Peter M. Birch-Jones – Memoirs

1.Birch-Jones – family – Pg. 1-3

2. 1945 Called to War – Pg.4 – 11

3. 1946 (Mar/Apr) – Japan -Pg.12-14

4. 1946 (Apr. /May) – Australia – Pg.15-19

5. 1946 (June) Singapore-Ceylon – Pg.19-22

6. Suez Canal Pg. 22-24

7.1946 (June) Malta, Gibraltar – Pg.24-26

8. 1946 (July) – England – Pg.26-30

9. 19691946 Norway – Pg.31

10. 1946-1949 – Returns to Canada - Pg.32-38

11. 1948-1949 – HMCS Crescent – Pg.38

12. 1949-(Feb) – Skaguay, Alaska - Pg.39-41

13. 1950 – Korea – Pg. 42-44

14. 1951-1952 – Halifax – Pg.45-47

15. 1953- England – Married Life – Pg. 47-52

16. 1954 – HMC Venture – Pg.52-56

17. 1956-1958 – HMCS Crescent-Pg.56-62

18. 1962-Azores & Gibraltar – Pg.63-66

19. 1964 Cyprus – Pg.66-68

20. 1966-1967 – NDHQ & Margaree – Pg.69-74

21. 1969-1973 – CF. Staff College & HMCS Provider – Pg.75-82

22. 1949 - HMCS Crescent – China Trip -Pg.83 – (Pg. 13-19) -

Peter Meredith Birch-Jones

A Nautical Life

Many people have asked me the origin of my hyphenated name and that is as good a place as any to start. The reason for my name "Birch-Jones" is a very simple one: money. My grandfather was a fairly impecunious Welshman, by the name of Morgan Jones, who was a qualified veterinarian and land manager. He met, in the course of his wanderings-around, an Agnes Birch, who was the granddaughter of a Colonel Birch, who owned half the land that is now Blackpool, when it was a fishing village. Her parents were both dead; one died in a hunting accident and the other died of natural causes. She was going to inherit a whole lot of money from her grandfather, being the sole surviving granddaughter. The old boy wanted the name Birch kept on obviously, and so it was legally done, and that's how the "Birch-Jones" came about.

I have a picture of the home where my father, Hugh Maurice Birch-Jones, was born. It was a great big place that my grandmother actually bought, or her grandfather bought for her. Unfortunately, the marriage, after three boys, broke up, because my grandmother did one of those things they call "doing a bolt" in England. She ran off. My father was a little boy at the time, about eight years old, and was going to a prep school in the country. He left school and went wandering across England to try to find her, but he never did.



The Birch Estate, Stroud, England[1]

Well before this event, my great uncle, Owen Meredith Jones[2], brother of my grandfather, had arrived at Esquimalt in the Royal Navy as a surgeon. He looked around Victoria in the late 1890s and decided to leave the navy. He became Victoria's first neurosurgeon, not the first doctor, but the first neurosurgeon. He became a very successful surgeon, having studied with the Mayo brothers at their clinic, when they first formed it. So when my grandmother did a bolt, he had by this time bought a four-hundred-acre farm in Metchosin, half of it on the water side and half of it on the road side. He brought my grandfather out with his three little boys to live on and manage the farm. My father thus spent his boyhood in Metchosin, an area just outside of Victoria. Later he went to a boys' school in Victoria on

[1] There is no documentation to confirm that the Birch Estate was located in Stroud. However, this location is consistent with Dad's recollection of his father Hugh's stories.

[2] Owen was born Oswald Meredith Jones, in Carmarthenshire Wales, but changed his name to Owen as an adult.

Rockland Avenue, called the Collegiate School, which was one of the big old houses on Rockland, somewhere close to where the Belfry Theatre is now. In fact, it may well have been the Belfry.

After my father graduated, he joined the cable service in Bamfield. The cable operators were highly skilled using the flick key; they did about one hundred words a minute. I've never been able to understand how they did it. Bamfield was the Canadian connection end of the Transpacific cable between us and Australia. Because of the importance of this link, the operators were frozen in their jobs. My father and another young lad stole a boat and made their way to Port Alberni, took a bus to Nanaimo, and then the ferry to Vancouver. They could not join the Canadian Army because they were now deserters from the cable service. However, the Imperial Army was recruiting at the same time in Vancouver, so they joined the Royal Engineers and went overseas in 1917. My father survived the war, obviously, despite being gassed and blown up, but was not seriously hurt. He came back to Victoria and married my mother, Marjorie Scott, in 1923.

At that time, my mother was Mrs. Dunsmuir's private secretary. Actually she was the private secretary to the lawyer, who was the lawyer to the Dunsmuir family and he did nothing else but that. Mrs. Dunsmuir would not have a private secretary, as she was afraid that many of the family's more racy secrets would emerge, and so, my mother ipso facto became the private secretary to Mrs. Dunsmuir and therefore privy to a whole lot of the family's secrets. The most notorious member of the family was, I think, Dola. She had a separate house on the Dunsmuir Estate. Dola was a lesbian and one of her great friends was Talulah Bankhead, who used to come and stay with her.

After they were married, my father got a job offer to go to Japan and be part of a British import/export firm in Tokyo. At that time there was a large British colony there.

My mother became pregnant eventually. When my mother was well into her pregnancy, the doctors advised her to leave the country, as she was terrified of the earthquakes and she really didn't like or understand the Japanese. So, they started back across the Pacific in one of the old Empresses. On that voyage there was an incipient Chinese crew mutiny, so first class passengers were issued with revolvers, much to my mother's fear, she being a little Prairie flower and quite unable to cope with these kinds of crises.

On arrival in Vancouver, fortunately without incident, they started a trek across Canada by rail. They'd realized that they weren't going to make it to Halifax, let alone England, which was their ultimate destination. In the meantime, my grandmother Agnes Birch had died and left my father with quite a lot of money. They stopped off in Estevan, Saskatchewan, where my aunt lived, because my maternal grandfather had been the first doctor in southern Saskatchewan, in Estevan, in the late 1800s. His name was Harold Scott and my grandmother's maiden name was Service. She was a Service from Guelph, Ontario. She was reputed to be related to Robert W. Service, part of the Scottish Services. The Services arrived in Canada around the 1800s and some of the Services participated in the War of 1812. The bulk of the Service family are all still located in Guelph, Ontario. I have the original Service Bible of 1855, which unfortunately only has one name in it. It's now 165 years old.

I was born in Estevan in the middle of a blizzard on December 10th, 1925. Apparently I was a bit of a sickly child, so my parents decided not to go to England, but came back to Vancouver, where they took up the whole top floor of the Sylvia Court, which was at that time an apartment/hotel. I only lived there for a year or so.

Then we went down to Seattle, with an English nurse and a Scottish housekeeper. My father went into business with a German/American, manufacturing moth cakes.

They were big pieces of anti-moth material set into a piece of cardboard and they were doing quite well. We had a big house on Mercer Island with a little boat and a dock. Then along came the 1929 crash and it all went. It was a small factory of about two hundred and fifty people, but the small factory just collapsed, so all of this English money that gave me my name disappeared up in smoke. Within a matter of weeks my mother and father were back in Vancouver on 10th Avenue and my father was going door to door selling vacuum cleaners. It was an enormous change. Then we moved back over to Victoria in the early thirties and my father went on relief, earning one dollar a day digging trenches for the sewers in the Uplands, along with quite a few Victorians who had also known better times. He got back onto his feet when he got the job as Commissioner of the Red Cross. This was a good-paying job and, of course, the pay was regular. This was about 1936.

By this time I was going to Monterey Public School and I went there for four years. We lived on Monterey Avenue, which was quite close to the school. Then my father's fortunes improved and I got moved over to St. Michael's, which was then a preparatory school from Grade 2 to Grade 9, on the corner of Windsor Road and Hampshire in Oak Bay. It was a rickety old place, but a wonderful little school and I have very fond memories of that school. I went there for three years. My parents had by then moved to Vancouver, where my father joined J.S. Tait and Company in the importing business.

In the meantime I moved over to Vancouver after completing my year at St. Michael's and living with another aunt. I went to a school called North Shore College, thankfully gone. It wasn't a particularly good school, as I remember. It was a day school and it was just four blocks away from my house in North Vancouver. It had some good teachers and I was able to skip a grade somehow in that transition period, which was just as well, because my mother had kept me out of school when I was five, nearly six, so I didn't get to enter school until I was almost seven. I would not have been able to go to Royal Roads to join the navy and meet the age requirements, having completed Junior Matriculation. My mother was being overprotective, that's all. So, I had to scramble and do twelve grades in eleven years.

