thirty days at sea purposely hunting for heavy and stormy seas in order to be able to recover the helo in all of the elements that the North Atlantic could throw at her. Launch and landings became successful however the H04S-3 was limited from all weather and night operations. In typical RCN fashion and fortitude, the following year the flight deck was then dismantled and transferred to the newly commissioned DE, HMCS *Ottawa* With the intention that if this concept was ever to succeed, a helicopter with suitable A/S warfare characteristics and similar size in its construction would have to be introduced as this was the type of vessel that would somehow, have to accommodate a helicopter for its purpose in anti-submarine warfare. Enter an RCAF Sikorsky S 58 as it transferred its airborne weightlessness aboard *Ottawa*'s prototype flight deck for the first time. Unsung history in the RCN had once more been made.

Within the few short years that followed and along with a hangar in protecting a ship-borne stationary helo, all St. Laurent Class DDE's re-designated as DDH's, were to be fitted with a larger and improved prototype flight deck and became the first anti-submarine destroyer escorts to do so . . . increasing the range of A/S capability significantly through the emergence of the new Sea King helicopters in 1963. And with the onset, was the introduction of highly effective and cleverly designed ‘bear trap’ haul-down system to safely retrieve and shackle them down in heavy seas. During these trials and for further safety, the onboard engineering branch was tasked in providing firefighting protection. But the frequency of sorties and firefighting provision was to slowly wear down and detract from the capability of the engineering branch because of the lack of the extra numbers needed. To eventually

supplement, sufficient numbers of specialized air force firefighters were to become part of the ship's company . . . with personal reservation. Along with several other Chief ERAs who sailed in those ships, we have basked for many years in sharing an opinion. Because of their sea-going versatility and had the pusser added more stokers to a ship's complement, the responsibilities and other ship board tasks could have been met with much greater efficiency. Instead, the space that "trained-for-inland-airports" firefighters required created much congestion and their lack of damage control expertise and sea-going adaptability evolved as a major contribution to 'midship ballast'.

The trials continued and turned successful. So being that all seven of the St. Laurent Class destroyer escorts and the remaining two Mackenzie Class *Annapolis* and *Nipigon* (under construction) were converted and built respectively with a hangar and flight deck.

Canadian tradition prevailed as ever as other allied navies waited for the results to see if it would all work. In the meantime, prototype equipment was being fitted aboard the *Algerine*, New *Liskard* and eventually the veteran destroyer, *Crusader*. These were the forerunners of the most unique far-advanced design of the St. Laurent Class DDE's, Variable Depth Sonar, the pioneer hydrofoil *Baddeck* followed HMCS *Bras D'Or*, smoke-curtains in submarines, the never-ending re-establishment of effective procedures in ship damage control, and countless other innovations that were first ever in the world. They were quietly designed and proven in Canada through her Royal Canadian Navy. Were we ever so modest, or were we just plain shy? Let's not discuss the AVRO's Arrow project in 1959, as that is a similar boast, but it's Air Force. The fact of the matter is that Canada's navy had never done a good job at "blowing its trumpet" and at best, proclaiming the efficiencies that evolved from our country's maritime strength. It is reasonably well documented of the size and ranking of the RCN at the end of WW2 as being the third as such. But as we have witnessed of the countless numbers of ships that were built in Canada for the effort in aid of Britain, earlier examples of their origin referred to with *Medway*, *Striker*, *Stalker*, *Narvik*, *Pluto*, *Anzio*, etc. The fact that Canadian shipyards across the country that included as far and remotely inland as the Lakehead's Port Arthur Ontario reflects of the magnitude of accomplishment and versatility that Canada could amiably muster in support of the war effort during those years of fear and horror.

Good sailors too.....

After retirement, I had the occasion where at a ‘book launch’ in the Maritime Command Museum in Halifax, of being seated next to retired Vice-Admiral Robert Timbrell, he himself a wartime naval officer and now deceased. He spoke to me beyond the presentations that day and agreed on the analogies of the co-authors. They each in turn rose at the podium to briefly discuss the content of the book about which was a collection of true facts and stories that had occurred in the RCN during WW2, and had for some obscure reason, never before been revealed. The admiral, in his firm but silent agreement, leaned to me and whispered a tale that was just unbelievable and probably completely unknown to many. He went on to say that of the magnitude of ships that were built in Canada, there was a time in the very early stages of the war when six corvettes had completed construction and trials and were destined for commissioning in the Royal Navy. In so doing, the RN had requested delivery of the vessels but “Would Canada also have them sailed across the Atlantic and . . . through its own resources?”

Well with that request from the Motherland and with little hesitation, six of the finest corvette crews were detailed off so that they would sail them across. When the ships had eventually arrived at their wartime destinations in the YewKay, the RN were so impressed and in dire need of the capabilities of the six ship’s companies. So much, that they were further requested in the form of an order, to remain on board these newly commissioned RN vessels. The absence of those six crews had put the RCN back on its heels by as much as two years in fending for itself in re-training crews for its own ships, having to cope with a growing reputation as that of an inferior sea power.

Hosaqami - a tribute to the past

Referred to earlier as the miniature totem pole presented to Britain’s H.M.S/m *Totem* (T) from Canada’s Cowichan Indians, a full-scale work of art was to also find its way to England in short years to follow. H.M.S. *Excellent*’s Gunnery School on Whale Island in Portsmouth was to cease operations as (the infamous to all others) Academy for Gunnery Instructors. Like the RCN too, the Royal Navy saw that with growing technology and the streamlining of gunnery into electronically controlled and much smaller calibre surface weapons, the art of big gun

bombardments and the need for those loaders and operators, were no longer in modern day demand. Quarter's, Layers, Anti-Aircraft and Radar Control ratings of the Royal Navy were joined by Canadian counterparts and together, they would amass as students and blossom into Gunnery Instructors. At sea, they would lead the gunnery department into action and while ashore as earlier encountered, would be relegated to the instruction of precision drill and smartness and bearing upon the navy's pristine parade squares on both sides of the Atlantic and indeed upon the Pacific Coast. In celebrating that turn in history and as a token of recognition from the RCN in its' 50th Anniversary, Hosaqami, a 25 ft. totem pole was carved and treated with colour by Chief Mungo Martin of the Kwakiutl Tribe of British Columbia and later presented to Whale Island. As well described in the Royal Navy's newspaper "The Navy News": It was configured with a killer whale to represent the sea, a thunderbird as the hunter, and a man on the bottom as "the speaker holding the staff of authority", symbolic of the instructors from a once very engaged Whale Island.

It was transited from Esquimalt B.C. to Halifax N.S. in late 1959 aboard the newly converted frigate HMCS *New Waterford*. Hosaqami would lie at rest in the Gunnery School in *Stadacona* until carefully placed aboard HMCS *Kootenay* the following summer. On July 15, 1960 *Kootenay*, under escort of the 5th Squadron's *Gatineau*, *St. Croix* and *Terra Nova*, sailed for Portsmouth and Whale Island to make the presentation. Embarked in *St. Croix* were 15 First Nation sailors from ships and establishments of the RCN who came from different Canadian tribes, one of whom was a personal friend named Wilf Beaver (Six Nations), an AB Medical Assistant. They would adorn themselves in their respective tribal costume and on Whale Island on the 28th of July, would join Captain Haddon RCN and Cdr. John McDowall from HMCS *Niobe* in London, in making the presentation.

Twenty-seven years were to go by as the totem stood high and proud, but as a result of a severe storm in southern England in 1987, a rotting and badly damaged Hosaqami was removed and returned to Halifax in 1990. (*the author: fortunate to have later sighted it upon a cradle behind the former Dockyard Boiler Shop*) It was only then determined beyond repair and with dignity, be returned to its natural state by rotting back into its original habitat. The remains were transported to Esquimalt B.C. and laid to rest behind the Memorial Wall of the C & PO's Mess. In preserving this wonderful history, a miniaturized version is displayed

within the mess and prudently bestowed with the nickname, “Son of Hosaqami.”

“The McKee Room”

In 1985, the Command Chief Petty Officer at Maritime Command decided to form a dedicated assembly of Chiefs and Petty Officers from ships and establishments in the Command. The group became known as the “Pride and Commitment Committee” that represented the lower deck navy in marking the Canadian navy’s 75th Anniversary. Their mandate was to form ideas and plan objectives to contribute to the celebrations and Fleet Review of the armada to be staged in Halifax in that year. CPO1 “Joe” Fillion, in his travels as the Command Chief and chairman of the committee, had always admired the initiatives that the army had undertaken and accomplished in their regiments and messes. One of these was the splendour and magnificence of regimental trophies and plaques that were duly-appointed and aptly displayed in the WO’s & Sgts’ Mess at Le Citadelle in Quebec City. . .home of the “Vandoos.” Joe then decided that with all of the traditions and potential that the Canadian navy endeared, we certainly lacked initiatives in the past in not taking advantage of similar opportunities. . .at least in contrast with naval museums and shore-bound wardrooms. Number one on the agenda then became the resurrection and dedication of the “McKee Room” at the C & PO’s/ WO’s & Sgt’s Mess at Windsor Park in Halifax. CPO1 “Fred” G. McKee, for whom it was dedicated, was a former Command Chief Petty Officer but also went on to be the first ever naval representative to be appointed as the Canadian Forces Chief Warrant Officer.

As part of this illustrious meeting-come-board room that would to be used for special closed-door sessions and private mess dinners, tasteful decor with a naval flare and furnishings of oak were deemed as “appropriate and acceptable only” from the hearts of those on the committee. Almost single-handedly, the room would be constructed by CPO1 Lloyd Blagdon. Lloyd at that time was the President of the Mess Committee and former Chief ERA in the 280 Tribal Class destroyer, *Iroquois II*.

The main table in the McKee Room would be long and sturdy and surrounded with 24 chairs flanking both sides of its length. At the head, would be a more elaborate ‘senior’ chair with a contoured seat and arm rests. The significance of the chairs would identify each of the 24 ships

of the RCN and the men in them, lost at sea during World War II and the Battle of the Atlantic. To do so, broad and very legible brass tallies were fabricated and etched with the lost ship's name, date of sinking, co-ordinates, method of sinking, and the numbers of brave souls lost in each of the tragedies. These tallies were to be inlaid onto the high backrests of the chairs where on the reverse was a similar brass tally that identified the donor(s), mindful that much financial assistance was required in order to conduct this initiative. To provide a finishing and very appropriate touch were paintings of the 24 ships donated by artist Pat Burstall, that were to be mounted on the surrounding walls of the room.

