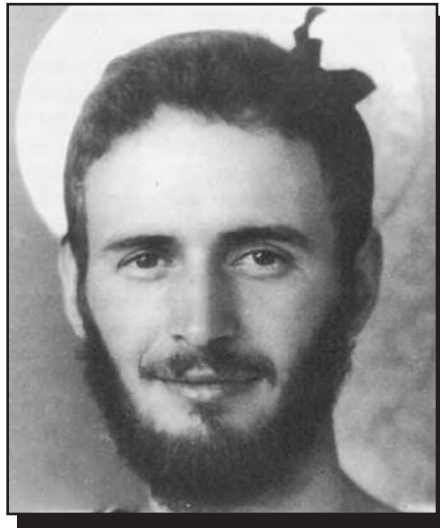


DAVIS, Stanley William KOREA

THE LIFE OF A SAILOR, THROUGH THE EYES OF S.W. (STAN) DAVIS

As near as I can recall, it all began in the summer of 1944 in Kildonan Park, West Kildonan. I was spending a couple of weeks vacation with my aunt and uncle and happened to be in the park when a troop of sailors from HMCS Chippawa came marching down Main Street and stopped for a brief rest at the park concession. This was my first opportunity at seeing the military marching and I will never forget that sight and especially the precision and sound of the naval band. One could not help but march along with them, which I did, for as far back toward Chippawa as I dared.



I guess from that day on, I was convinced that I would one day be in the Navy. As I was only fourteen at the time, I still had a few years to go and I secretly wished that the war would not end before I was old enough to enlist. Well, fortunately, the war did end sooner and I don't remember being disappointed but I was still determined to "Join the Navy and see the World" as soon as possible.

When I turned seventeen, I decided to give it a try and was not surprised when they told me to go home and wait until I was seventeen-and-a-half, which was the minimum age at that time. Home I went, but not before I was given a list of things to bring with me when I returned. This included a Birth Certificate and two or three letters of reference. Two of the letters came from Mr. A. C. Savage, and Mr. Bouchard, both local businessmen in Fisher Branch.

Well, after what seemed like an eternity, the day finally arrived and armed with my documents, I went back to Chippawa and this time I was accepted. After a few days of tests, medical examinations, etc., I was told once again to go home and wait. Well wait I did and finally I was called in to Chippawa to be sworn in and pick up my tickets and orders to proceed to HMCS Naden in Esquimalt, British Columbia for training. Officially my enlistment date was June 18, 1948.

I will never forget the feeling when that train left Winnipeg and was headed for a place that I had never before been to and had only read about. Also, this was the first experience at being alone, without a friend or family member along. It makes a difference, when you travel with someone you know and are away from home with someone you are familiar with, to talk about things that are common to you both. This would not happen to me for my entire five and a half years, as I never did meet up with anyone I knew.

Besides the loneliness, everything was new and strange to me - the training, the rigid discipline, the new terminology. They did not speak

English, they spoke Navy. The lonely feeling would eventually lessen as I made more and more friends and became used to the routine of military life. It would lessen but never really go away and was experienced every time I would return from leave. I'm sure that those who have left home at a young age, for some reason or another can appreciate what the feeling is like.

Beautiful British Columbia, as the current license plates read, was certainly true back then as well but what a change for a small town farm boy! I don't think I was prepared for the change and did not think it was that beautiful then, but only because it was very strange to me.

Upon arriving in Vancouver I was met by a "Navy" person and taken to the BC Ferry dock for my first boat ride to Victoria. Never losing sight of the shore, I thought sea life was okay and I could handle this part. That was not a good example of sea time, as I soon learned.

What a rude awakening I received when I arrived at HMCS Naden in Esquimalt. What a rude bunch! No welcome, just "shave off that moustache", "get rid of those side burns", do this, don't do that, orders, orders, rules and more rules. I was obviously not prepared for this either. In spite of it all, I later realized that it was all necessary and I survived and probably grew up and matured a lot faster than if I had not enlisted.