For Grades 11 and 12 I went on to Brentwood College, which was an all boys' boarding school. In those days Brentwood College was at the end of Saanich Inlet and I was there for two years. When I graduated, I applied to go to Royal Roads, then in its second year of existence as the Royal Canadian Naval College. I was living in the same building where my mother had been the private secretary to the Dunsmuirs, when it was called Hatley Park. After two memorable years, I graduated in June of 1945 and was sent off to join HMCS Ontario; the war in the Pacific was still going on. We, being eight Royal Roads RCN midshipmen, joined the Number 2 Canadian hospital ship, the Letitia, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Letitia was a sister-ship to the Athenia, the first ship sunk in the war. Thus began my adventures as a

subordinate officer in the Royal Canadian Navy. At that time we did two years as a naval cadet and then twenty months as a midshipman, before becoming an acting sub-lieutenant. All these ranks were called subordinate officers.

1945: Called to War

Hawaii, Philippines, Hong Kong

We sailed out of Halifax to the Pacific via the Panama Canal and arrived in Pearl Harbour, where the old Letitia's refrigeration equipment broke down. Since we were carrying a large amount of frozen food and medicine, it was essential that we had it fixed. Being an old Scottish ship built on the Clyde, they had to send for the parts all the way to Scotland and fly them out to Hawaii. We were stuck for three weeks in Hawaii. In the meantime, the Japanese, sensing these Canadian midshipmen were on their way, promptly gave up and the war was over.

Much to my surprise and delight, there is a picture of the old Letitia in the military museum in Nanaimo. It's the only one that I have ever seen of that old ship. The medical staff was all Canadian army and the crew were British from the Anchor Donaldson Line. The original purpose was to go to Hong Kong and pick up the Canadian prisoners of war, many of whom were in pretty poor shape.

Because of all these delays as a result of the faulty refrigeration machinery, we spent three weeks in Hawaii. We didn't mind, but we had very little money. In the meantime, courtesy of the US transports, the Canadian POWs had arrived in Pearl Harbour. We were the first Canadians they had seen since the war and we were eagerly questioned about many things Canadian. They were indeed in bad physical shape, but in good spirits.

We had a couple of little adventures in Hawaii. One day, on a run ashore in Honolulu, we were wearing British uniforms and we were being tailed by a bunch of U.S. Navy submariner sailors, who looked very hostile towards us. We were wearing Canadian flashes on our shoulders, but at a distance they couldn't see that. They sort of edged up towards us in a somewhat hostile manner. We were very puzzled by this, because it was so unusual. Apparently they had thought that we were Australians and had wanted to beat us up. There was an on-going battle during the war between the Yanks stationed in Australia and the Aussies, which was why those sailors were a very hostile group, having suffered at the hands of the Aussies. When they came up to us they said, "Hey! They're Canadians! We're so sorry!" They were apologetic all over the place and they insisted on taking us back to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, which was at that time taken over by the United States Submarine Service. We spent the rest of the day eating and drinking and surfing at the expense of our new-found American friends.

Another pleasant encounter of a different sort in Pearl Harbour was when we, the eight midshipmen, were ordered to go and visit a U.S. Army hospital ship in harbour. My tour guide was a young second lieutenant named Dolores Ceneviva from Plattsburg, New York. She was a very pretty young lady nurse. She was close to my age and, like me, was just starting her career. We both felt an instant attraction and to our mutual astonishment the matron, who was obviously a romantic type, shut us in one of the

cold storage rooms. Needless to say, we didn't stay too long, only long enough for a couple of shy kisses and an exchange of addresses. Months later we did get letters from each other, but time and distance soon made this but a pleasant memory.

About the same time, HMCS Prince Robert arrived in Pearl Harbour from Hong Kong. She had been the last warship out of Hong Kong in 1941 and was the first one back in 1945. We were sent for by the captain of the Prince Robert, Captain Wallace Creery, and quizzed as to why we had not spent more time on the bridge. We explained that the Canadian army staff and the British merchant crew hardly ever spoke to each other, and since we were nominally under the army's control and had never been invited to the bridge, we assumed we were not wanted. To our relief Captain Creery instantly understood this, but admonished us to try and spend some time on the bridge. We were able to get some much-needed backpay and purchase some badly-needed white tropical uniforms.

Finally, with our machinery repaired, and having embarked six hundred US Army Air Corps personnel as passengers like us, we sailed and bade farewell to Hawaii with little regret. Just before we reached the Philippines, a message cancelling our appointment to HMCS Ontario, which was by this time on the way home, arrived in the ship. It also informed us that we were to join HMS Duke of York in Hong Kong. We were to be dropped off at a place called Tacloben Airstrip in Leyte. This was the island in the Philippines from which McArthur had left, vowing to return. We spent two interesting weeks there, waiting for a New Zealand Air Force Catalina that was going to pick us up and fly us to Hong Kong.

By this time the war was well over by a few weeks or so. One of the more enterprising members of the group, George Wither, found out the Americans were pushing all of their transportation equipment into the ocean, so we bought a brand new jeep for a pair of white shorts and that was a pretty good deal until we found we had to cough up for the gas, which was an astronomical price. However, we tootled around in this jeep for two weeks on the island of Leyte and had an enjoyable time seeing the sights.

One of the things that got us into a bit of trouble concerned the sanitation equipment that the Americans had installed. It was an interesting arrangement: they had built an elevated trough on stilts with about twelve wooden seats above it with a steady stream of water running through this galvanized tin trough. At the other end was a pipe that led to a hole in the ground. We discovered that you could make paper boats with newspapers and float them down the trough. The next stage to that was setting fire to the paper boats, causing some consternation in the seats above. We got reprimanded for that, I remember.

Eventually, the New Zealand Catalina arrived and the skipper looked hard at the eight of us and the eight tin trunks we had with us. He said, "I can't possibly take all of this stuff," and we said, "Well you've got to; this is all we've got to last us for a whole year around the world." Eventually he loaded all our stuff and we prepared to take off. I can remember sitting in a blister on the starboard side of the Catalina watching the water rush by underneath me. It rushed by for about five miles, before we were able to get off the water. We lumbered slowly into the air and without incident flew to Hong Kong and a few hours later landed on the water. We were then instructed to take our trunks by boat to the MV Aorangi anchored out in the harbour. She was a lovely old ship from the P&O line (a famous cruise liner

now) and was used as an accommodation ship by the Royal Navy. HMS Duke of York was up in Tokyo Bay for about six weeks in order that Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser could sign the surrender documents on board the USS Missouri on behalf of Great Britain. He was also spending time with General McArthur to discuss the occupation plans.

When the ship returned to Hong Kong, we joined the Duke of York, our group consisting of the original eight midshipmen and so began a very happy and eventful ten months in the Duke, as it was affectionately called, ending in August of 1946 in Plymouth, England. This brought the total number of gunroom members up to thirty-three, but about twelve senior midshipmen were on the point of leaving the ship. This group were mostly public school boys from Eton, Harrow and Winchester and, as only a British Public school boy or man can be, they were somewhat superior and disdainful of us colonials. Fortunately they left before some full-scale battles began, because we were older than they were and, in the main, bigger. After they had left, we were a somewhat smaller and more cohesive group of Royal Navy midshipmen who were our seniority, a couple of New Zealanders, a couple of Aussies, two RNR mids and an RNR Sub Lt.

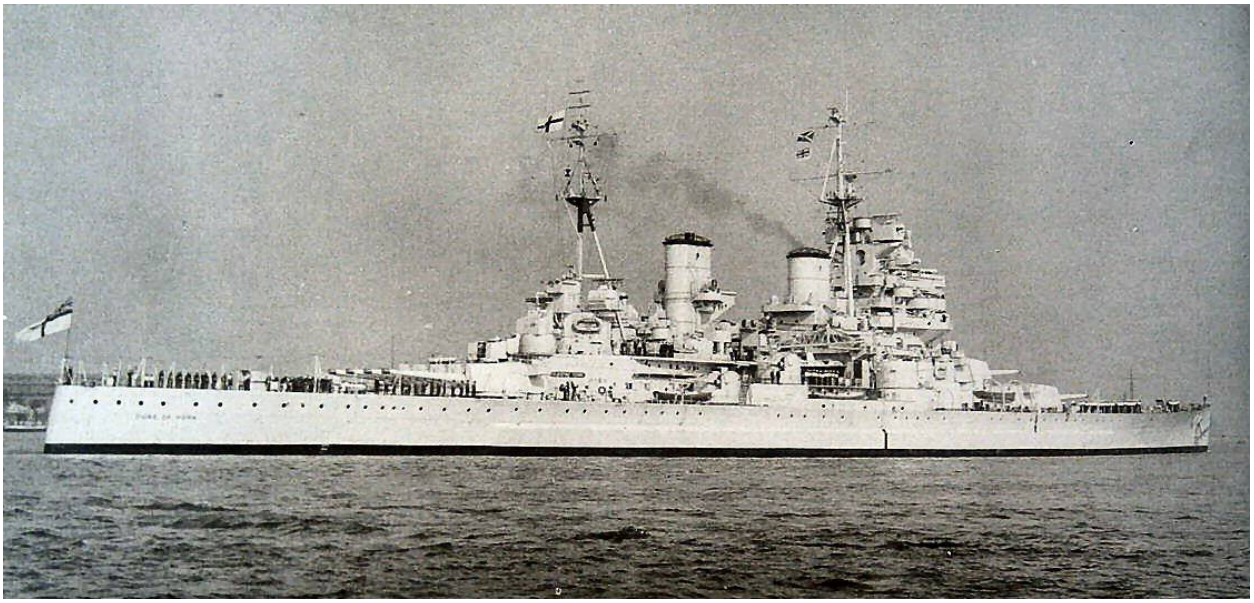
The sub of the gunroom and president of the mess was an eighteen-year-old ex-Dartmouth cadet with a baby face. We Canadians were to make his life pretty miserable as he tried to exercise some control over us, which was, of course, his responsibility.