The ships and their donors:

1. HMCS Margaree	C&PO's HMCS Margaree II	1985
2. HMCS Skeena	C&PO's HMCS Skeena II	1985
3. HMCS Fraser	Rear Admiral F. Crickard	1985
4. HMCS Ottawa I	C&PO's HMCS Ottawa III	1985
5. HMCS Athabaskan I	C&PO's HMCS Athabaskan III	1985
6. HMCS Bras D'or	C&PO's CFS Mill Cove	1986
7. HMCS St. Croix	C&PO's HMCS Hunter	1985
8. HMCS Raccoon	RCN C&PO's Asso. Victoria	1987
9. HMCS Regina	C&PO's HMCS Nipigon	1985
10. HMCS Shawinigan	C&PO's HMCS Catarqui	1985
11. HMCS Otter	C&PO's HMCS Tecumseh	1986
12. HMCS Spikenard	C&PO's HMCS Cormorant	1985
13. HMCS Windflower	C&PO's HMCS Griffon	1985
14. HMCS Chedabucto	C&PO's Submarine Squadron Ojibwa, Onondaga, Okanagan	1986
15. HMCS Louisburg	C&PO's HMCS Assiniboine	1985
16. HMCS Charlottetown	C&PO's HMCS Protecteur	1985
17. HMCS Levis	C&PO's Patrol Frigate Project	1987
18. HMCS Trentonian	C&PO's HMCS Nonsuch	1985
19. HMCS Weyburn	C&PO's HMCS Saguenay	1985
20. HMCS Clayoquot	C&PO's HMCS Preserver	1985
21. HMCS Valleyfield	C&PO's HMCS Scotian	1986
22. HMCS Guysborough	C&PO's HMCS Brunswicker	1985
23. HMCS Alberni	C&PO's HMCS Algonquin	1985
24. HMCS Esquimalt	Pride and Commitment Committee	1985

The 25th chair, the head chair, features *Iroquois* I which of course was not lost, but damaged by enemy gunfire with the loss of three lives and wounding ten during the Korean conflict. This chair was donated and inscribed with C&PO's, HMCS *Iroquois* II from which PMC Lloyd Blagdon was former crew. Retired RAdm Crickard also grasped at the opportunity to make a donation on behalf of his father who had served in the RCN during the First World War as a torpedoman in submarines CC1 and CC2. He sponsors the chair that commemorates the sinking of *Fraser*.

This memorable instalment opens the possibilities for the additional 23 blank chairs that complete the furnishings in the McKee Room to be considered as other memorials to tragedies at sea in the Canadian navy such as the explosions and lost lives in HMC Ships *Kootenay*, *Nipigon* and the submarine *Chicoutimi*, and inevitably, those that are bound to occur in the dangers presented at sea and in ships of the navy in the future. With hope that this initiative continues to memorialize naval history within the 'new Mess' facilities at CFB Halifax, the torch is passed. And to "Joe" ... a big Bravo Zulu for his commitment!

"The Uni-Bag"

Many who read these passages shall be very aware of the one-time Canadian naval uniform, and there will be many that are not. Soon after Canada's National flag replaced the beloved White Ensign in ships and naval establishments, integration was forced upon the RCN. Very briskly, out went the "Royal" and in short months to follow our pride in uniform was eradicated in substituting a blue jean collar, jumper and bell-bottoms for a green 7 UP delivery boy suit with a shirt and tie which in some imaginary minds, would better allow for sailors to be accepted in entering bars and restaurants. Not so! Even as I grew older as a Leading Seaman, so did my pride as well as my conscientiousness about how I looked in jumper and bell-bottoms rather than a shirt and tie which did not portray the life and style of sea-going sailors. That would come later as I eventually became promoted and into 'fore and aft' rig.

There is a need to look into some of the more detailed and traditional ways in how the 'square rig' uniform was worn while it poses the opportunity for the unaware to be informed in just exactly, how to dress up. The term 'square rig' derives from the resemblance between the sailor's collar and the sails of his ship. The other rig as worn by the chiefs

and petty officers in WW II was often referred to as ‘round rig’ which has no place in naval terminology but does as the ‘fore and aft’ rig. This too is a doubtful version but so-called, as it would in the past, normally take “four and a half” years to become a petty officer. In so doing, a sailor would then relinquish his blue jean collar, bell-bottoms and round cap and re-emerge with a shirt and tie, a double-breasted tunic with his licence to take charge signified by the ‘cardboard foc’s’le’, the peak of his cap.

When times were such that men in ships were not allowed the convenience and grandeur of having civvies aboard, the result was that if you were going ashore in uniform, you had to look just right. There was much versatility to be had in the square rig and vain as it may appear, might have been the criticism of the unwary civilian or female onlooker. But on the other hand, they were never too sure at what they were confronted with anyway. To the beholder, be sure you made comparison to the few wayward matelots that didn’t really care and opted for their time to finish. They would proceed ashore as “First man ashore is the best man dressed!” . . . by scrounging a silk, or a lanyard, or even some nicks hanging from a mick bar, whose owner might still be squaring away from the duties after coming alongside and instead, looking forward to dressing up and steamin’ ashore when the work was finally done. People like that wanted to sparkle, and through personal and meticulous care, they did.

Caps n’ tallies

The cap, which is not a hat, because it’s at the top, tells everyone from where you belonged and even if you were a seaman, a gunner, or a stoker. The cap tally was displayed with an element of pride. To secure one to a cap was never like you were taught in *Cornwallis*. Do it on a cap that was one size smaller so that it would brandish tightly and glitter with elegance. Secure a ‘butterfly bow’, whose knot encased a dime, a tanner, or a button. Be sure that the wings of the bow stood straight up, pressed thinly with beeswax, and were joined together at the inner edges. The pusser in the meantime, dictated that the first letter of the ship’s name was positioned directly below the cap’s middle seam, in hope that the bow would stand directly above a man’s left ear. However, ship’s names, and their short, or otherwise lengthy spellings required unwritten and home-grown rules. So a smart looking sailor went to work to ensure that

the last letter of the ship's name was ensconced in a fold and seen to disappear behind the forward portion of the bow. If it were that the ship's name was lengthy, then involve the two last letters. H.M.C.S. LOON, had the "N" wrinkled and almost invisible, while H.M.C.S. ATHABASKAN might have the last two letters "A" and "N", obliterated and obscured. About the frigate christened HMCS CAP DE LA MADELAINE, meant that later, the pusser launched a study and came up with the answer . . .by reducing the font considerably. However, untraditional in comparison to all other ships, the new version emerged when the 'Cap' re-commissioned. The study evidently took a page from the tally as it appeared upon the ROYAL CANADIAN SEA CADETS, in smaller font and space-saving letters.

The positioning of the bow told a tale. Worn front and centre indicated that the wearer "Had been around the 'Horn!", or in a few misinterpreted cases, was a bit of a Jack. Half way from the left ear to dead centre, was an indication of a man who hadn't, but certainly had 'time-in' and had earned the right to do so. The shape and positioning of the cap said it all. It showed character, even of those who hadn't any. Tilted forward and resting on the brow was the sign of a barrack stanchion, a supply rate, or 'Jack', fresh out of *Cornwallis*. Worn "square", and "in accordance with . . .", were the pusser's ratings who followed the letter to the law or had lesser imagination and usually shy of more personal pride. Pulled down and tilted back as tight as ever, so that the crown of the head formed a bulge in the cap, instantly told the onlooker of a man who was attuned to be swept in the gales at sea and who never deployed a chin-stay unless he were in a pusser's guard or a boat's crew. There was nothing worse than sighting a matelot coming across a wind-swept brow holding his cap so that the wind wouldn't take it. A seasoned 'hairy' always had to have two hands ready, or in true naval custom. . . "Two Hands for the Queen." . . to not fall off the brow, drop his 'tachee bag, or chop one off for the quarterdeck and have his other mitt available to get his station card back.

Caps were meant to remain on heads except at inspections as a courtesy to "Sir", at prayers or in church, in "toeing the line", or getting weighed off. They were used as pillows, as a receptacle for a "Yorkie", for stowin' yer ringbit, or as a fanny when transiting several tots from one mess to the other. They were also used to mute out the often loud and lengthy, vocal persistence of the OOW on the tannoy because the inside diameter of a pusser's cap normally corresponded with the circumference of the bulkhead speaker. The best caps were "steamers" which were comfortable, most of them in need of scrubbing or even a coat of white

paint, and guaranteed never to come off if you banged your head on some overhead channel plate or a pipe flange. Cap tallies on them were in different states of display: salt-stained, oily, unravelled lettering, wrong positioned, and even attached to the cap with the wildest of bows. One upper deck stoker in *Crescent*, had but the lettering of the tally displayed only. Where he wasn't adept to tying a bow, he cut the tally ribbon off just before the "H" and right after the "T" and clagged it on to the front of his cap with an industrial stapler.

"Touch yer collar for luck Jack?"

And then came the blue jean collar whereupon the underside, was your *Cornwallis* embroidered "name and official number." Were it just stencilled, signified that the wearer had already been through a collar or two, suggesting that he had a little more 'time-in'. And where a brand-new issued collar was joined in a vee at the front, it was folded thrice vertically, into "a hill and two valleys", as eventually opted for and becoming the mark of the RCN. It is assumed that this regulation resulted in that when folded, rolled, or stowed, the three white stripes and 'showing' side of the collar would be protected from soil or wear. The mother navy, the Royal one, and the commonwealths were folded in "two hills and a valley", and when stowed, the 'stripes' and showing side would be exposed. Collars told other tales about a sailor too. Well faded from once a very navy royal blue, illustrated much sea-time. A Med' collar, Mediterranean blue in colour, was commonly worn by the kippers. In some circles it was not only more appealing to the eye, but was very traditional. Some of the more flamboyant world travellers would signal an impression as an accidental stiff breeze would unfurl the underside, amply revealing what might be a depiction of the globe and where he might have sailed . . . or even an embroidered 'dragon', salty attestation to a trip or two to the far east. A custom that found its way into naval tradition came from civilians, and to explain why, remains a mystery. To "touch a sailor's collar for luck" opened many doors of opportunity. By walking down the street on a rig-run, pretending to mind your own business, a good-looking girl or even a dear old granny might just "touch your collar", for that ounce of luck. An old granny was usually full of spirit and belief and would trot off so overjoyed in anticipation of good fortune, but when a good-looking girl reached out, complimentary smiles

might go back and forth and the door was now open to possibly more than just a social conversation or an engagement with good luck.

Silk n' lanyard

The lanyard takes its history from the length that it was. A landsman's yard at about 3 feet in length. It was worn under the collar so it wouldn't strangle the wearer, as was the black silk scarf. The silk was displayed in a vee with a 4-finger width bight made fast by the jumper's dove-tailed tapes, that when secured, extended to no more than 6 inches. Much to the belief that the 'silk' was worn to commemorate the death of Admiral Nelson, is a misnomer. We as stokers often wondered why the silk was worn as a sweat band and bandage for gunners. We could understand that getting your fingers caught under cannon wheels might require a bandage now and again but working up a sweat in the sea fresh air was an impossibility, where deep down in the 'pit' is where the real sweat really was.

White Fronts . . . Singlets . . . Gun Shirts?

Adding to the assembly is the form of the "white front" or "singlet", which rates its term from the mere reasons that it is 'white', and 'fronts' the vee of the uniform jumper. In lesser naval circles as it adorns the backs of members of the Naval Gun Run, who prefer to this piece of navy blue trimmed rectangular neck apparel as the "gun shirt." Until the early 1960's, seasonal dress dictated that white fronts were to be worn under the jumper in warm weather substituted with blue woollen jerseys in winter months. . . or trips to northern climes where uniform might rarely be worn. In minimizing the need for dhobey sessions, an abbreviated form of white front known as a "dickey-front" occasionally replaced it. Two white pullover panels with identical blue trim about one-foot square and lashed around the upper waist was a much cooler convenience in the tropics. Have one made at the naval tailor's in silk, meant that this sailor of the seven seas was about to get married in uniform, a mariner's tuxedo shall we say, that was further embellished with tapes, that transformed from blue serge to ones of white silk. Today, they can only be occasionally spotted in the newspapers' social pages in commemoration of time-consumed wedding anniversaries.