Basic Training was another new experience that I will never forget and one that all young people should have to endure. At times, in fact, nearly every day I would have gladly left for home if I could have. Why did I ever get myself into this mess? There were full days of Parade Ground training: how to march, how to stop, how to carry a rifle, clean a rifle, how to dress properly in Naval gear, how to salute, who to salute and who not to, when to say "Sir" and when not to, etc.

Finally, four months later we were considered to be trained and it was a happy and proud day when we graduated and were ready to move on to something more challenging.

There was really no surprise when I was drafted to the Cruiser HMCS Ontario which was then used as a training ship. This was an opportunity to put into practice all that we had learned in the classroom during basic training. One nice thing about a training ship in peacetime was the trips we took: San Diego, Acapulco, Hawaii, Panama Canal, West Indies, Antigua, Alaska, to name a few. What a geography lesson! Unlike basic training we were now permitted to take shore leave almost every evening except when our "Watch" was on duty. The only drawback to this, of course, was the miserly pay that we received which had a very detrimental effect on the extent of your social life.

During the first couple of months on the "Ontario", I decided that I would like to become a Signaller or Radio Operator and was granted authority to work with the Communications Branch I admired their neat and tidy appearance, as well as the excitement of playing such an important part in the ship's operation. The decision to become involved in Communications was one I never regretted.

It's hard to explain the feeling of going home for my first leave, but there I was at last, on my way to arrive in time for Christmas. It was a great feeling but unfortunately it didn't last nearly long enough to suit me and all too soon I was on the train heading back to my ship. The same lonely feeling but, this time it only lasted until I was onboard the ship and back with familiar, friendly faces.

Another cruise south for three months was the first time I had not experienced a prairie winter. Those training cruises always managed to go south during the winter months and, of course, this was fine with me.

It was early summer in 1949 that I received my next posting. This time I was heading to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and HMCS Stadacona for a year's course in Communications. Following a brief stopover at home, I arrived in Halifax to begin another new experience. As a seasoned "Salt", I was now going to learn all about Naval Communications and considered myself as going

full speed ahead with my new-found career. The course was full of new terms, another strange lingo consisting of Morse Code, semaphore, Aldis light, cryptograph, receivers, transmitter, antennae, ship screening, convoys, etc.; complex but very interesting and, as it turned out, a very rewarding experience and an enviable trade.

Winter in Halifax was different again, from that in Esquimalt, with colder temperatures and a lot of wet snow. Since we spent most of our time in a classroom, it was not that hard to take. I remember reading and hearing about the flood in Winnipeg in the spring of 1950 and a number of us from Manitoba volunteered to go to help with flood control currently being carried out by quite a number of military personnel. Since we were nearing the completion of our course, our request was turned down.

Graduation day at last, and what a proud day that was! I was sent back to HMCS Naden to await a posting to another ship. The Korean War was in full swing by this time; Canadian Destroyers were already on patrol with the United Nations forces. I was on leave in Fisher Branch when I received a telegram ordering me to report immediately to HMCS Athabaskan which was leaving for Korea. By the time I arrived in Esquimalt, the ship had sailed and I was sent, instead, to the Frigate HMCS Beacon Hill to await another ship to Korea. This happened in the spring of 1951 when I received a posting to the Destroyer HMCS Cayuga which was leaving approximately June 1.

Preparing for our arrival in Korea meant many hours training with long periods of "Battle Stations" involving simulated air and submarine attacks. This was all necessary to ensure that everyone knew what to do and where to go in the event of an attack. Everyone was assigned a station which you would be required to proceed to each time the alert was sounded. We were equipped with life jacket, steel helmet, etc., which were to be carried with us at all times.

A couple of stops on the way to Korea, one in Hawaii and another at a deserted island where our gun crews would practice shore bombardment at fixed land targets.

Upon our arrival in the "Korean Theater" as it was called, we were mostly involved in screening duty which meant the protection of aircraft carriers while they launched and landed aircraft. While this was not too exciting, it did provide the Communications crew with some excellent training while performing maneuvers around the carrier. When not screening carriers, we were assigned patrol duties which took us close inland where our gun crews would shell shore installations, supply trains, etc., and, of course, being close to shore we



were subject to shelling from enemy guns. We were, fortunately, never hit due mainly to the poor aim of the enemy. There were others, though, that were not as lucky as us.