In December 1945 I celebrated my twentieth birthday. This was a bit of a milestone, because when you are twenty in the Royal Navy, you get bar privileges and can drink hard liquor. Before that you could only drink wine and beer. However, as these were the most expensive items and with a wine bill of only five pounds per month, this restricted us quite severely. When I got the bar privileges, I was able to buy pink gin, which cost us tuppence each. On a five-pound mess bill, tuppence at a time will take you a long way.

About this time, the Commander in Chief Admiral Fraser expressed his desire to meet the Canadian midshipmen, so down we went to the admiral's quarters, which were right under the quarterdeck and were very large. There was an armed marine sentry standing outside in dress uniform. While there I was staring at a picture of the USS Missouri and the signing of the Japanese surrender, which was placed on the bulkhead. The admiral pulled up alongside of me and said with a chuckle, "You know, your chap signed on the wrong line. It caused no end of a flap." His name was Colonel Cosgrove and he comes into my story later, because he was our Consul General in Shanghai when we got there in 1949.

At this point I should describe my first ship, HMS Duke of York. She was built just before the war, one of five battleships in the class, the others being King George V, Prince of Wales, Anson and Howe. The Prince of Wales took part in the first battle with the Bismarck, in which HMS Hood was sunk and the Bismarck with her superior speed of thirty-five knots got away. Later, the Prince of Wales was sunk in early 1942 north of Singapore by the Japanese Air Force along with the Repulse, an old battleship. At the time we joined, Duke of York, Anson and Howe were still in the harbour, but left for home shortly after, leaving us the sole battleship and flagship of the British Pacific fleet. She was designed to be thirty-five thousand tons, but was nearly forty thousand tons with her additional armaments. Her main

armament was ten fourteen-inch guns in a 4-2-4 configuration. This was a unique design initiated by Admiral Lord Fraser when he was director of Naval Gunnery in the Admiralty in the early thirties. They were to be used to great effect in the sinking of the Scharnhorst, a German battleship off Norway at a place called North Cape. On June 01, 1946, the admiral became Lord Fraser, Baron of North Cape, the Norwegians having deeded a point of land on North Cape to him. As a future gunnery officer (Long G), it was my regret never to witness the main battery firing. She was powered by four main engines and four screws with eight boilers supplying superheated steam to the turbines. This gave her a speed of 31.5 knots under full power of one hundred and ten thousand horsepower. Later on, en route to Australia from Japan, I was to witness the third of a full power run in this forty thousand ton battleship.



HMS Duke of York

One of my first and pleasantest duties as a midshipman was to be in charge of the No. 2 picket boat. (In command sounds rather too grand.) They were lovely boats, forty-five feet long with a flying bridge, twin sixty-five HP diesels, twin screws, twin clutches and twin throttles. I had a leading seaman coxswain, a stoker mechanic, a bowman and a sternsheetsman armed with boathooks, who performed a rather elaborate drill when coming alongside. The coxswain was a Geordie (i.e. from Newcastle). He and I took an instant dislike to each other and so he used to go and sulk in the cockpit when I was running the boat, which suited me.

I had two experiences while boat running that I particularly remember. When I had just joined the ship, my boat was called away and I went to receive my instructions from the officer of the watch. He told me to go to the officers' landing and pick up the Chief of Staff. I asked who the Chief of Staff was and I was told somewhat pityingly that his name was Commodore Evan-Lombe. This proved to be my undoing. Shortly after I arrived at the landing, a tall rear admiral got on board. What was I to do? So, I went to this very tall senior officer and said, "May we wait for just a few minutes more, Sir?" He then very courteously asked me why we were waiting. I replied, "I was sent ashore to pick up the Chief of Staff, Sir." He then replied, "But my dear boy, I **am** the Chief of Staff." This was the moment I learned

that there was a wartime rank of commodore first class who wore a rear admiral's stripes. This was typical of the courteous manner of the very senior officers in the flag ship.

The second trip I recall was somewhat more interesting and exciting. Early in the new year with Admiral Lord Fraser embarked, the ship slipped the buoy and proceeded to Amoy, a Chinese port north of Hong Kong. The Commander in Chief wanted to visit with a group of Chiang Kai Shek admirals and generals in the port. When the ship had anchored, I was informed that my picket boat was to be the admiral's barge, as the barge was U/S (unserviceable). I was not unnerved, as I assumed the admiral's coxswain and crew would take over. To my surprise I was informed that I and my crew would climb the boat as the admiral had decreed, "The snotty will drive." So I went to the OOW (Officer of the Watch) and asked where I was going. His reassuring reply was, "I haven't the faintest idea. Mind all the sunken vessels in the river." So, off we went, picking our way upriver through a forest of sunken masts and funnels. Fortunately a clutch of senior Chinese officers could be seen on our starboard beam a mile or so upriver. I was able to alter course, stem the tide and come in, moving slowly sideways toward the small landing space. The unfortunate thing about that movement, while making a neat landing, is that there is no way to stem or stop the sideways movement. By this time I had advised the Flag Lt. to "hang on to the admiral, as there would be a slight bump." He fortunately did this, thus preventing the admiral from landing on his nose in front of the Chinese officer. We returned to the ship and one and one-half hours later returned to pick up the admiral without incident. This was to prove a turning point in later years, because Admiral Fraser never forgot that trip.

While we were living in the MV Aorangi and before the Duke of York returned to Hong Kong, George Wither and I had befriended an RNVR Sub Lt. by the name of Joe. In early January '46 he was given the job of returning the yacht 'Jessica' to the Governor of Macao. Macao was a Portuguese colony founded in 1588 by Vasco da Gama and was the oldest colony in the Far East. Joe sent a signal inviting George and me to accompany him on the passage to Macao, returning the following day by the Macao ferry. We obtained permission from the "snotties' nurse", LCdr Hugh Moore, who was the navigating officer of the Duke of York. In capital ships of the Royal Navy, the navigator was traditionally the snotties' nurse, that is our mentor as well as our instructor in navigation.

We set off early on a Saturday morning to join Joe and Jessica, which I will briefly describe. She was a sixty-five foot double teak hulled boat powered by three diesel engines, one of which did not work and one other worked part-time. She had three screws, a wheelhouse, a single funnel and a large saloon below. She had been stripped bare by the Japanese or Chinese looters and the only light was a twenty-watt bulb on a wandering lead.

We were delayed in starting until early afternoon by a Royal Navy Commander (E)[3], who wanted to be dropped off at Tai O, an island off the mainland and opposite to Macao. Our crew consisted of Joe, a motor mechanic, and a coxswain, as well as George and myself. Our journey was to have been a distance of about thirty miles and concluded in daylight. Due to these delays it was to end in darkness, when our troubles began.

[3] (E) denotes an Engineering Officer

It was getting dark by the time we had dropped the Commander (E) and another officer off at a village on the Island of Tai O. We set off to cross the strait, a distance of about seven miles. The wind was abeam and the sea was rising as we began the crossing. With no navigation lights I shimmied up the small mast on the wheelhouse and attached our 20-watt bulb to its top as our sole running light. By this time we were wet, cold and hungry. As we approached the harbour we knew from the chart that there should be lights on the breakwater, but we could see none. By this time we had removed the one light from the masthead in order to read the chart. As we slowly edged our way into calmer waters our forward progress was abruptly stopped with a loud bump. We had run onto the unlighted breakwater, which was under water at high tide. We appeared to have had little damage to the bow, and so Joe was able to back Jessica off and commence an end run around the breakwater with still no lights to guide us. This time we ran aground on the same breakwater, but this time the bow was higher up on the rocks and both hulls were breached. No amount of racing the tired old engines astern had any effect. We were well and truly aground on a falling tide. At this point the ever useful 20-watt bulb once more had a third role to perform. It became our Morse code signal lamp, as we slowly and painfully sent by flashing light, "SOS yacht Jessica." We managed the dots and dashes by making and breaking contact with the light. Believe it or not, a young Chinese boy, who spoke English, Cantonese and Portuguese and who knew Morse code read our SOS and scampered off to find the skipper of the British ML (motor launch) stationed at Macao for anti-piracy patrols. On being informed that the motor launch skipper was at a party at the British Consul's, he went to find and inform him of our plight. This brought about the next sequence of events. The skipper, an RNVR Lieut. rounded up his crew and with the Consul embarked out of the harbour to come to our rescue. On approaching Jessica he struck some rocks, lost his starboard engine and rudder and limped back to harbour. By this time we had more company. Two Portuguese vedettas (police launches) were somewhat more cautiously approaching Jessica, accompanied by several small sampans with their female Chinese crew, who were also bobbing nearby.