*Stoker Mechanics on Haida's foc's'le - Halifax 1947.
Contributed by Frank Judd, ex-Chief E.R.A. (deceased 2005)*

Author's note: An illustration of how the rig was worn by tiddley matelots. RCN Stoker Mechanics who sport the 'starred' propeller, the fore-runner until the maple leaf appeared on trades badges. Split collars that tug the 'vee' of the jumper wide apart. Low slung white fronts (gun shirts) where the guess is that some of them are dickey-fronts. Note the cap tally butterfly bows and how some of these jack-me-ticklers make them 'close up' on the lettering. A narrowed silk vs. the 2 ½" regulation width, how proud those badgemen display their G.C.'s, Leading Stoker G. Ivy self-evident as the leader of this shower, while one-badgeman John Myers with his cuffs rolled back, seems itchin' to "get ashore and spend it." The cap worn by the gentleman in the rear, fourth from the left, lacks personality as does the wearer appear and who remains unidentified. Seated with his arm around Doug Lovering, the man with the cigar, is Frank Coady, then a Leading Stoker that when I sailed with him in Micmac by 1959, had already been promoted to PO2 but for reasons unknown, was once again a killick when I ran into him again years later. Frank Judd appears cocky

then as he always was to be, the man standing on the extreme right with the mischievous smirk. And it was Frank who explained that the very lofty gentleman on the extreme left was Stoker 1st Class W.M. “Tiny” Hansen. Tiny completed his 5 years in the RCN and took release in 1951. He then joined the Canadian Army, went to Korea. . .and was killed in action. Indeed, another Canadian unsung hero, as most are unaware.

Bell-bottomed trousers

Now here is just the spot to define the Seven Seas:

* North Atlantic:	<i>Septentrio Atlanticus</i>
South Atlantic:	<i>Meradies Atlanticus</i>
* North Pacific:	<i>Septentrio Pacificum</i>
South Pacific:	<i>Meradies Pacificum</i>
Arctic:	<i>Oceanus Arcticus</i>
Antarctica:	<i>Oceanus Antarcticus</i>
Indian:	<i>Oceanus Indicum</i>

* also interpreted as the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas.

Bell-bottoms creased with the “seven seas” was an irregularity. The lofty guys may have had seven but this near 6-foot stoker who only sailed five of them, honestly depicted of it when I served with the RN. It is best explained that when stowing your Kecks away before the convenience of clothes hangers, meant not only stowing them inside out, but folded several times in forming a neat little square package that would fit compactly into your boot locker. Needless to say, if a matelot had long legs, there was more material to deal with, and to achieve seven folds at about 6 inches apart meant that you had to have four-foot legs. The RCN did away with that long before I had ever joined but hanging them up inside out not only made an impressive vertical crease. . .but kept the ‘gunge’ out as well. Before the days of zippered flys, itchy serge was the material which incorporated a four-button horizontal flap. . . and boy was that tough when goin’ for a slash.

When I went into submarines, I always felt that by being in the RCN, dress regulations would remain as colonial, but the MAA at *Dolphin* didn’t see it that way. I was no longer allowed to where a white T-shirt

under my No. 5 dungaree work shirt as an undervest, my trade badge became an up-scaled two-starred propeller, the blue jean collar had to be



Seven Seas bells - Aeneas at Blockhouse alongside HMS/m Talent 1965

RN issue with ‘two hills and a valley’, and my lanyard had to be shipped underneath the silk. And when my trollies came back from Sunbeam the cleaners at Blockhouse, I was presented with a bill to pay for a square brown paper package, “bells” all folded up into five creases.

Full Whites

In order that Ceremonial Colour Parties, Gun's Crews and naval bands might grace Parliament Hill in a Sunset Ceremony, or Royal Guardsmen should add splendour to the gates of Buckingham Palace, unequivocally there is nothing that portrays more, the pride of country and bearing and discipline of the naval service. So too from time to time, when sailors of a ship's company muster on a parade square, the flight deck, or on the jetty for Sunday Ceremonial Divisions, comes with it a periodic reminder to each and every one of them, "Just who we are!" Such an exalted show of demeanour, unity of the navy and their purpose with the seas and their ship, resplendent is the #6 uniform of crisp cleanness and significance of dress, "Full Whites."

For the wearer, appearance and comfort availed, but if it were known that the ship was to "make it so" on an approaching Sunday with just a few days' notice, it became complicated by the continuing demands of sea-watches and daily sea routine of the ship. Much planning and preparation prevailed for the whole ship's company. But along with the trousers, the creases, folds and dinginess that comes as a result of being stowed in a kit bag or rolled up in a boot-locker for months on end, presented a challenge. A destroyer's entire ship's company would have to restore the starched and gleaming white appearance of seldom worn and stain prone "full whites" to avoid the catastrophe of handing over your station card and getting your leave stopped on the eve of the ship going into "jolly-ports" like Barbados or perhaps Fiji. Add to the mix, the fore and aft rigs with "high-collared whites" of the officers and Chiefs and P.O.'s. Suddenly, the ship's laundry was in very hot demand as nearly 250 uniforms had to be brought to a gleaming white and steam pressed as looking starched. Hot too were the conditions for as full whites were scarcely worn, it was usually in the tropics or during the warm Canadian summers that the temperature and humidity of the ship's laundry rose to and exceeded machinery space conditions. Tots and/or the money the dhobey wallah's would accrue though! It was the perks that paralleled an otherwise very thankless no-charge requirement of washing, work dress, sheets and cooks' whites on a routine daily basis.

So as the big day arrived, it became a rare and special event at "Hands to clean for divisions." Down in the mess, soiled, paint stained and oily dungarees were cast aside and the crew would anxiously prepare to emerge in transforming the mess into a renewed existence. After the shower, on went the white front, then the trousers, followed by black

boots or shoes to avoid getting smears from polish on them. Now it was time to put on “the jacket.” Unlike the blue jumper that required the addition of the blue jean collar, the white’ was integral and all in one piece which made it less cumbersome. Left now was the lanyard and silk, do up your white “tapes”, and finally with cap in hand, you were ready. If only a dressing mirror were available, a reflection would reveal blue badges, a blue collar, and a bottom hem single half inch stripe on a gleaming white jacket that sported a man in his “Sunday Best.” Never uttered aloud but in many a matelot’s mind was the yearning statement, “Boy. . .if only mom, dad and my party could see me now!”

Blue sweaters

The jumper then the jacket

Naval Hair

It appears that in the latter part of the 1700’s, natural hair of officers was queued, and then the men started to tie their hair. The pigtail went out of fashion ashore about 1785. It was the hallmark of a navy man. This practice became fashionable at about the time of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. “Love Locks” then became a facial adornment until about 1850, when beards became in vogue. The Foretopman’s Lock came into use until about 1910, the birth of the RCN when it was said that “The shore-loafing-dandy, the barrack stanchion, took to plastering his hair back like a rat that had eaten his way through a keg of butter.” Before long, ‘mudguards’ began to adorn clean-shaven faces upon matelots’ cheekbones. Beards remained however, as they do today albeit they are cropped and manicured to look so unnatural. A very full and natural beard that trailed in a hue of brine-white that covered a white front and silk was one to be admired while having much room to store crickets and fleas. Although considered a gentlemanly fashion, moustaches became forbidden in the navy at the same time as matelots started pulling gun carriages. It appeared that if Queen Victoria had an indifference, she just wouldn’t leave the matelots alone. As she plunged into mourning at the death of her husband Prince Albert in 1861, she needed to do something in bearing witness to the event. She forbade that sailors shall no longer sport moustaches out of respect for the cookie-duster that once adorned the Prince Consort. So throughout the most part of the twentieth

century, regulations about the growth of hair in the navy were limited to short haircuts, beards, and rarely witnessed, wisps of hair on the cheekbones. . .the “muff-diver’s mudguards.” In efforts to grow a beard, we are reminded that as human beings, a beard and its attractiveness just doesn’t occur overnight and because of genetics, varying stages of growth often contributed to a scruffy and dwindled appearance. Some could produce a very acceptable ‘skers in as little as five days, while others might spend as long as a month in determination that often ended in shaving off. So in order to control the process, regulations required that an official request form was to be submitted that bore the standard: **“Request to discontinue shaving as of (date)?”** In doing so, the incumbent in his commitment, was sacrificing his shore leave for the duration it would take for his “set” to be termed “presentable when ashore”, at the pleasure of the Master At Arms and in due course, the Coxswain. For decades, there were no civilian clothes permitted aboard H.M.C. Ships and smart appearance ashore remained the priority. This administrative requirement also prompted the need to acquire a superseding I.D. card for which the former photograph bore any resemblance to the owner’s amended “moosh.”

In today’s modern Canadian Armed Forces, the naval beard must be maintained as extremely short and while at sea, an ongoing controversy. The notion that the required “air-tightness” of emergency face-masks might hinder the desired effect of deterring respiratory entry of unwanted gas emissions into the wearer remains at issue because of the differing facial structures of beard-growing matelots. Moustaches too, now abound as free gangway with little question. Since now, the discipline required in upholding the direction of 1861, the Royal watchdog Queen Victoria and “her Albert” have been parted from our midst for well over a century as our naval customs and traditions continue to erode. But for “middies” in closing, a Midshipman’s patches were known as “Weekly Accounts” and it is a matter of doubt whether “young gentlemen” ever wore a white collar all round, and if they did so, was such to keep the powder from their pigtails off their coats. . .not tar and grease.

ADC Aiguillettes

Originated by the army from apparatus worn by Aide-de-Camps (A.D.C.). He carried rope and pegs over his shoulder so that on arrival in camp, he hobbled the legs of the General’s mount so that he wouldn’t

stray. The **Executive curl** so displayed upon the top or single ring of commissioned officers' dates from the Crimean war and is called "Elliott's eye." It commemorated a Captain Elliott who carried his wounded arm in a sling under heroic circumstances. It is worthy of note that of all the sea-going nations of the world, except officers of the French and American navies had been joined by Canadians in a unified armed force in not wearing an "Elliott's eye." That, thank common sense, lasted for 40 years until it returned as a befitting morale booster for commissioned officers.

Red Braces

Whether there was an awareness among sea-trainers or not, it soon became the custom to sport "red braces" with mess kit that this brand-new initiative might have been a coincidence. It is said that in the mid nineteenth century, an old R.N. sea captain once wore a coat of such thin material that his red braces showed through. Through time, several R.C.N. officers from where the wear of mess kit originated, knowingly perpetuated this custom. Today, one must only have to witness the annual gathering of Sea Trainers participating at a Mess Dinner. Consisting of all ranks, and all those who once were and are today, Sea Trainers, these individuals attired in their mess kits and, Black Tie for 'the retireds' as may be the case, all sport red braces. If you do not, you are banished from the dinner or, pay the ultimate fine through "ringing the bell" at the bar after the port has been passed.