We took a South Korean boat alongside one day that had nine wounded Marines on board. Since they had no doctor, we were asked to provide medical aid for these wounded troops. Our Surgeon, Dr. Joseph Cyr, was on hand to remove bullets and treat the wounds, one of which was a collapsed lung. They all survived, and in fact made a very speedy recovery, which they attributed to the skills of our doctor.

The reason I emphasize this particular story is because our "Doctor", Joseph Cyr, was later discovered to be an imposter. He was, in fact, Ferdinand Waldo Demara Jr., who had somehow obtained the real Dr. Cyr's credentials, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy in Halifax, NS under Cyr's name and was assigned to the Cayuga as a Surgeon. It was a result of the publicity received for his efforts in saving the Korean marines that was his downfall. The story by a Navy public relations officer was carried by Canadian papers and was read by the real Dr. Cyr.

This story and other similar escapades was detailed in a movie "The Great Imposter", which was filmed in 1960, with the part of Demara played by Tony Curtis. I personally remember him as a very inquisitive man always asking questions which, I guess was all part of his education. He treated me for water on the knee which had developed following a fall. I had every confidence in his treatment based on what I had seen and heard of his skills. I had no idea, of course, that he was not a real surgeon.

My assignment to the Cayuga was cut short after only five months due to a serious illness in the family and I returned to Winnipeg in the fall of 1951. The trip back to Canada was a memorable experience. I travelled halfway across Japan by train which took me to Tokyo. From there, I flew to Vancouver by US Military Air Transport aircraft via the Aleutian Islands; from Vancouver by Commercial aircraft to Winnipeg.

When I arrived in Winnipeg, I was assigned to HMCS Chippawa where I remained until after the New Year (1952) and was then posted back to HMCS Naden in Esquimalt to await posting to another ship. This happened in the spring of 1952 when I was sent to the Destroyer HMCS Crusader which left for Korea in April.

The procedures and routine on the Crusader was much the same as the Cayuga and I now considered myself a seasoned veteran of all this and was prepared for another long stint away from home. By now, I was used to the many days at sea with short periods of leave in

Japan and back to sea again. During one period, we were at sea for 52 days without any leave and everyone was, to say the least, a bit testy by the time we were allowed shore leave. The highlight of one of our breaks from patrol was a visit to Hong Kong. I had the opportunity to visit the cemetery where a number of members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers were buried, some of them local boys from Fisherton and area. I was surprised to see such a well-kept cemetery in this far-off land.

In addition to the patrols and carrier screening, we also provided support to the ROK Navy (Republic of Korea) which I assume only had a handful of ships. Some of these were made entirely of wood and used to patrol inland in search of mines. I drew the assignment of Radio Operator onboard one of these vessels one evening during a patrol. My job was to remain in radio control with our ship and provide support in the event of enemy shelling or the discovery of an active mine area. Besides the fact that no one onboard spoke English, the radio room was small, hot and smelly, and contained at least one family of rats and a dozen or so mice. What a night! I never complained about our ship again.

We had the opportunity to work with ships from a number of other countries including Great Britain, Holland, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Our ship was the first Canadian ship to work with the 7th Fleet. This involved carrier screening with one of the largest gathering of ships in Korea and was a very active and busy time for our branch.

Upon completion of our tour of duty, we returned to Esquimalt in May 1953, thirteen months after having left Canada. This was a very emotional and happy time for many, especially the married members of the crew who had not seen their families for this long period. Some were seeing their year-old children for the first time.

Following our arrival, I was transferred to Naden to begin my discharge routine. This being completed, I returned to Winnipeg and home, officially discharged in October 1953 after serving for five and a half years.

Although I was discharged from the Regular Force, I did remain with the Reserves for a period and was involved in training Reserve personnel in Communications (Morse Code, Semaphore, Operating Procedures, etc.)

Many times during my term, I questioned my sanity in joining the Navy, but I do believe that it was one of the smarter things that I ever did. I also feel that the training, the discipline and the experience I gained have influenced my life and certainly were a factor in fashioning my future, as I continued in Communications for another thirty years with the Federal Government, retiring in 1985.