The Portuguese demanded that we abandon the yacht, because the seas were getting up and the winds were high. There was considerable danger that they might have pushed the yacht sideways onto the rocks, and she would roll over and sink. Joe ordered George and me and the motor mechanic off. We had somehow managed to make our way through a whole bunch of rocks. It was quite difficult for any boat to approach us. Joe and his coxswain stayed on board and tried to hold the ship steady on by putting out a kedge anchor. So, the three of us went ashore in the police launch and alongside the British motor launch. This was about midnight. George and I went down to the tiny little wardroom which was about the size of a postage stamp. The skipper of the motor launch, noticing that we were tired and cold, said, "Well, I haven't got much to offer you," but I can remember that he poured us a glass two thirds full of gin and topped it up with port. It was an awful drink! Anyway, we managed to drink it down, and soon we were warmed up and feeling no pain at all, when there was a call down from the deck above, "Survivors of the Jessica, Sir!" Down the ladder came Joe and his coxswain fully dressed, cap and all, but very wet. They had to swim for it because Jessica had broached and sunk. They were rescued by the police boat and brought in, and by this time the British Consul had arrived back at the motor launch and said, "I'm not sure what I am going to do with you two Canadians. I guess I am going to have to call you distressed British seamen!" So we roared off at about four in the morning in the Consul's Ford V8 through the fortunately deserted narrow streets. We ended up at a large hotel.

By this time we were famished, so we asked if we could order some food. We ordered a huge meal of Chinese food, which appeared miraculously in a very short period of time and we ate and ate until we were stuffed, then tottered off to bed, declining the offer of the company of young ladies, restricted by the lack of funds more than anything else. We didn't think the Consul would foot the bill for that.

We were due the next morning to meet with the Governor of Hong Kong himself, "Face the Music" as we called it. We were down at the jetty at ten the next morning and the governor turned out to be a commander in the Portuguese Navy. He was absolutely charming. He first apologised for the fact that the Portuguese had not yet restored the navigation lights on the breakwaters. He then dismissed the loss of the yacht as a result of navigational hazards, much to Joe's relief. At the subsequent inquiry into the loss of the yacht, the only individual who was assigned any blame was the Commander (E) of the dockyard for letting the yacht leave in such poor condition. The next day we returned on the Macao ferry to Hong Kong and the Duke of York with a bit of a tale to tell.

During the months of January and February 1946, apart from the short trip to Amoy, we were moved to the middle of the harbour. Our time was spent watchkeeping on the quarterdeck, boat running, and attending lectures and instructions covering a range of professional subjects required by Royal Navy midshipmen.

During this time I was to have one more pleasant experience courtesy of the Admiral Fraser. It was announced that two wardroom officers (young) plus 2 midshipmen were invited to spend a weekend ashore with the admiral in the governor's mansion. The admiral was also acting as the Governor of Hong Kong while awaiting the arrival of his civilian successor. Midshipman Geoff Hilliard and I won the mids draw. After a great dinner and a game or two of cards, which I couldn't seem to lose, we retired for the night to our beds, a vast improvement on our hammocks in the midshipman quarters. In the morning with fully loaded picnic baskets we drove around the wrenery and selected four young third officer wrens to accompany us for a picnic and swim at Repulse Bay. The wrens were close to our ages and I gained the impression that they enjoyed our company rather more that the many senior officers lining up to take them out. The next day was to be a tour of the New Territories and a visit across the frontier to meet the Nationalist general, whom I suspect had no warning of this visit. The admiral drove a large Humber car, while we drove a Jeep. The road was steep and rocky and the admiral drove with great skill. All was well until we reached the border, guarded by a fierce-looking Sikh soldier. Unfortunately, he had not been informed of the admiral's intentions, nor did he recognize the admiral, we being in picnic garb. He spoke no English; we spoke no Sikh (Punjabi?). It was an impasse. I watched with some fascination as the flag lieutenant began the difficult task of establishing our identity and the acting governor's intentions. Finally sensing that this was a very senior personage indeed, the Sikh guard allowed us to pass. The Chinese guards were more accommodating at the mention of the Chinese general's name and we were seen through. They must have phoned through, as the general seemed quite unperturbed over our rather motley-looking group. Only the vehicles looked smart. We were given Chinese tea and rice cookies, while the admiral and the general, with the aid of a hastily-summoned interpreter, had a short conference.

Our return was without incident except for the atrocious road, which the admiral seemed to enjoy tackling. After a pleasant picnic up in the hills of the New Territories, we returned to the governor's mansion, a hot bath, and a good dinner. On Monday morning we returned to the ship after a very pleasant and welcome break.

At this point I will mention a piece of recent history. When the United Kingdom returned Hong Kong and Kowloon to Chinese rule and left the colony in 1996, it was not because the treaty concerning Hong Kong and Kowloon had run out. That was in perpetuity. However, the ninety-nine year lease on the New Territories had run out. Without the New Territories, Hong Kong and Kowloon's water supply was totally inadequate. So, apart from the signs of the times and the end of colonialism, the loss of the New Territories was the deciding factor. Shortly after this event, with considerably less fanfare, the oldest colony, Macao, was turned back to the Chinese government and the last vestiges of colonialism were gone from that area.

1946 (March/April): Japan

On March 11, 1946, we slipped from our buoy and proceeded north to Japan and our first destination, Nagasaki. Needless to say, we looked forward to this visit with some anticipation, not knowing what to expect. The ship was too large to enter the relatively small horseshoe-shaped harbour. The Americans, with their usual efficiency, had organized enough landing craft to take about half the ship's company, about six hundred men, ashore at one time. I was in the first group. As we entered the harbour, much damage to buildings and the Mitsubishi torpedo factory could be seen, but nothing more than would be caused by heavy bomb damage. Then we got into large army trucks and drove about two hundred yards onto a vast plain of rubble no bigger than a fist. That was Nagasaki. It was out on this plain that we realized the full impact and power of this bomb. Somewhat subdued we sailed for Kagoshima, where we were to have a few more adventures.

Kagoshima was a larger harbour, so we were able to anchor off the US Marine Corps base, which we were to visit. The marines provided plenty of ship-to-shore transport and had arranged for entertainment, a geisha show one night and a challenge boxing match the next night. This was to be my first encounter with the twangy music and high wail of the geishas covered in white paste on their faces. It was a culture shock and went largely unappreciated, despite being, I suspect, a high calibre show by Japanese standards. The marines and sailors would have preferred a strip show, I suspect. Years later, during subsequent visits to Japan, I learned to appreciate this form of entertainment. By then I was older and wiser.

Kagoshima was famous for its volcano, which promptly erupted, and spewed ash all over our ship, reducing visibility to a few hundred yards.

The second night the entertainment was boxing. One of our group, Brian Bell Irving, was fighting as a middle weight. Up to Brian's bout, the Duke of York's crew was tied with the marines. Brian was an excellent boxer with a deadly punch. In the first minute he was all over his marine opponent and was hammering away at him against the ropes. The marine reached behind him and swung a haymaker which connected. All of a sudden Brian was lying on the canvas out cold. He recalls looking into the anxious face of the referee. Afterwards he said that he neither saw nor felt the punch. This resulted in the marines winning four to three.

Nagoshima had one more punch for us. By this time a fierce storm was passing through the area, making normal boat running impossible. So we waited ashore for some developments, fortunately in the company of Captain Angus Nicholl. About midnight a large Japanese tug was commandeered to take us back to the ship and off we went, drenched in spray and holding onto whatever we could. We got alongside the Duke of York's soaring ship's side, from which a wood and chain jumping ladder had been let down. The idea was to, one at a time, wait for the tug to be on top of a wave and jump onto the jumping ladder. By tradition the first off was the captain, who made it easily, giving courage and encouragement to the rest of us. We all made it without a smashed finger! We sailed the next morning, glad to be back at sea.