We "weren't" good at Gongs, awards, and attaboys

Since WW2, and the ensuing Korean Conflict had ended, the RCN/Canadian navy however threatened through the many years of the Cold War, was not to be engaged in hostilities until the war in the Persian Gulf in 1991. Canadian Naval history saw our gallant and heroic forefathers appropriately decorated for their brave contribution through the multitudes of campaigns and battles. . .and rightly so. Unlike many of the other domestic arrays of ribbons and medals awarded for mere achievement that the United States bestows upon their military folks, the Canadian government's justification of the awarding of decorations and medals stood frugal, bound by an inheritance of custom of British

Heraldry and Regulation. Beyond Korea and up until the Persian Gulf War, other than merit and bravery, only two medals were ever struck and awarded to Canada's sea-going navy. The Queen's Coronation Medal had emerged and although presented to all members of the RCN's "marching contingent" in London, there was sparse allocation to the separated ships' companies of the RCN's flotilla at Spithead. Then several years later in 1967, Canada prudently divvied out the 100th anniversary Centennial medal where methods for recipient selectivity remains questionable to this day. An example was that a certain east coast destroyer had been allocated with five of the medals which were distributed to revellers as 'door prizes' at a 'ship's dance'. Even so in *Okanagan*, where two of the medals were dispersed, one of which was given to the biggest man in submarines. And because he was the biggest man, life in cramped quarters was a constant ordeal. Like a lumbering oaf, George Pembroke was continuously crackin' his head and bangin' his shins each and every time he transited for'd or aft. He did not fit down behind the engines and George enjoyed that. We supposed our George received the medal as a token for his ability to absorb pain and constant discomfort. The disposal of the other medal became a mystery. . . to those outside the wardroom curtain.

It was therefore left that the Canadian Decoration (CD) was about all that would adorn uniform jumpers of Canada's matelots, and in order to get it, you needed time in and an undetected dirty nose. Along with one or even two rosettes, its lonely predominance was valued as some sort of long enduring superhuman sailor and admired by those junior, who one day might get one too. So as the Cold War prevailed as Canada's ships and sailors engaged in countless patrols in seeking out and defending of the potential of war with the Soviets, there was to be no medal recognition. The Cold War was to be a long and serious threat to the western world for nearly 45 years as the RCN remained "Ready, Aye Ready" in its defensive contribution, highlighted by politician-free interference but most efficient naval activation of the fleet during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. For the men who quickly prepared and sailed south to engage in peril, albeit to later defuse, the measure of will, sacrifice, and courage accorded by Canada's matelots in an otherwise inevitable world war, followed a continuing fate as it would until the Soviets conceded as a totalitarian regime in 1990. Yet there was to be no visible recognition of the fact upon the uniform.

I was among the majority of having no medal at all, but in 1968, I was awarded the G.S.M. with "Malay Peninsula" clasp. Although a British

medal, it was awarded for having served in *Andrew*, *Anchorite*, and *Alliance*, each engaged in “classified” patrols and commando landings during the Indonesian Confrontation of Malaysia of the 1960’s. It was handed to me by the scribe in a little white cardboard box that showed up in *Okanagan*’s mail bag one day. I had earlier applied for it when aboard *Aeneas* in the Pompey Squadron prompted by my old RN messmates from Singapore who were now wearing it. Unsure if I would qualify as I was RCN. I would later wear this single medal with much pride until I received a mating CD a couple of years later. Among Canadians, the G.S.M. with clasp would be seen as unique and most rare. Most rare in that only five of us had been awarded it while serving in the RCN and had others of our meager numbers in the Fezz applied, might have brought it to a total of about ten RCN’ers.

But now, it was most rare to display two medals among the many CD wearers with just one. By the time the Silver Jubilee had passed and the Cold War had ended, the numbers and myriads of medals on matelots increased dramatically. Along with the sparse but representative Medal of Military Merit (MMM), and Meritorious Service Cross (MSC), other medals began to cascade upon the fleet. The Gulf War, Special Service Medal SSM (NATO), Adriatic, Bosnia, Cambodia, Haiti, Canada’s 125th Anniversary, *a.k.a. “1992, the Year Of The Queer medal”, UN Peacekeeping, and by 2002, recognition of presence in South West Asia and Afghanistan in the fight and defence of Terrorism along with the Queen’s Golden Jubilee medal struck in 2003. **(so coined in commemoration as the year when the homosexuals came out of the closet. . . and the smokers went into it)*

and indeed.....“Smokin’ . . . a way of life”

Smoking and the use of tobacco in various ways has changed drastically in the navy especially in 1992 when smoking was completely eliminated from within ships. Only ten years beforehand when I left *Skeena*, ashtrays were mounted on bulkheads throughout the gangways, especially in the Burma Road. People would smoke at will with restrictions at fuelling and ammunitioning evolutions only. There were times that common sense never prevailed among those in charge of a control room or a bridge. The pipe, “No smoking throughout the boat. . .battery gassing!”, would flow throughout all compartments. Douse that explosive cigarette but for people to carry on with their welding projects

or make toast for breakfast, would never enter the minds of those in imperceptive charge. Many times, we'd plea for changing the pipe to "No naked lights," that said it all. When the AOR's commissioned, wardroom wisdom decided that there will be smoking only in "tiled deck" compartments for fear that fuel cargo some twenty feet underfoot from the steel deck dispersal area might blow up. Under modern day policy, the dispersal area still has a steel deck, the fuel's still twenty feet underfoot, but that's where people go to get their nicotine because the space vents to the atmosphere.

Digressing further when taking on diesel fuel in a 'Tribal'. Standing over the open tanktop in order to sight the level rising in the tank not only made for a convenience to flick your ashes, but served as a receptacle as your butt extinguished in the fluid in a little puff of smoke. The pleasure of smoking in bunks and hammocks was never encouraged and applied like an unwritten rule requiring common sense rather than a written regulation. A dayman being slept out with "all-night-ins", turned in reading a book might be acceptable but if you just stood down from a big job or had been on your pins for hours, contrastingly, common-dog said no. In *Micmac*, I had been part of a novel stokers' 40 mm Gun's Crew that was assembled for some inter-department recreational competition that we came last in. I managed to snare one of the spent shells that I had fired. I then cropped and machined it into a very convenient ashtray that would hang from my hammock clews and in years later, be included in my bunk inventory. That ashtray went to sea, on and under it continuously, and acceptably deployed when I just couldn't sleep.

Common sense didn't prevail on one occasion until it was time to "fess up." There was a case in one ship when a fire had occurred in a bunk in one of the messes. This Able Seaman jumped out of the bunk and quickly doused the fire with a portable extinguisher aborting what could have been a serious disaster. For that, he felt he was somewhat of a hero and there might be at least some recognition for his efforts. Later, the bold A/B was hauled up on the carpet and on completion of the charges being read, the Executive Officer, none too pleased inquired of the maggot, "Why were you smoking in your bunk that caused this terrible fire?" The A/B now saw that he was going to have some difficulty in getting out of this one and offered the common sense reply, "It was already on fire when I got into it Sir!"

In the modern navy, shore side civilian society has prevailed and opted for the cleaner life. "No smoking throughout the ship. . . Fuelling ship!" . . or "No smoking throughout the boat! Battery gassing!" are ho-hum

announcements that were as common as piping “Hands Turn To” at oh-eight-dubs. Today the pipe is no longer a factor. It has been replaced by the 1992 administrative order, “No Smoking throughout the navy! Second hand smoke will kill ya’! Otto fuel, asbestos particles, PCB’s, lithium batteries, toxic paint, chlorine gas, carbon tetrachloride, peredite and jet-black diesel exhaust are all okay though. They might make you cough a little. . .or just give you a headache!”

So in closing out on the topic of shipboard atmospheric pollution, a long naval tradition has hence come full circle and is reborn. The history of tobacco, and its use in the navy, arose from the term, “galley-packet.” There was a time when sailors chewed tobacco more so than smoke it, and for the limited few that did, the galley was the only place they were allowed to do so. The buzzes would emanate and abound from the circles of smokers who would muster for their moments of pleasure in the galley. These chaps became known as the “galley-growlers” and hence, “the galley packet.” Today, the only place that a smoker may take his pleasure is certainly not the galley, let alone anywhere else within, where the so-called deadly smoke won’t reach the pinkier and sensitive lungs of the cleaner-living that are probably already contaminated with the effects of CTC. Smoking is only allowed in externally vented compartments, or the upper deck. The DDH 280’s use No. 3 rope store which is isolated from the citadel and frigates designate a semi-sheltered breezeway on the port side of the ‘uppers’. These areas are where the “growlers” still prevail. They are the wisdom of the ships that gather and mull over the daily goings on. Solutions, wash-ups, drips and moans, criticism, predictions, and rumours . . .all of these are the ‘buzz’. . .unaware that the “galley packet” is re-lived, and thrives in modern times. There is a reality. The modern frigates secure starboard side to, to avoid exhibiting that an awful pile of the lads who are “growlers” are hidden on the other side. . .’cause they like their ‘baccy. Makes you wonder where the commissioned “closet-smokers” might go for their’s.

With aplomb, here ends the chapter. The decks are cleared up. . .the gear returned. “Secure!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE VOYAGE ENDS

The time had come. It came sooner rather than later because of the seeming quickness through which my career had gone. I no longer had need for one of the most trusty implements used in connection with the sea. . .and so I too, swallowed the anchor. I was a cadet, had been an armourer's mate and a parade G.I. To be an ode in *Cornwallis*, a boiler room fire puncher, an engine room watchkeeper, an upper deck stoker. I was a "part three", a donk shop killick, an outside killick, an outside wrecker, a donk shop horse, a panel watchkeeper and then a Chief Tiff. I became coxswain on a tanker, a sea-trainer, a Command Chief Petty Officer...and most captivating of all, a son of King Neptune.

From early in 1991 until I retired in 1995, an example of the instability that we were encountering was also displayed in the instability of the constant changes in the senior leadership roles throughout the CF. Not only were we going through MND's and CDS's at one per year, but in nearly 5 years as CCPO, I had served under five different admirals, all gentlemen, and two of whom were "our Peter", and Vice-Admiral "Larry" Murray. Through that period as the Command Chief, I still worked hard, spent long hours, had fun . . .and played hard. I was to leave the navy satisfied that I had a pretty good "kick at the cat." My turning point in adjusting came at the time the navy's did.

So when the big day came, I was showered.... And I won't forget it. From donning the naval uniform for the first time in 1954, and shedding it finally in 1995, I would be forlorn but satisfied that I had had a full, pervasive and enviable career. But like a ship that had done her life-long duty at sea, I was paid off and went to scrap. Among the many parting momentos I received from valued shipmates and close oppos, there were two that are most significant. In testimony of the brotherhood that persists among submariners, good friend "Gumba" Carciopollo, then a Command Master Chief from the U.S. Submarine Base at Groton CT. had travelled to Halifax. He, on behalf of the befriended fellow USN submariners who I had associated with both ashore as well as at sea aboard the fast-attack USS *Groton*, presented me with "A 'Boat' In A Bottle." Upon a piece of driftwood was mounted a glass bottle, the contents therein of a fast-attack submarine rarely seen skimming upon the surface. So unique and a treasure to behold forever. And then from my good friend Jim "Lucky" Gordon. . .a dandy.

Because of time, serviceability of the towering mainmast stepped in front of *Stadacona*'s A Block had come to an end. During its replacement, Base Chief Petty Officer Lucky had absconded with some teak wood from the belaying pin rack and due to his skill at woodworking, decided to construct this magnificent 18-inch-high pedestal that enshrouded a bottle of pusser's rum. It was gilded and adorned with multitudes of brass tally-plates that in his determination and the art of sniffin' around, came from several of the ships and submarines I'd sailed in. Surrounding this 8-sided gem of superb craftsmanship, wherein lies a manual puzzle in gaining access to the bottle, are etched each of the navy's "Toasts of the Day."

So when it came to making a toast, it would be on a day in that this time, Lucky would retire. I had promised myself that some way on some day, that bottle of pusser's neats had to be cracked open. What better way than when of all the people that joined Lucky at a reception in wishing him into retirement just two years after I had left. I brought the pedestal with me, dismantled it, and broke the seal as we all rejoiced to share the jug. The room was full of matelots. . . Sons of Neptune indeed. All those who have served above and below the seas . . .who had stories to tell too. And not forgotten too, are the splendid people for whom I still communicate with from a long-ago Royal Navy.... of my time in that service and learning with them, in becoming and being a submariner. I was part of the Submarine Service and the Submarine Service will always be part of me! When I pass on, I will go to Heaven, because all submariners have done their time in Hell.

We have reached conclusion and as we are the Sons Of Neptune, join Coxswain CPO1 Wibberley, HMCS *Fraser* and the Herb Leviston escapades. The Late Bob Wibberley, who within himself an icon, an inspirer, a true example and a legend in the navy. When his time came to retire after an extremely successful and rewarding career he proclaimed, "I am leaving my navy. I have enjoyed my navy and I have fully given to it as it has given to me. My navy is precious. I only ask that you . . .all sailors who continue to remain and have the honour and distinction of being in my navy . . . **Look after it!**"

May I be humble... in joining Bob by adding that foremost were the people that were in "it", and today I'll say again, my own life seems richer for having had their friendship.

A final “return” to HMS/m *Alliance*

Nothing to do with decision-making, it was that phrase about “when I’m right or when I’m wrong” that in retirement, made me recall of an incident at a submarine association re-union at HMS *Dolphin* in 1998. During the events, I would joyfully board *Alliance* once more. Today, she remains high out of the water as a true-to-life museum artefact that not only represents the last of the A-boats, but as a living reminder of a British WW2 diesel submarine. While within this re-union, I had encountered dear old messmates in numbering seven of us who had all sailed together in that very submarine over 33 years before. We boarded at the express permission of the curator, Cdr. Jeff Tall, (RN ret’d), who literally threw the keys at us. We marvelled through this now glistening, pristine, example of how life and unavoidable strife was in those submarines in those years. She looked nothing like she did so long ago when she was permeated and engulfed with diesel fuel, chordite, humidity, rust, oil and human sweat. We had the boat to ourselves without any hindrance from formalities. Memories flooded back as if it were yesterday stimulating us to remain prankish and youthful as we were then.

As we took pictures of each other in our old pits, it was Soapy Watson’s turn to climb into the after upper athwartship bunk in the sailors’ mess. He was so comfortable and having had the pleasure in imbibing a couple of tots or so from the re-union’s rum issue, he nodded off almost instantly. We decided to leave him there and get him up on the way back. However, because of all the excitement and our own ingested tittle, we forgot about him and returned to the re-union festivities at the Chiefs’ mess adjacent in *Dolphin*. We were later informed that after our departure from the boat, *Alliance* had been re-opened for guided tours to the general public. Among the crowd was a very inquisitive and excited 13-year-old boy escorted by his father, who in his astonishment remarked on Soapy, still ‘tits’ed up’ in the sailors’ mess. Pointing with excitement while turning toward his father, he declared, “Cor’ Dad, looka this! They’ve even got a live snorin’ manikin in that bunk!”

As Soapy and I returned to Halifax after such a memorable time, it was two days later when I reflected on the old “Ally-ancee.” Somewhat in a feeling of chagrin, I went down to my rec room bar dubbed “Snort Drain Three.” Among the ditties and rabbits that clutter the glass partitioned shelves, there was mounted as a conversation piece, the *Alliance* door knocker that I had villainously appropriated from her wardroom door in Guzz’ Dockyard in 1965. It had been a long time ago and now recalling

how splendid the boat looked as a museum, I concluded that she was not in her completeness. I should return the doorknocker to its rightful place. I removed the mounting screws

(the originals) and took to burnishing the 'rabbit' until it looked like a jewel. Off in the mail it went, caressed in a little padded blue "Birk's box" and addressed to the Gosport Submarine Museum, attention: the curator Cdr Jeff Tall. The note inside read:

Dear Jeff,

Please return this knocker to the wardroom door. If you look closely, the holes where these screws belong. . .are still there.

Mind yer bubble,

Buster

.... with but one dutifully-bound thing left to do. Recall the previous stories of Doug 'Catman' Gillespie, a legend in his own right. Sorrowfully and surprisingly, 'the Cat' passed away late in the year 2002. To do things right, we managed to get his ashes aboard *Iroquois* in Halifax. A message arrived some weeks later from the Middle East. It was confirmation that 'Catman' Gillespie went in true fashion as once a Chief ERA, then a civilian Gas-Turbine Inspector/Technician beyond his naval career. It read as follows:

Date: 3/30/03 11:33:21 AM Atlantic Standard Time
From: user801f@dnd.ca (user801f)
To: retsubmarine@aol.com

35 miles from Oman, east of Salalah

Buster,

As per the wishes of Shirley and as expressed by Hutch and yourself, Catman's Ashes were committed in proper naval fashion. Included were a 'Piper playing a lament', the side party "piping the side" as most of Doug's remains went over the side while the off-watch ship's company had mustered on the quarterdeck and flight deck. The rest of Catman's remains were scattered by the Port Cruise enclosure exhaust with Doug's last engine changeout crew present. The Port Cruise was the last engine Doug changed on Iroquois last time here in 2002. A glass was raised and

a toast was made in his honour in the engine room by a dozen stokers, Padre Bruce, and the EO.

I ask that you not make the last part public knowledge yet as Padre Bruce does not want the Padre General to find out through the grapevine before the Padre himself can pass on the "variations" to Naval Custom. A fitting end.

CPO2 Bob Polvi

Chief ERA, HMCS Iroquois.

"May the Souls of Old Sailors inhabit Sea Gulls!"

Everybody needs “a Mentor”

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

It seems that with the arrival of the Victoria Class submarines, much controversy began to grow over the acquisition as a result of political hesitation. It then followed that, as the four boats had been laid up for a considerable length of time that now stretched into years, much preparation and set to work was drastically required before they could be restored to seaworthiness and trialed before leaving the YewKay one by one. Where was the forethought? Where were the people with the vast experience and sage advice? Where was the desirable, but over-bearing and insistent Chief?

Along with such obstacles, the hurried decision to pay off the last Oberon Class submarine in the Canadian navy was in my personal opinion, a very obtuse and profound decision. Unlike her operational capability in her younger years, *Onondaga* was at the time “running like a sewing machine,” capable of operational depth, only fresh out of major refit and work up and certainly worthy as a training platform for would-be submariners in the complicated art, dexterity and psychology of going to sea and diving under it. In simple terms? “Keeping an edge.” An absent quality that I believe contributed to the fate in *Chicoutimi*. (ill-advised direction of two lids open in heavy seas and indecisiveness to what tools you’d need to get the job done in lickety-split time with efficiency. Up and down the tower they continuously went until Neptune and his un-respected oggin both lost their patience with the ignorance of precaution when down she came.

In a cost-saving attempt, precautions were carelessly pushed aside resulting in that Canadian submariners would not hear “two blasts of a klaxon” for nearly two years. Instead, the rush exuded by cycling the entire community into classroom desks for six months in a training school at HMS *Collingwood* far to the south in England while the slightly used and ‘long-at-idle’ boats were being swarmed with activity at Barrow-In-Furness up north without the presence of the end-users. “Now where do we start?” the shipyards might ask while assigned crew members were denied access as they doddered with theory, modules and maker’s handbooks in clean and shiny-assed uniforms while drawing big bucks on subsistence.

Having gone from class to class of submarine in my past, submarines are still submarines as I reflect on how simplified the transition was by at

first sorting out the major differences in systems and structural geography. Once determined, then climb into bilges and void spaces in chasing critical pipe runs and other major components that I would be totally unfamiliar with. Something along the lines of saving time and expense by weeding out what a seasoned submariner already knows, verses what he doesn't. To eventually emerge from bilges and ballast tanks with bruised knees, sore elbows, lumps on the head all housed in crabby and worn-out coveralls are reminders of my past in constant practical training that stuck. You never stop learning in submarines. So with all of this, where was the wisdom, experience and confidence of the entrusted Chief who the decision making bureaucracy could otherwise depend upon in providing strong, sound and reliable advice? Where was the Chief who would bellow "Negative!" to the bureaucracy or with greater attention-getting confidence.... where was the Chief to insist that "This is Bullshit!"

I heard a recent interview on CBC radio with a submarine C.O. who among a plethora of questions, was asked "Why do you like being a submariner?" His reply was, "The people." Well, that's a well-founded answer, but I found it extremely weak. It might have been more credible to describe why and how those people became the reason. Might it be that among them, there were a few internal leaders. Quiet and experienced people who in constant toil and determination set example through total disregard for their own personal time and well-being in that **the submarine always comes first**. People whose aim through knowledge and long-time experiences are certainly the mainstay within a submarine crew and the example they set and serve is what the new "Wannabes" should wanna be. Complete with confidence, dexterity, initiative and patience, these men are the example of quality submariners, and indeed sailors in general, become the mentors to follow. That C.O. somehow missed his opportunity to elaborate.

From my days aboard *Micmac* was a chap named PO2 George Faithfull. In short time to follow was an inspiring outside wrecker in *Grampus* followed by a killick stoker named Geordie Graham aboard *Andrew*, then to *Anchorite* and *Alliance* and later, *Aeneas* with Stoker PO Ernie Clayton, Les Beadle and then Outside Wrecker and bomber-bound Chief Mech' Fred Searle. Back home for a stint in *Onondaga*, albeit none to be found in such a short stay but in *Okanagan*, I found another 'Wrecker in the name of CPO2 Don Hood. I would go on as several more would follow including Command Chief Doncaster, an inspiration of another kind. My mentors.....an example of how to, and to follow each step of the

way. In the navy, and especially its submarine service, everybody needs “a Mentor”.

“...the submarine has created its own type of officer and man - with language and tradition apart from the rest of the Service, and yet at heart unchangingly of the Service.”

Rudyard Kipling, 1915

A Glossary. . . beyond Jack Speak's

1's - Full ceremonial uniform (gold badges).

2's - Dress uniform (red badges) w. lanyard: shore leave/ neg. lanyard: duty.

3's - Work dress uniform.