Our next port of call was Kure, the main British base for the occupation. To get to Kure, you approach it through the inland sea, consisting of hundreds of islands, big and small, most of which are terraced for farming and food production, mostly rice. We went to a buoy in Kure and from there we were able to observe several large Japanese warships, including a heavily-damaged aircraft carrier, the Ryusuo, and a sunken Kongo class battleship with her decks and superstructure awash.

One morning about nine of us midshipmen took away a thirty-two foot sailing cutter and some sandwiches and set out to explore the harbour and wrecks. We noticed that there was an extensive shipyard and dockyard base, and many tunnels bored into the hills. This would be a very heavily-defended area had the atom bombs not been dropped. A few miles northwest of Kure was Hiroshima. Again there was a vast plain of small rubble with a single building and tall chimney of brick still standing in the middle. It had been a brewery. On the southeast of Kure there was a shrine village called Miyajima and trips to visit there were arranged daily in a large Japanese tug. It was a steep climb up a hill to the village past several Buddhist shrines in alcoves. In some of them sat what appeared to be small gold Buddhas. I think that they were gold and hope that they remained intact. The village itself, where the main Buddha shrine was closed, was notable for a large sign stretched across the street, "Welcome Occupation Forces. Get your beer here." The souvenirs were small and cheap and mostly wooden. I bought some wooden coasters, only to find the sign "made in Toronto" written on the back. We also visited the aircraft carrier looking for "souvenirs" to liberate. The Japanese sailors followed us around the ship, but did nothing to impede us. In a large storeroom off the hangar deck we found hundreds of Japanese handheld Electrolux cleaners in their original boxes. What they were doing there was a mystery, but we left them as they were, as they were no use to us. We left the carrier to return to our cutter and sailed home armed with a few "souvenirs" taken from the damaged carrier. The Japanese sailors followed us and unfolded a large banner which read, "There is to be no looting by occupation forces on pain of death." We did not feel that our objects lifted from a wrecked aircraft carrier constituted looting.

We sailed the next day for our last Japanese port, Tokyo Bay.

I should mention a third interesting experience we had while in Kure. A British merchant ship, called the Menestheus, had been converted to the role of Royal Navy "amenity ship." This meant she had a full-sized theatre and stage, a large capacity brewery, and a deck full of shops. Among these was Messr. Greves, known affectionately in the Royal Navy as Messr. Thieves. This was a men's tailor shop, specializing in naval officers' uniforms. By signing on the dotted line, you received what seemed to be almost unlimited credit and treatment suitable for those way above our humble station. I ordered a No. 5 (blue) uniform, which was to be delivered in Plymouth, England when we got there, and some No. 10 (dress whites), which were immediately available.

The theatre group was entirely male and in the daylight appeared a somewhat jaded group, who looked at us young midshipmen with a gleam in their eyes. At night some of them miraculously became dazzling beauties on stage, a role for which they were entirely suited. It was an enjoyable and interesting experience, with literally oceans of very inexpensive beer. It was also my first, but not last, encounter with the gay world of the English theatre.

We arrived in the early morning on a beautiful day with a lovely view of snow-capped Mount Fuji gleaming in the sunlight. At first we anchored off Yokusku, the port for Yokohama. We were allowed to go ashore on a full day pass and we caught the fast electric trains now running again between Tokyo and Yokohama. Both downtown centres in Yokohama and Tokyo appeared to have survived the extensive bombing they suffered. However, in the thirty miles or so between the centres, there was again another vast plain of nothing. This was the result of the fire-bombing of the area, resulting in a huge fireball sucking up all the oxygen and suffocating, if not burning alive, hundreds of thousands of Japanese. In fact, more people perished in these fire bombings than initially at Nagasaki and Hiroshima combined, before the radiation sickness began. This in itself was enough to convince me that these bombs were needed to convince the Japanese that the war was lost, thereby saving a further loss of life of a million people on each side.

We travelled around downtown Tokyo, observing that both the Imperial Palace moat and the Imperial Hotel appeared to be intact. The Imperial Hotel was designed by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright and was reputed to be earthquake-proof. It was eventually rebuilt and considerably enlarged in the nineteen sixties. The Japanese were acting as a conquered and subservient people, a far cry from the barbarous and vicious conquerors in the lands they occupied. However, the people of Japan had paid a terrible price, particularly in the cities. I was able to buy some Japanese silly prints in the U.S. PX (Post Exchange), which was up and running already.

At the end of March we commenced the long passage to Sydney, Australia and another interesting and pleasant phase of what was to become a round-the-world tour. During the passage in ever-increasing sunlight and warmth, we crossed the equator without ceremony, as the ship's company had already crossed several times. One beautiful star-lit night, I was fortunate to have the middle watch during our semi-annual full-power trial. This is when the ship steams at full-power for four hours on a straight course. Compared to the noise and vibration back aft, it was relatively quiet on the bridge close to one hundred feet above the water. We were doing close to 30 knots and looking over the side of the bridge. I could hear the hiss of water going swiftly by and I saw incredibly bright phosphorescent turbulence created by our bow wave. It was a time of beauty and awe, as this forty-thousand ton ship ploughed her way through the calm sea and star-lit night. There is something about the sky at night in the southern hemisphere. The stars seem bigger, brighter and more numerous.

Shortly after the full-power run, we were scheduled to begin our engineering training phase. This was for a period of one month and was to take place entirely in tropical waters and included time spent in all of the several machinery spaces. As was mentioned earlier, there were four engine rooms and boiler rooms driving four propellers. One of my first watches was spent in one of the boiler rooms. The Duke of York was built as a primarily-based Atlantic ship and was not built to include the tropics. This was most evident in the southern latitude where the temperature during the day in the boiler room rose to 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Four hours spent at that temperature requires consumption of a lot of water and some salt pills.

Every hour the sprayers of oil fuel had to be charged and then cleaned. There were a range of sprayers, four to each boiler, each tended by a stoker; the watch-keeper in charge was a chief stoker. The

objective was to keep the water level up to the safety mark, the steam pressure up to the required level of 850 pounds per square inch and the sprayers adjusted to keep the burning of the oil at maximum efficiency with a minimum of smoke. I quickly gained a new respect for the work of a stoker, particularly in the tropics.

1946 (April/May): Australia

Our arrival in Sydney Harbour was eagerly looked forward to by the Canadians for our first glimpse of that beautiful harbour and "our bridge" as the Aussies called it with obvious pride. Our arrival at the docks coincided with the departure of HMS Implacable, a 930,000 ton aircraft carrier, known as the glamour ship of the BPE (British Pacific Fleet). There were well over one thousand people down to see the ship leave. She had been in Sydney for a period of refit similar to the one planned for us. We did not know that she was to be our next ship in September.

I had been relieved of my duties when we arrived and was able to go up on deck and view our arrival on one side of the dock and the imminent departure of Implacable from the other side. Of the over one thousand spectators, there must have been five hundred attractive Aussie girls, most of them tearful. The Commander, not known for his inspired decisions, made one that morning. Just before noon and the departure of Implacable, he gave leave to one watch, about five hundred sailors. I was then able to witness one of the phenomena of a sailor's life. The Duke of York sailors mingled with the crowd and were seen leading away many of the girls, who were beginning to dry their eyes, with assurances that they would do everything possible to lessen the pain of their loss.

Thus began our longest alongside time in the ship and the pleasantest in terms of leave and getting to know a little of the country and its people. In all of this I was again to be singularly fortunate. An invitation soon arrived for me to have dinner with a middle-aged couple in Sydney named Humphrey and Jean Earl. He owned a factory which made bacon and meat-slicing machines and my father, who was in the importing business, and Humphrey had corresponded with a view to doing business in Canada. Nothing came of that, but for me it produced a memorable and poignant time. After dinner, Jean Humphrey produced a picture of a beautiful girl, scantily clad in lingerie, and said, "How would you like to meet her?" My reaction was obvious. She said, "Her name is Maide Hann. She is David Jones' leading model; she is Miss Anzac (Australia-New Zealand) and she is my niece." David Jones was Sydney's leading department store. So it was we arranged that a few nights hence we would mee club. I recall that it had quite a long red-carpeted stairway leading d white, cloth-covered tables with a fair sized dance floor and band. We three were waiting at the bottom



A picture of Maide Hann from The Sydney Morning Herald, 1947, as a David Jones model, or "mannequin" as they were called at the time

of the stairs when Maude made her entrance at the top. It was like a Hollywood movie of the forties. This dazzlingly beautiful woman dressed in a long white classical dress came gracefully down the stairs. I thought it must be someone else, but she stopped opposite and said, “Hello.” We had a dinner I can’t remember, and then we danced and I was hopelessly in love. She was as nice as she was beautiful. I was then twenty and she twenty-three and at the top of her career as a model. I was to see her a few more times before we sailed, but another opportunity presented itself.