186'in (one eight sixin') - Sonar operation where the submarine turns in slow circles in acting as a single hydrophone. Internal state requires that all systems and machinery are shut down to dramatically reduce self-generated noise.

2A's or 3A's - bell bottoms and white fronts (no jumper).

3 lounge - compartment in certain destroyers designated as the C&PO's lounge transformed from 3 mess after the rum issue had ceased and ships were authorised to operate controlled bars.

47-11 - (forty-seven eleven) The cheap, pungent perfume that was issued to German U-boat crews to mask the hum. Nobody used it much. The house number address in Cologne where within a small room, the solution was produced in mass quantity. Said to have tasted better than it smelled.

Abes 'n Odes - Able-Bodied (A.B.) seaman and Ordinary (O.D.) Seaman.

A.F.O's - Admiralty Fleet Orders.

AA - Anti-Aircraft rating.

ALK - Submarine variable depth tethered communications transmitter.

ALN - Submarine communications mast. The Girl Who Made the Stars

A.M.U. - Air Movements Unit.

AWO - Fared, hinged, external aerial fitted in A-class submarines.

Aragones - (ara-go-nees) tomatoes after the Italian tomato brand or "Commanche bollocks".

Barricoe - A brass banded, coopered oak Royal Navy Barricoe Rum Cask, also known as a Breaker.

Bastard - A term often used in describing a heavy sea state. . .a brutal skipper, jimmy, or coxswain.

Bastards - A bunch of: a tangled mess of rope, wire, or disorganized stores. Sometimes referred to as a "pot-mess", the culinary name for a stew.

Bendix - porthole, scuttle (refers to the window in a washing machine)

Birds - Men Under Punishment.

BIWI Squadron - (pronounced bee-wee) the R.N.'s British West Indies Squadron, Bermuda.

Blue-Liners - RN Duty-Free cigarettes distinctive by the faint blue line that runs the length of the paper and the regulation, HM SHIPS ONLY.

Breath o' freshers (Go for a ...) - To go on the bridge or casing after a long dive in a submarine

Boards, to the - when an attack periscope is raised or lowered to the control room deck level in order to reveal minimal periscope on the surface, it is ordered, "to the boards".

Bollocking - Angry words spoken to someone who has done something wrong.

Bomber - RN nuclear ballistic submarine.

Boomer - USN nuclear ballistic submarine.

Bootneck - A Royal Marine.

Bow - Formal greeting from within, or aboard, a Japanese submarine.

Bow wave - Visual greeting from the front of the ship.

Brackets E - Lt. (E), Cdr (E), etc. "Engines", Engineer, Ginger beer, Engineering Officer.

Brown-hatter - Male homosexual. Also, queen, bum bandit, trouser trout, snapper, knobber, etc.

Bubble and squeak - Potatoes and cabbage with corned beef or fish.

Bunhouse - The wardroom. Wierdroom, warehouse, the wardrobe.

Burberry / Burbs - The more practical navy blue going-ashore raincoat. They were “non-issue”, more presentable and less bulky and used as a topcoat in favour of the greatcoat or oilskin. The belt was seldom secured for “that image” where officers were not required to wear them at all. Named after the tailoring company that made them.

Burberry Hill - The Halifax Citadel. When a matelot took his party for a stroll ‘round the citadel, he might offer his burbs’ as a ground sheet or a seat. He would never offer it to a lady for ‘stepping over a puddle’.

Burma Rd. - The main gangway in a steam-driven DDE/DDH

Burn - A run ashore. . . a “good burn” is a very good run ashore.

CANAVFINMOD - Temporary fin fitted to Okanagan as a result of an u/w collision.

CANAVMOD - (Canadian Naval Modification) acronym for change to equipment.

Cap/Hat box - Metal canister with hinged lid issued to matelots for the stowage of 2 in no., Caps, white and/or blue. Stowed in kit bags, on top of personal lockers or above the broadside messing settees of HMC Ships. (fact: everybody stowed everything in them except caps).

Cardboard foc’s’le - Cap peak - Officers/Chiefs & PO’s

Casual, a - Form of advanced payment that is authorized prior to official paydays.

CDLS - Canadian Defence Liaison Staff.

Centres, the - Deck plated passageway that divides a submarine’s two main engines.

CEP - Contact evaluation plot.

CHAKON - A CHACON or CHAtham CONtainer - used during World War 2 to send supplies to and from Chatham Dockyard in Kent, and was a forerunner of modern container shipping.

Channel dish-up / Yankee dish-up - A listless act of washing mess deck traps by throwing them out of the scuttle and thus saving time and effort. Done when nearing harbour and the opportunity of drawing replacements. “Yankee” in the RCN, was aimed at the belief of the one-time traditional wastefulness of the affluent U.S.N.

Cheesed down / rolled up - In a state of uncontrollable laughter.

Chuffed - Happy, satisfied, pleased. "I'm chuffed. They just piped Up Spirits."

CK - Cook.

Clinker-knocking - The task of removing fire ash (clinkers) from boiler furnace fire registers with a long, hand-held poker.

Clippy - London bus conductor.

Clobber - Clothing, also referred to as lagging.

C.N.A.V. - Canadian Naval Auxiliary Vessel.

COB - USN Chief of the Boat.

COMEX - The time or period at which an operational serial or exercise begins. (Commence Exercise) Conversely, FINEX denotes Finish Exercise.

Communications number - Man assigned to ship's inter-communications during evolutions.

Comping up - Procedure for embarking compensating sea water into submarine external oil fuel tanks to expel all air. It is followed by subsequent filling of fuel to then displace the "comp water".

Cook's tour - Guided tour through a ship or submarine. In contrast. "a Twelve-Fifty (\$12.50) Special" was an elaborated and more detailed tour given by a host. Derived from the Thomas Cook Travel Agency.

Cotter(s) - Safety device that when inserted into submarine ballast tank vent operating gear, retains it in the "shut" position. Sea cotters are applied in patrol operations but during extended periods alongside, are substituted with (padlocked) "Harbour" cotters. Also, because of their similarity in shape to a frequent dish at sea, Captain Highliner's frozen fish fillets are called Harbour Cotters.

C.V.D. - Central Victualling Depot (Halifax)

D.B. fan - "Double Bottom" apparatus used in ventilating/providing air to confined compartments

db - decibel

Deckhead Inspector - A very tired matelot who does merely what he has to do and spends a lot of time in his pit.

D.E.D. - Docking and Essential Defects (submarine dry docking & maintenance/repair period).

Deep six - The six fore and aft bunks situated in the after ends of an O-class submarine. Also see "oggin"

DF - Duty-free

Dhobey dust - (dhobi, dhobie, dhobey) laundry detergent. It followed that when Coffee Mate hit the fleet in the 1970's, it was quickly endeared as "dairy-dust". Its introduction saw the end to trying to keep the "milk-for-the-coffee" cool in the engine room.

Dhobey-wallah - a rating that "steams the ship's laundry"

DIW - dead in the water

Dog-ends - cigarette butts

Dog/dogged - the method by which a scuttle (porthole) was secured to the shut position. The securing arrangement normally consisted of 2 or 3 brass clips. (dogs) Also applicable to w/t doors and hatches.

Doggo - term used in describing an ugly person usually a female. "Is she ever doggo!"

Dog's breakfast - referring to a muddled or confused situation

Donk-shop - Submarine engine room, from the term, donkey.

Donk-shop killick - Leading hand in charge of.

Donk-shop horse - ERA in charge of the donk-shop. . .and the killick.

Donkey - An engine or in other applications, a donkey-boiler. Sometimes refers to a female.

Donkey's breakfast - Straw-filled mattress, at one time consigned to barrack bunks

Double-bank(ing) - Stand(ing) a watch with a qualified watchkeeper in order to become familiar with machinery systems or watch requirements

Dreaded lergy, the - any unidentifiable disease or condition that a matelot can't define.

Draft Marks - the frothy deposits on an empty beer glass.

Dragon, a - a real ugly female. . .more than donkey or doggo.

Drip-kid - A detachable, copper, half-round catch basin fitted below brass scuttles in messdecks and compartments. It served to "catch" moisture that

might leak through an improperly “dogged” scuttle. It also made for a great ashtray for the fortunate one who slung’ his mick along the ship’s side.

Drop your handbag - Flatulence, or in wardroom jargon. . .to fart.

Duck’s ass - A submarine’s stern. Originates from the gaping hole resulting from the after external torpedo tube where fitted.

Egyptian A.F.O’s - Skin books

Egyptian P.T. - Refers to someone asleep. . .on his back with his arms folded as an Egyptian corpse. See also Deckhead Inspector / Kip / Tits Up.

EM - Engineering Mechanic

ER or ERA - Engine Room Artificer note: greasies, bilge rats, diesel-weasels, greasers, clankies, stokers, grimies, oilies, and steam-bos’ns, are all demeaning names aimed at the men of the engineering branch.

Erks/Yobs - People, the lads, the troops, the guys.

F.A.D.O. - Fort Additional Drafting Office, HMS Dolphin.

Fags - cigarettes (pre 1970’s).

Fanny-boat - A tour-of-the-harbour vessel with tourists aboard who gape at submarines alongside, and the people aboard them. One activity was for only one man to wave at the tourists while loudly declaring (although they couldn’t hear) “All those that are beef...wave!!” The numbers of responding waves were overwhelming.

“Father” - Endearment by the crew to the submarine’s Captain. Also known as “God”

Fast-black - Taxi cab

Fast Cruise - A training exercise whereby the ship simulates being underway while remaining alongside or at a buoy.

Fazzers’ - Faslane, Scotland, home of the 3rd Submarine Squadron. Otherwise referred to as 3rd Division North, delineating from the 1st Division of England’s Football League.

Feather - the trailing wake of a periscope of a dived submarine

Fezz - from Far East Station (F.E.S.) or “the flung” (far-flung)

FISB’s - “Fukkin’ Igno-r-r-rant Scots’ Bastar-r-rds”.

Fitting out - the final stages of ship construction as non-structural appendages are fitted and installed, e.g., guns, furniture, radars, boats etc.

Flip - Term applied for hitch-hiking free rides on pusser's airplanes

Float the load - Submarine battery Hotel load.

Floatin' the load - Term used for describing a "glow on" during a piss up or a run-ashore, eg: "We were floatin' the load both sides with the screamers "in".

F.M.O. - Fleet Mail Office. Earlier designated as C.N.P.O.: Canadian Naval Post Office.

F.O.A.C. - Flag Officer-Atlantic Coast

Fo'c'sle - People who wonder..." Better write home now and again so fo'c'sle know where you are."

Fore ends - Forward 'end' of the submarine, short for Forward Torpedo Stowage Compartment

Fort Fumble - National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa

"Fort", the - Short term used for H.M.S. Dolphin, the R.N.'s former submarine base in Gosport, England whose name as a one-time army bastion was known as Fort Blockhouse. Turned back over to the army in 1998, supposing now that the new inhabitants (pongos) call it . . . "Dolphin".

F.O.F.E. - Flag Officer-Far East.

Fore-/After-ender - A torpedo rating who lives and works in the fore or after ends of a submarine where torpedoes and tubes are located.

Forty-pounder - 40 oz. bottle of booze.

FOSM - Flag Officer, Submarines (the boss of the Royal Navy's submarine service).

French-safe, a "safe" - Condom. When discarded from use and haphazardly observed afloat, upon calm harbours around the world, their hydrodynamic characteristics served in referring to them as a "backward swimmer".

Friday Routine - Formal weekly clean-up and scrub-out of a ship (or in very many cases, a certain submarine named Okanagan, whether she was at sea or not). On completion, Captain's rounds of the entire ship are conducted that usually excluded the machinery spaces. (except in that certain submarine, whether she was at sea or not).

Fuel-dump - Location in ship where fuelling hose is connected.

Gagetown - a.k.a. the Ranch, Chokey. Army Detention Barracks in New Brunswick.

Gee-dunk - Food and drink dispensing machines located in U.S. Naval Air hangars. So-called because of the sound emitting from inserting coins to purchase.

General Service (Gens') - the surface navy (skimmers). "What next? Now they're sending me back to Gens'!"

Gilly - A concoction made from torpedo fuel in the U.S. Submarine Service. WW2 U-boat submariners concocted with 47-11 referred above.

Grippo - An invitation to fine and lavish hospitality in someone's home in a foreign port.

Grocer - Coxswain of a submarine who at one time, was also responsible for the acquisition and issue of "vittles" (groceries.)

GUPPY - Updated version of USN fleet boats. (Greater Underwater Propulsion Power).

G.C. - Good Conduct badge (1 badge signified 3 years' service, 2 badges meant 7, and a 3 badgeman, 12. All badges were really indicative of undetected crime).

G.I. - Gunnery Instructor. His other job was as a Parade G.I.. . .a drill instructor.

Goffer - Soft drink.

Hairy-ass - A Canadian matelot, most commonly a west-coaster.

Hairy-bag - An east-coast matelot.

Hairy-fairy - A naval airman common to the RN.

Hard-sea trade(s) - Lower-deck trade(s) specific to the sea-going environment.

H3 - Defective hearing grade in medical documentation.

Helensbagels - Endearing term for Helensburgh, Scotland. A city south of Faslane where sailors like to have a run ashore.

HMS/m - His/Her Majesty's Submarine.

Ho, the - Standing at "attention". The order to stand to "attention".

Homeward Bounders - An un-ordered "sneak 'em in" increase of propeller revolutions in order to get home sooner... or a Racing/Married-Man's surfaced trim applied by increasing weight aft and decreasing weight forward to improve propeller efficiency.

Honky-fid' - Hong Kong.

Housewife - A pusser's sewing kit that included beeswax to keep thread from fouling.

Hum/ Hummy - stink or smell. . . usually aimed at a person with an unclean bod'.

Jag/ Jagged-in - To quit work. Also describes an equipment or system that has failed.

Inboard - submarine term for gone ashore from the boat. "Where's Fred?" "He's gone inboard." Relating to the berth occupied by the mother submarine tender or the squadron shore facility.

Inboard-wanker, or "I.B.W." - The submariner's application of people in spare crew, squadron staff, or refit crew.

Inboard digs/ shore digs - Submarine term for accommodations off the boat. i.e. ship's messdeck, barracks, hotel, room above a pub, or anywhere in fending for yourself.

Inviter valve open - Much like anyone, generosity and good will abounds from a little tippie when the whole gang gets invited down the boat for a tour.

Irish Pennant - Loose dangling or unravelled thread on items of kit, uniform, canvas or ropework.

'ish (the) - The whole issue. "We drank the 'ish!"

Jack - A matelot.

Jack-me-tickler - A well turned out and tiddley matelot.

Jacky - A stropmy matelot or someone who sounds off against experience or superiority.

James Bond, the - Power launch used by submarine sea training staff at Faslane for boarding and leaving submarines in work-ups/trials. Its' speed and appearance typified power launches used in the James Bond films.

Jay-Bee - Johor Baharu, Malaysia

Jill-Dusty - A wren stores rating opposed to Jack-Dusty, the storesman.

Jesus-boots - Leather sandals.

Jolly-port, a jolly - A good run ashore port. A trip that has just a little bit of ops and lots of port visits.

Jury rig - A temporary measure or a substitution of equipment in getting a job done.

Killick - An anchor. Descriptive to the rank insignia of a Leading Seaman/leading hand.

Kipper - A fish, a torpedo, or in RCN parlance, anybody from the RN or England.

Kip / Kipped out - Sleep/asleep. see also. . .Deckhead Inspector, Egyptian PT / tits up / zuzz / zonk.

LCdr - Lieutenant-Commander.

LEM - Leading Electrician's Mate (RN).

LM - Electrician's Mate (RCN).

LM(E) - Leading Mechanical Engineer (RN).

Lolly or Tin - Money.

LOP - Lynch plot. Local Operation Plot.

Lower Deck Leave - With little to spend and nowhere to go, leave was granted by being on leave but living aboard the ship you belonged to.

LSLR - Leading Seaman Layer's Rate (RCN).

Makee-learner - Applied to wayward Odes, a Part III, Subbies, 'new on the job' ratings, etc.

Maker's - From the term "make and mend" at which time men would stand down from duties to make-and-mend clothes. In modern times, a "maker's" transformed into leave for an afternoon, usually Wednesdays. A "sports maker's" restricted leave from ships and establishments for organized sports. A "snow maker's" is the act of shutting down the navy and the dockyard during snowstorms. . .almost exclusive to Halifax. "Whoopee!"

Mankey/Mank' - Dirty/dirt.

Mech' - RN Mechanician. Promoted to artificer level from the stokers' branch.

Med' collar - Blue jean uniform collar in a turquoise shade midship ballast: the occupants of a submarine's wardroom. The wardroom is generally located amidships.

Milestone/hit a - The odd, non-momentous wave that slaps you around and makes a ship shudder like she's going to break up. They sequence at about every tenth pitch in a heavy sea.

Monkey's fist(s) - Short length(s) of rope terminating with a spliced (baseball-sized) handgrip. A series of them were connected to a wire lifeline so as to transit weather decks in heavy seas in ships (eg: Tribals) with low freeboard upper (iron) decks.

MUPPET's - The "Most Useless Pricks Pusser Ever Trained"- At the outset of nuclear propulsion, refers to nuclear submariners (in a cleaner and better life) by diesel submariners.

Mob or Andrew - The Navy.

Moor - To secure to a buoy. As well, people required to make up a jetty party. "The moor, the merrier!"

Moosh - A name bestowed upon a rating whose proper name is unknown. "Get fell in with the duty watch moosh!" said the killick to the AB. Also used in referring to someone's face. "I've got a picture of my granny's moosh in my hat box."

NAAFI - Navy Army Air Force Institutes.

N.A.D. - Naval Armament Depot.

N.E.T. - New Entry Training.

Night clothing - So-called relaxed dress in evenings at sea. Usually #3's, negative collar. The rig would appear totally black in this configuration and bearing similarity to a crow, the wearer was referred to as "a shithawk (seagull) in night clothing".

N.R.E. - Naval Research Establishment

Oggin - Water, the sea, the ocean. Also referred to as "the pond" or the "deep-six".

Ole' ships - Endearred term bestowed upon (a) former shipmate(s). "Hi ole' ships. How ya been?"

OOD - Officer Of the Day

OOW - Officer of the Watch

OPSCHEd - Operations schedule.

“Out Pipes” - The order to turn to (Start or resume work) Originates with the extinguishment (and the pleasure) of smoking a pipe.

Outside Greaser - Stoker detailed to work on outside (of engine room) machinery and systems.

Outside Killick - The Outside Greaser's boss.

Outside Wrecker/ “Wrecker” - The Outside killick' boss, the overall one. .
.ERA or Mechanician.

Part III - Practical portion of the RN submarine at sea qualification programme or term applied to a qualifying submariner. Part I: basic classroom, Part II: branch acquaint training.

Party - A lady, a girlfriend, a girl. Older ladies and widows are endeared as “grannies”.

P.A.S. (pazz) Boat - Port Auxiliary Service craft, Royal Navy.

Paybob - Pay Writer or Supply Officer when acting in the capacity

Pierhead-jump - To be pier-headed was a draft or posting from one ship to another.

Pig's ear - A ‘fitted’ save-all device to collect and route liquid drains as does a funnel. (for barrack stanchions: a skin-coloured acoustic device fitted on the side of a pig's head)

“Pinky” - The Pink Panther (Pandera Rosetta) mascot to HMCS/m Okanagan.

“Pipe” - An order or announcement broadcasted over a ship's inter-communications system or audibly, by Bos'n's Call, e.g., “Bos'n's Mate. . .pipe Hands to Dinner!”, or “Did you hear the last pipe? I missed it!”

“Pipe Down” - Order given 30 minutes prior to the verbal “Out Lights” and all hands turn in e.g. the bos'n's pipe is down for the day, or in the event of stormy and heavy seas, routine pipes for the day are concluded and all off-watch hands turn in for reasons of safety.

Pipping - The process of paint & preservation (p&p) to preserve items of spare gear parts and equipment i.e. packaging and/or process of dipping components in hot resin preservative.

Pirate-rig - The authorized wear of civvy clothes in submarines at sea only. A perk that allowed the wear of old shirts and worn-out jeans instead of pusser's

work dress. When they became threadbare at the end of a patrol they could be "deep-sixed". Saved on dhobey water as well as money. . .not having to buy new work dress from slops.

Pit - Bunk, rack, breadbox, submarine 2 by 6, the width and length in feet.

POLTO - Petty Officer Electrical Technician (RN)

Power nap - A five-minute kip. Usually done in the sitting or in some instances ... the standing position.

PR - Periscope reader.

PTI - Physical Training Instructor.

Pusser - Naval slang for anything that is military-like or service issue, as in "pusser's issue", meaning anything that is supplied by the Navy, e.g., "I went to clothing stores and bought pusser running shoes."

Pusser's hard - Bulk, hard soap produced for the navy and used for scrub-outs, scrubbing ships' sides, dhobey sessions, and even for showering when your dhobey-dust runs out.

P.X. - U.S. Armed Forces "Personnel Exchange". On base cheap merchandise.

Q.R.C.N. - Queen's Regulations Canadian Navy

QHM - Queen's Harbour Master

QM - Quartermaster

Rabbit - a matelot's souvenir or method applied in illegal acquisition or an agreed-to transaction.

Rabbit-run - A run ashore, solely for the purpose of acquiring souvenirs'. Best get them back aboard though before they get lost if a real "Good Burn" is about to start.

Radio Lady - Affectionate term applied to sparkers/communicators that typifies their daintiness and the hush-hush, and cozy environment of the WT office/radio room.

Rattle, the - Punishment.

R & R - Rest and Recreation

R.C.N.H. - Royal Canadian Naval Hospital

RC - Radar Control (gunnery).

Red Duster - Government flag flown from yet-to-be commissioned naval vessels usually undergoing “makers’ trials” (civilians aboard).

R.F.A. - Royal Fleet Auxiliary

RG(P) - Refit Group Portsmouth

RG(S) - Refit Group Singapore

Rig of the Day/Rig of the Rag vs. Dress of the Day - Work dress vs. uniform dress.

RIMPAC - Pacific Rim

RNAD - Royal Naval Armament Depot

Rogues’ Gallery - A photograph of a submarine crew displaying the Jolly Roger. Modern day referral to a photo of the Ship’s Company.