By this time a host of invitations had arrived for both officers and men to partake of some Australian life and hospitality outside of Sydney. Again I was lucky and, along with an RNR midshipman called Charles, accepted an invitation to stay for ten days at a sheep station in Armidale, New South Wales. Armidale was a small but prosperous town in northern NSW, but known for its boys’ school, which was later attended by Prince Charles. The sheep station turned out to be several hundred thousand acres and stretched as far as the eye could see. Peter Danger, the owner, was fortyish and a dashing-looking fellow with a deep tan and a Ronald Coleman moustache. His wife, Ann, was English and was the daughter of Vice Admiral Lane-Poole, RN, who had the Australian station before the war. They were a delightful couple, who made us very much at home. Amongst his many assets, Peter had inherited a very large and well-stocked wine cellar. One of his favourite books was 1,001 ways to make a cocktail. So, after a day spent on horseback out with the sheep, we would arrive home to a hot bath and sitting before a roaring fire in a huge fireplace, we made the difficult choice of which of the 1,001 cocktails we would sample that night while Ann prepared supper.

During the course of the day I had learned something about Charles hitherto unknown. Charles had an upper-class accent and seemed to know a lot about the West End, the theatre and ballet, about which I knew nothing. This left me feeling a bit inferior at times. However, while on leave, I learned that Charles had rarely ridden and was nervous around horses. I had ridden an English saddle as a boy in North Vancouver and felt at home around horses, while Charles was quite uncomfortable. This gave me a feeling of one-upmanship, so I felt that we were even. The Australian saddle was a compromise between the small English saddle and the much larger Western saddle and was very comfortable to spend several hours on. We learned to dip sheep, the shearing process, and the castration procedures amongst other things.

Another pleasant diversion was the arrival of a neighbour's Tiger Moth biplane, which we used to ride around in turns to survey the vast sheep station. Later on I was to learn to fly one of these.

On another day when Peter was off somewhere, Ann, who was planning to cook a goose that night, asked us to kill it and pluck it. Being a couple of city-bred lads, we hadn't the faintest idea about how to go about it, except we knew we had to chop its head off. After much chasing and squawking, we finally cornered the unfortunate bird. We decided that it was my job to hold the bird steady on the block while Charles would strike the death blow. So it was done. On being released the now-decapitated body appeared to be chasing us, running around headless and spouting blood. We fled from the scene, only to return after the bird finally subsided. It didn't stop us from enjoying the bird, however, along with a very good dry white wine from Peter's seemingly bottomless cellar.

On our next-to-last day, Peter took us duck hunting. We were spaced a few hundred yards apart and up-river from a large pond. The idea was the beaters would startle the birds congregated by the (notes p. 27) large pond, who would the fly following the river's path, allowing us a chance to shoot at them. It was a time of fleeting opportunities. I was to distinguish myself by bagging two birds, which turned out to be spur-winged plovers, protected birds. My defence was that the little spurs on the forward edge of the wing were invisible when in flight. Peter said that they were very good eating, however, and we would have them the last night alongside the legitimate ducks.

We returned to the ship, which by now was in drydock. Prior to docking we had to de-ammunition ship. With 10 x 14 inch guns, and 8 x 5.25 second-ring armament, we had a lot of ammunition to get off. This we did by using our two ships' cranes, one on each side. We midshipmen had the job of conning the crane operators into position to pick up the shells and cases of ammunition. It was not tiring, but exacting work. This also gave the Commander the opportunity to conduct us on a tour of the ship's hull from the bottom of the huge dock. This size of a battleship's hull is largely unseen, as normally over two-thirds of it is below the waterline. We were able to see the massive screws and the equally large single rudder. I was surprised to see how much growth there was on the hull and around the condenser intake. This was one of the main reasons for docking. The second reason was to take x-ray pictures of one of the shafts, which had a suspected fracture. A notice was duly posted that we were to take our camp cots we were now sleeping on and remove ourselves from sleeping in that area. Occupying a tiny cabin in the bowels of the ship was a somewhat dim-witted Royal Marine. We called the sheriff. He was named that because of his large and drooping yellow (blonde) moustache, straight out of a western movie. The sheriff chose to disregard this notice, which, in small print, warned of possible sterility effects if we did not heed this warning. When we move back, we pointed out the small print to the sheriff, who went even paler from his usual almost albino appearance and rushed off to get tested for sterility. Fortunately for his future family, all was well. When the ship, with a clean hull and new bottom paint came out of drydock we had to begin the process of ammunitioning all over again. This time, however, many of the magazines were left empty and were stored, not with bullets, but tinned meat for still heavily-rationed England.

At this point I should comment on my impression of Sydney. It was a modern, clean and impressive city and even more impressive harbour, deep and with many coves and small harbours. Despite all this, it was in several ways quite primitive and unsophisticated.

While in Canada men and women were still forced to sit in separate parts in the beer parlour, in the beer troughs in Sydney, the women were non-existent. They had peculiar drinking hours from four PM to six PM. This brief period was at the behest of the women to get their husbands home for supper. The result was that the men lined up six deep at zinc-lined counters, knocking them back as fast as they could refill them. By closing time, they were blotto and got home as best they could. Apart from a very few good restaurants, the food was plentiful, but plain and tasteless. Steak, eggs and chips was the staple diet morning, noon and night. The steaks were huge and were suitable as soles for a logger's boots. In the course of fifty years I was to know Sydney, its progress to an even more beautiful and very sophisticated city was as remarkable as it was to become cosmopolitan. In the forties I thought that, although Australia was a friendly and attractive place, its development was some thirty years behind

that of Canada. Now I think that Australia has come into its own, is better-governed, more sophisticated and is thirty years ahead of Canada.

Finally it was the last week and preparations were being made to have a farewell dinner on the white oak quarterdeck under the ceremonial awning and the gleaming fourteen inch guns of 'Y" turret. Fourteen inches was the diameter of the one-ton shells each of the four guns fired. At this time I was to learn of the peace-time skills of the Royal Navy to give a really bang-up party. The Royal Marine band, now a dance band, played at the stern, Noel Coward tunes as well as the latest American swing hits. There was a duck pond with live chicks swimming around in it. Multi-coloured flags decorated the inboard sides of the ceremonial awning. There was a huge buffet and chairs around the quarterdeck. There were three conveniently-placed bars with white coated stewards. As well there were officers in their short white bum freezers, wing collars and bow ties and a host of pretty girls and attractive women. However, undeniably the most beautiful girl at that farewell dinner and dance was my partner, Maide Hann. The captain and the senior commander made up a receiving line and when I introduced Maide to my captain, Captain Angus Nicoll, the monocle he wore dropped out of his right eye, and he said, "My word" before greeting her. Then it was time to dance and I don't know how I did it, because I was floating on air. Maide was a superb dancer, as sure footed as any top model can be, and thanks to my father's insistence on ballroom dancing lessons before I went off to boarding school, I was a reasonably accomplished dancing partner. A lot of the senior officers asked her for a dance, because she was both beautiful and famous. She refused them all. It was a night I shall never forget. It was also the night we were to meet the gunroom's solution to our sub of the gunroom. We had been granted overnight leave in Sydney and still the sub-lieutenant was trying to compose some rules of his own. George Wither's Aussie girlfriend had an older sister, about 23 or 24, who had already been married to and divorced form a U.S. serviceman.

When she was introduced to our baby-faced, golden-haired sub-lieutenant she took one look and literally gobbled him up. He would arrive back on board at about 0750, just before colours, looking dazed, and we saw little of him during the day. At 1600 he would be off ashore again and that would be the last we saw of him until the next morning. I am sure that he was never to forget his time in Sydney either.

At last the dreaded day of departure arrived. We were due to sail at 1400 and Maide had promised to come and say goodbye along with her Uncle Humphrey. Noon came and went, as did 1300, when all the guests were ordered ashore and the brow was closed to the ship's company. The suddenly there she was with her Uncle Humphrey standing on the jetty. I pleaded with the officer of the watch to be allowed ashore for five minutes and he, recognizing Maide from our farewell party, relented and gave me my five minutes. And so we said our farewells and I sincerely thanked her and her uncle and aunt, who couldn't be there, for all their kindnesses and came back on board reluctantly for the first time. The brow came inboard and the tugs began to ease us out. Then a few sailors, even more reluctant to leave than I was, jumped off the 5.25 turrets into the harbour and swam to the jetty, climbing a ladder into the waiting arms of the police. Some were luckier and escaped. We lost sixteen sailors and a couple of marines that day, including the marine corporal of the gangway. He turned over his watch at noon, walked off the ship and into a car (driven by a lady), never to be seen again. And so we proceeded

out of the harbour and back to Hong Kong to pick up the admiral and his staff before commencing the long voyage home to England. This was the first time I was to see the commissioning pennant flying astern, held up by helium balloons, signifying the beginning of the end for this ship's commission.