Rosie-Lee - Tea.

RP - Radar Plotter.

Rubber, a - A loan of money

Rum-rat - A matelot who basks in his rum issue more so than others.

Safe-depth - A submarine’s safe keel depth is established at 180 ft. to avoid collision with deep-draught surface vessels. Prior to the arrival of super-tankers on the high seas, safe depth was maintained at 90ft.

Sarong - A colourful cotton sash tied about the waist that hung past the knees. Along with jesus-boots and nothing else, this was the popular pirate rig in submarines at sea in the far east.

SBS - Royal Marines Commandos - “Special Boat Service”

Scablifter - RN SBA (Sick Berth Attendant).

Scran - food.

Scran Bag - Unsightly appearance of a matelot. After a good run ashore, “He came back aboard lookin’ like a scran bag!”

Scran Locker - A depository in ships and establishments for articles of kit whose owners are unknown. (Regulated by the Cox’n/MAA) To reclaim the article, the owner must prove ownership, then make a modest payment that is deposited in the ship’s entertainment fund.

Scrape - A shave.

Scratcher - A submarine "deck" Petty Officer responsible for seamanship duties.

Scratcher's Dickey - The scratcher's mate, usually a killick.

Screamers - Diesel engine superchargers.

Sculling - Laziness. When one does not work or hides from work, he is 'scullin' or 'sculling about'. Gear left scullin': clothing or other items not stowed away. (from term: to scull a boat by rowing or propelling with one hand).

Scupper - A ship's upper deck drain or to finish off a beverage.

S.E.I.E. - Submarine Escape Immersion Equipment.

Sem-I (Sem-aye) - American matelot from term semi.

Sesame St. - The gangway on 02 deck of a gas-turbine 280 class destroyer. So-called as it provides access to the wardroom and officers' cabins...that are also known as midship ballast.

"Set - A sailor's beard. . .and if a bearded sailor's name wasn't familiar, he'd be referred to as "Skers", from whiskers.

S.E.T.T. - Submarine Escape Training Tank.

Shark shit - Remnants from the huge eddy of floating seaweed found in the shifting warm water currents of the mid-Atlantic and Bermuda Triangle. So dense and golden brown Sargassum is the gulfweed as a sea within a sea. .the Sargasso Sea.

Shave and a haircut - A very short period in drydock. e.g. clean the ship's bottom, take propeller poker gauge readings and re-paint the boot-topping or anti-fouling only.

Shipshape and Bristol Fashion - A phrase meaning in good and seamanlike order with reference to the condition of a ship. Nautical clean and neat, with newly painted and scrubbed surfaces, brass polished, etc. In good order; efficiently arranged.

Shit-locker - Stomach

Skimmer - Matelot's cap. See also "steamer" (or term for a surface ship rating. .see General Service).

Skirmish party - Homegrown name for personnel detailed to go around picking up litter and dog-ends on barrack grounds and roadways.

Skinful - To be overwhelmed with a situation or to have had enough to drink. "I had a skinful of that routine!" or "He had a real skinful ashore last night!"

Slack hammock - wake up late/ adrift, or hammock improperly lashed and stowed.

Slide - butter

Slops or slop room - Clothing stores. Derived from the Dutch translation for britches

Smells and Bells - Malta. (dingy alleys and lots of belfries)

Sneakie / Mystery - A submarine patrol that is classified. Duration of patrol, destination or mission are not usually disclosed by "Father" until underway, or sometimes not at all.

SOA - speed of advance. Pre-calculated speed established to maintain a passage advance at sea

Sods' opera - a matelot's sing-song of bawdy tunes. Derived from "Ship's Operatic Dramatic Society"

South wind - a glass or bottle that is empty, describing a south wind being typically warm and dry.

Spiffy-dins - A formal dinner

S.R.D. - Special Red Demerara (186 proof) Jamaican rum

S.R.E. - Sound Reproducing Equipment. A ship's main internal communications system also providing radio broadcasts (when in range) or recorded music. Too often interrupted with ship's "pipes". When so, such "pipes" were referred to as radio "commercials".

Steam/Steamin' - Where a stoker stands his watch at sea. "He's steamin' in #3 boiler" . . . "He's steamin' the laundry."

Steamer - A matelot's most comfortable cap. A bowler, headgear, titfer, top, etc.

Steamin' gear/boots - What matelots wear at sea.

Stock Number - Apart from the numerical method of identifying naval stores items, slang for personal official/service/serial/ S.I.N. number.

Stopper - Once alongside, a defect or breakdown (usually escape system) that prevents the submarine to sail or dive.

Stop Trim - Adjustment of submerged displacement with sea water to obtain neutral buoyancy and thus enable a non-propelled submarine to remain "stopped" at a pre-determined depth. So precise is the evolution that in the fine adjusting stages, the desired displaced condition is attained through raising or lowering retractable masts.

STS/SSTG - Sea Training Staff/Submarine Sea Training Group.

Sub', Subby, Shitty Little Jobs Officer (SLJO) - A Sub-Lieutenant

Submarine Comforts - Perks for submariners that skimmers don't get. One-in-one tots, first shot at movies selection, living ashore in foreign port, submarine jerseys, civvies, pirate-rig, a little bit more pay, etc.

SUBMISS - Activation of fleet operations when a submarine is deemed missing. Search vessels and aircraft prepare for rescue operations.

SUBSUNK - Fear or confirmation that a submarine is disabled or at worst, lost. Search vessels and aircraft deploy.

"SUED", "SUE on" - Acronym for Ship Up...Ends Down. Means by which a drydocking vessel is correctly positioned on the stern post and then completely resting on the keel blocks when docked down.

Sujee - A composition of soft soap, flakes of pusser's hard, and water. With a long-tom, used for scrubbing down ships' sides.

Tachee-bag - A matelot's slang for his navy-blue denim "attache case". Perfect for going ashore with a shaving kit and towel but more often, anything else whether going ashore or coming aboard, whether legal or not. (tachee-bags seldom got inspected when you came aboard) (Ugh!! By 1990, they then bore knapsacks)

Tack & Corpin - Course and speed

Tank, a - a fat woman. If she's whoopee size, she's a "Panzer".

Tanker-Wanker - a matelot who has had the pleasure (or embarrassment in small ship circles) of sailing in roomy, lots of water, and comfortable messes and cabins in tankers. . .and tankers ONLY.

Tanky - submarine seaman rating who works for the coxswain. Responsible for striking down and the issue of "groceries".

Tannoy - Dated internal communications system. Any part of the system whether a microphone, speaker, or the overall system, was referred to as "the tannoy".

Tapper gear - Horizontal control levers for operating hydroplanes and rudder pre-dated in classes of submarines prior to the O-class.

TAS (tazz) - Torpedo Anti-Submarine.

Tea-caddy - From the Chinese unit of measure, "catty", a commercial weight of 18 oz. English tea was packed in catty boxes.

Techni-coloured yawn - Puke, spew...vomit.

Ten-tonner - A very long and well needed/deserved shower.

Thousand-milers - Shitnicks (undershorts), or socks that are worn continuously at sea in submarines. Through long periods on water-rationing, they can be worn inside out, then back to front, or in changing feet in maximizing wear endurance. (a certain former submariner holds the record in the "Black-Knight Club" for successfully NOT removing his 'nicks and socks in 44 days of a 7-week patrol).

Threadbare - To be unhappy or disgruntled. "Was he ever fukkin' threadbare!"

Tickler - Duty free cigarette tobacco for rolling your own.

Tiddley - Smart looking.

Tidge' - Short for tiddley.

Tiffy - Artificer.

Tiffy Apprentice (RCN) - One undergoing advanced training in artificer trades, e.g., Hull, air, engineering, electrical, electronics, gunnery, control, and torpedo armament.

Tiffy - Forced misinterpretation of medical assistant as a "Sick-bay tiffy" in RCN.

Tin - see "Lolly".

Titfer - Hat, cap, or anything else worn on the head.

Tits-up/ tits'd up - To go to sleep or refers to someone asleep. Also, that when an equipment or system fails, it is said to be "tits'd up".

Totem (T) vs. Token (K) - Audible method in order to distinguish between the two submarines Totem-tee/Token-kay.

Torch - A "Made in England" flashlight.

Townie - A winger or oppo from the same home town or city usually having joined the navy at the same time.

Trim - The method by which a submarine's overall weight is perfectly balanced with its center of gravity from forward to aft. see also: Homeward Bounders, Stop Trim.

Trollies - Pants/trousers.

Trot - Term derived from vessels secured to 'a line of buoys.' Today transformed into the berthing of submarines alongside.

Trot sentry - Crew member detailed for safety and security on the submarine's casing.

Tumble Home - The sides of a ship near the upper deck inclining inwards are said to "tumble home".

"U.A."/ "T"/ "G" - Under-age/Temperance/Grog. Social classification of age and/or lifestyle. A rating at 20 years of age would elect "T" or "G". "T" provided a small monetary allowance in lieu of his daily tot issue.

UC - Underwater Controller (RN) as to SN: Sonarman (RCN).

UW - Underwater Weapons (RN) as to WU: Weaponsman Underwater (RCN).

Up-and-Downer(s) - Steam reciprocating engines, (as fitted Prestonian class frigates).

Ultra-zonk - Slang term for submarine in the ultra-quiet state, ie: reduced machinery noise state while off-watch crew turns in to further reduce noise levels while helping to conserve oxygen.

Vertrep - (Vertical replenishment) In-flight helicopter personnel/stores transfer.

VM (vee-em) - Victualled member (single hand) entitled to rations and quarters by living aboard when alongside. Compared to R.A.: Ration Allowance, (married hands) who live ashore and are in receipt of allowance to do so.

Wall, the - Jetty, wharf, pier.

Wanchai burberry - An oriental brolly. A bamboo and accordion-ed waterproofed paper umbrella.

Wash-Up - A staff review of the fallout at the completion of an exercise or sea-training work-up period.

"We Come Unseen" - Official motto of the Royal Navy's submarine service, although the lads in it opt for the more descriptive, "We Come Unclean".

Wheel(s) - Term sometimes used for propeller(s) but more often, screw(s).

Wheel-spanner/Wheel-hook - The stoker's cherished possession. . .his badge of office. Tool carried in rear or trouser leg pocket and used to operate valve handwheels. (Usually accompanied with a flashlight, a 12" crescent wrench, and a large ring of keys dangling from his belt).

Whittler - From "vittler" ...Victualling Storesman. The "jack-dusty".

Wriggle - Rounded half-moon faring fitted above ship's side scuttles to curb "scupper" water from entering an "opened" scuttle. Also referred to as an "eyebrow".

Wright and Logan - The photography firm that for decades has produced traditional portraits of naval vessels of all nations proceeding "in" or "out" of Pompey Harbour.

YewKay - United Kingdom/U.K.

Yorkie', a - An equal contribution of money among a drinking crowd to pay for the rounds usually thrown into a cap or a beer glass. Sometimes referred to as a "whip-round". It was always cheaper that way because it kept the "welshers" at bay...the ones who would skip their round.

Zuzz/ Zonk - More sleep.

"Jagged in": The End