For the passage to Hong Kong we had embarked about eighty Hong Kong civilians, who had spent the war years in very different circumstances.

One group had been fortunate enough to leave Hong King before the fighting was over; the other group had been interned as enemy civilians. Naively I thought that the fortunate ones would commiserate with their less fortunate compatriots, who had undeniably suffered much hardship, disease and brutal treatment. Each day the civilian passengers were given one hour on the quarterdeck, which was solely theirs, the ship's company being barred during that period. It was 1600 to 1700 as I recall. To my astonishment one group walked and strolled on the port side and the other group on the starboard side. Neither group spoke to the other. This was my first experience with the schisms which spring up in colonial society despite, or because of, the hardships of war.

During the passage we continued our engineering training and indoctrination with a combination of watchkeeping and classroom instruction from some of the engineers on board. It was also a time when many technical sketches and layouts of engineering equipment were required in our journals. This tried my meagre mechanical drawing skills to the limit and required many long and laborious hours.

When we arrived in Hong Kong, we disembarked our civilian passengers, still in rather a sour mood, and prepared to embark Admiral Lord Fraser and his staff for the passage home. By now the harbour was nearly empty of warships. These had been replaced by dozens of freighters and merchant ships of all kinds. One could begin to see signs of the remarkable recovery Hong Kong was to make in the next few years. During our time in Hong Kong, this time, we were able to enjoy some hospitality ashore from colonial families now restored to and restoring their beautiful homes. There was an air of optimism, which I thought was most admirable, considering some of the hardships many of them had endured. This was another period of intense lecture activity as our instructors attempted to catch up with the many subjects we were supposed to cover to prepare for the exams awaiting us in England.

1946 (June): Singapore, Ceylon

On June 7th we sailed for Singapore, our first stop on the long voyage home to Plymouth, England. Our departure had been delayed because the commander-in-chief, Admiral Fraser, and a large number of his staff were suffering from food poisoning. They had caught this common malady at a farewell dinner honouring his departure as governor of Hong Kong and Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet. Hence the departure ceremonies were largely curtailed as a rather pale-looking commander-in-chief boarded about one hour before we sailed. It was just as well, as we left the harbour in a tropical downpour under sheets of driving rain. I was midshipman of the watch on the bridge for entering and leaving harbour, an ideal position from which to observe the activities on our final departure from Hong Kong. Owing to the weather and the non-appearance of the admiral, the remaining ships in harbour gave the

normal salutes to the departing commander-in-chief, but not a full complement. At the entrance to the harbour, however, a stoic group of Jaipur Guards had stood in driving rain for an hour or more in order to give a salute and presenting of arms for the admiral to which a rather drowned-rat-looking honour guard party replied with three cheers. Then the gloom closed in as we lifted to the Pacific swell and we were going home. At least it was going home for the vast majority of the crew. For us Canadians it was another leg of new places and new experiences as we continued our round-the-world tour. There was one personal incident that befell me as we were leaving the harbour. I was on one end of a telephone link to the quarterdeck astern of the ship. This was a typical incident in the life of a midshipman or "snottie" as we were often called. The name "snottie" was derived from the time that midshipmen in the days of sail were often only twelve or thirteen years old and when their noses ran, they used to wipe them on their sleeves. This was reputedly the reason for snotties to wear buttons on their dress uniform cuffs to discourage this practice. Unfortunately for me, my best friend Tony Whetstone was on the other end of the phone link to the quarterdeck. This resulted in a conversation which went something like this: "Is that you Tony? Peter here." Having established this fact I proceeded to chat, at which time one of the numerous senior officers on the bridge said, "Pipe down Snottie, you're not at the bloody Savoy." Suitably chastened, I lapsed into silence. This trivial incident was typical of my life in the Duke of York, where our occasional rebukes were pretty mild stuff.

Our passage to Singapore was accomplished without incident and consisted of a combination of lectures and watchkeeping. By this time I was now a watchkeeper in the AIC or Action Information Centre. This was where the radar information was displayed. The radar officer was a green striper, technical or intelligence branch, and was a Canadian. Many of the early radar officers in the RN were Canadians, as we seemed to have an edge on the expertise in this field. Since the radars were often shut down, or not working, I was able to catch up on journal writing and studying for the exams which awaited us in England. Our arrival in Singapore resulted in anchoring out and our visit was to be less than a day. No leave was granted, due to the curtailment of the visit and the fact that there was a smallpox epidemic ashore in Singapore. I was thus prevented from seeing what was left of prewar Singapore, the site for many novels of intrigue and the unfortunate recipient of a brutal occupation.



Admiral Lord Fraser on the HMS Duke of York

The new commander-in-chief, Vice Admiral Boyd, came out to pay his respects and officially accept the turnover, resulting in the usual guard and band. The Royal Navy, with its strong core of senior regular officers, was obviously returning rapidly to peacetime customs of ceremony and ritual. The exception to this was Admiral Lord Fraser himself, who continued to be very relaxed in this renewed peacetime ceremonial.

After a short visit of a half day we headed for our next port of call, Colombo, Ceylon. After a short passage, we arrived off Colombo Harbour, a relatively small harbour, completely surrounded by stone breakwater, except for a rather narrow entrance. Two sturdy tugs attended us,

and under the guidance of a harbour pilot, we proceeded slowly into the crowded harbour and our anchorage. The anchorage required the ship to turn until facing westward, drop both anchors, then pay out four shackles while backing onto a stern buoy. We would be connected to this buoy to keep our bow pointed seaward and steady, there being no swinging room for a ship of our size. This time I was to learn the frustrations of a manoeuvre which wasn't working. This manoeuvre required buoy jumpers to connect a picking-up wire between the buoy and the ship. Every time the ship stopped engines to allow the buoy jumpers a shot at the wire, the weight of the four shackles of each cable up forward would pull the ship ahead, leaving a sizable gap between the buoy and the ship, the difficulty being if the buoy jumpers fell in the water while the ship was going astern, they would be sucked under and right into one of the four props. Eventually it was completed. Despite the delays, it was accomplished with a minimum of fuss and temperament. This allowed us to go on a run ashore in the late afternoon to see the sights of Colombo.

It was a modern city with clean streets and what seemed to be an orderly society. I remember buying a large golden sapphire pin for my mother, being fresh out of girlfriends at the time. We also found a snake charmer with his tame cobra. He played a tune for us and sure enough the hooded cobra reared up and swayed to the music. I am sure he was de-fanged, but his fangs appeared intact to us. By this time we had learned that there were good swimming facilities at Mount Lavinia, a short train ride away. The next day we bought first class tickets and set out to the railway station. When the train pulled wearily into the station, we joined the swelling throng on the platform, searching for a first class carriage, which we were told could be in the front, back, or middle of the train. Eventually we found one, only to find out that any compartment was fair game to the crowd. We managed to squeeze sixteen into our side-to-side compartment before turning others away who were still trying to force their way onboard. This resulted in a number of natives climbing onto the open windows and from there onto the roof of the train, which was eventually completely covered with would-be passengers. We proceeded out of the station for about five miles, when we stopped and to our astonishment, took on some new passengers. We could have walked the eight miles in greater comfort and in about the same time. However, Mount Lavinia was indeed a fine swimming beach with plenty of surf. It was also extremely salty, which meant that we floated high out of the water. The high salt content was tough on the eyes, but made for great surfing. There was also a good hotel, allowing us to have a good lunch and a few beers before commencing the rigours of the journey back. That, unfortunately, was the sum total of my Ceylon experience, later to be known as Sri Lanka. Colombo and the newly large harbour of Trincomalee was to become the major Pacific base of the British fleet after the fall of Singapore.

After leaving Ceylon, the thing I remember most was the length of the crossing of the Indian Ocean. It was very hot and very calm, and very moist as I recall.

During this passage we had a very interesting lecture from Admiral Lord Frasers' Chief of Staff, Commodore first class Evans-Lombe. He talked to us aboard the HMS Vigilant about the difficulties about melding in the British Home fleet, which they transferred en masse after the collapse of the German war to the Pacific, and this very large fleet consisted of four battle ships, 3 fleet carriers, 5 light fleet carriers, about six or eight cruisers, sixteen destroyers, and fast mine layers – a fairly considerable fleet. And the difficulty being of course was that the British had fought a very different kind of war from

the Americans. The American battles in the Pacific were fleet battles, between air-craft carrier fleets, and therefore Admiral Halsey, who was a fleet commander, and Admiral Nimitz, who was the Commander in Chief of the United States Pacific Fleet, had been used to large fleets of aircraft carriers, with both the Japanese and the Americans battling it out in some very large wars or battles like the battle of Midway, and so on.

On the other hand, the British had had more or less single ship engagements with capital ships, none of them air-craft carriers, with the possible exception of the Italian front, where the ancient but very effective old Swordfish aircraft sank or disabled most of the Italian grand fleet at Taranto. The Swordfish was a torpedo-carrying biplane of near World War One vintage, and carried one large aerial torpedo. The Swordfish, by the way, in that one battle of Taranto, achieved the distinction of sinking more ships in the war than any other type of aircraft.

In any event, in crossing the Indian Ocean, he talked about the difficulties of these conditions, where the British had had battleship engagements like the Bismarck, the Hood, and the Scharnhorst (which Admiral Lord Fraser sank at the Battle of North Cape, largely with the Duke of York's guns) and the battle of the River Plate. These were more-or-less single ship or triple ship engagements of one side or the other, and they had no big fleet engagements and certainly no air-craft carrier fleet engagements. So there was a different nature of the war, and Cdre Evans-Lombe explained the difficulties of trying to integrate the fleet into a not exactly hostile but overwhelmingly welcoming American fleet. Choosing Admiral Lord Fraser as the Commander-in-Chief was, in my opinion a very wise choice, because he's a very affable man, he was already a famous British admiral, having sunk a battle cruiser – a German battle cruiser – and as such he was accepted by the Americans and got along well with them.

However the difficulties that I've outlined existed because the two fleets had fought very different wars, and of course the major war that the British fought on the naval scene on the European front was the Battle of the Atlantic. This was their major, major battle.

Suez Canal

Our first port of call after crossing the Indian Ocean was Port Tewfik, which is at the entrance of the Suez Canal. Here, Admiral Lord Fraser left us, and proceeded to go to Cairo, and to visit the then king, King Farouk, of Egypt, and stayed there very wisely while we did the passages of the canal, up to Port Said, where we anchored.

We had already been briefed by the navigating officer as to the difficulties of taking a very large deep draught ship through the relatively shallow and often quite narrow Suez Canal. The difficulty lay when the ship began to shear as the huge volume of water we were pushing ahead of us began to build up pressure on one bank or the other which resulted in a difficult to control shear. It was not the first or even the second shear that would put us aground but usually the third shear. I think that we ran aground about twelve times. You could always tell when this was happening as one side or the other would rise up and we would achieve a list in the calm waters of the canal. There was a large tug ahead

of us, and one astern but we were always able to back up by putting two or four of the engines astern. I was standing watch on the quarterdeck and able to observe the vast amount of mud and sand which was displaced by our screws amidst considerable vibration. One felt like a jumping bean as the quarterdeck vibrated up and down with our manoeuvres.

Years later I was talking to a fellow Royal Roads grad from my senior term who had served his time in the King George V, a sister ship to the Duke of York. When we were exchanging reminiscences he stated that KGV, unlike us, had not run aground once while negotiating the canal. As they were sister ships, i.e. the same class, I asked "how come?" He replied that their navigating officer had hit upon a plan to control the shear that worked. He put the two outer screws at a steady slow astern, and the inner screws at half ahead thereby proceeding slowly up the canal with the ship in a much more rigid and controllable state. However, in our case we suffered no damage and soon entered the Little Bitter Lake where we were able to increase speed and then passed into the Great Bitter Lake where we anchored about 1600 and piped "hands to bathe." They were called the Great Bitter Lakes because of their very high salt content. We were advised to jump in and not dive in, because it was like diving into a concrete block: you would have gone in head first and come out feet first. So we all swam, if you can call it that, bobbing half in and half out of the water like corks.

Admiral Lord Fraser meanwhile had landed in Port Tewfik and driven to Cairo and Alexandria and was to rejoin us when we anchored in Port Said at the beginning of the canal. We arrived off Port Said in the early afternoon of June 28 and proceeded to anchor with both anchors and to moor our stern to a mooring buoy with some pick-up wires assisted by tugs. I was able to witness the arrival of hundreds of small open boats carrying a great variety of goods which they hawked from the water's level in very loud voices. The man who appeared to exercise some degree of control over the whole process was called Jim Irish. He was famous to the many who had passed this way and was to give us a rousing send off a couple of days later.

We had been warned before going ashore to be careful and avoid crowds and to not attract a crowd if an argument develops. I was to soon learn the wisdom of this. A few of us went ashore later that afternoon only to be besieged by street traders and hawkers who were, to say the least, annoyingly persistent. One fellow in particular wanted to clean our shoes and when we spurned him he would try and dab the wrong colour shoe polish on our shoes. Getting very annoyed I used the work "impshi" to this man. This was a Hindu term meaning "go away you worthless person." This produced a loud yell from him saying "you say impshi to me!" This in turn miraculously produced a crowd of twenty or thirty or so, all hostile-looking. Deciding that discretion was the better part of valour and being heedful of the warning we had received, I turned and ran pursued by a mob yelling for my blood. Being a sprinter I easily out-ran them after a couple of blocks or so. My desire to return to Egypt has been severely curtailed ever since.

Despite this we went ashore in plain clothes the next night with a crowd of young D of Y officers including our intrepid Royal Marines officer whom we called the sheriff. To my horror, despite instructions to the contrary about carrying firearms, he was walking around in his bulky jacket hiding a Webley '45, a Colt '38, a bandolier, a commando knife and I wasn't sure about some bulges which

looked like grenades. With our heavily armed "escort" we proceeded to investigate Port Said's seedy nightlife. It was an eye opener for us Canadians who up to now had no experience of this. Thank goodness the only people accosting us were rather fat young Egyptian women, as I was sure the sheriff would have blown the place up had we encountered sterner opposition.

Somewhat more worldly, we left the town of Port Said with few regrets. We spent the next night on board being entertained by the Guli-Guli man – a magician of some considerable skill in the “now you see it now you don't” school.

The next day we departed in the afternoon accompanied by tugs to assist us out of the harbour. Jim Irish, a fat and elderly Egyptian whose hawkers and traders had been allowed to sell their goods on the quarterdeck the previous afternoon and was by now much better off from the experience, saw fit to bid us a ceremonial farewell. On one of his larger launches he had placed a brass band of eight or ten so-called musicians who played British tunes and music, all of which were off-key or otherwise mangled. It was like an Egyptian Spike Jones without the zip and timing. Unfortunately for me I was Mid of the Watch for entering and leaving harbour and from this high elevation I was able to watch these sweating musicians producing the cacophony of sound. I say unfortunately because when I hear music like that I have a strong desire to giggle. Giggling on the bridge of a battleship leaving harbour by a lowly midshipman is definitely frowned upon and not done. However I couldn't help bursting out laughing once and was duly frowned upon; it was rather like a cartoon in Punch.

1946 (June): Malta, Gibraltar

On July 3rd after a short passage from the Suez Canal we entered the Grand Harbour of Malta and secured fore and aft to two buoys not without some difficulty. The so-called Grand Harbour is actually quite small and the Duke of York took up a large portion of it. Once we were secured, the C in C Mediterranean Fleet, Admiral Sir Algernon Willis, came to pay his respects to Admiral Lord Fraser. A little man, he was known to be fussy about dress and ceremony. He arrived looking immaculate in his No. 1 dress whites. Admiral Lord Fraser appeared on deck in his white shorts and shirt and to everyone's astonishment wearing black shoes. Whether or not this was absent-mindedness or some kind of gesture was anybody's guess. With a capable Flag Lieut. like Vernon Merry was, I doubt that it was an oversight.

Later in my career I was to pay another and more interesting visit to Malta but I will mention a few first impressions here. Valetta, the town, although bomb-damaged still, was a place of clean streets and orderly people. The Maltese were polite but rather distant people, a far cry from the mob we had left in Port Said. One could see the stoicisms that saw them through the siege of Malta and the nightly bombings for three years. Even the area known as the Gut was orderly by comparison to other world seaports and crossroads. The population is primarily Catholic although the island has a long history of religious strife between Christians and Muslims.

We left Malta on July 5th one year and one day after we left Royal Roads to begin our life at sea and ashore in the RCN, and our life in the RN whose excellent training was to stand us in good stead but not without criticism.

Our arrival in Gibraltar was a slow process of getting inside the breakwater and eventually alongside assisted by tugs and under the control of a harbour pilot. The whole evolution took about two hours when to my inexperienced eye it should have taken only one. The town of Gibraltar was a disappointment, being somewhat dingy and small. The great attraction of the place was its huge and strategic role in several hundred years of naval warfare. It was here that I learned that the Mediterranean, although largely non-tidal, did have a rise and fall of a few inches. This was accomplished by the Mediterranean forming up with the Atlantic where the so-called tide went out at one level and in on another. This allowed German U-Boats to come and go into the Med largely undetected. This was because of the different layers under which they could hide undetected by hull-mounted sonars, or ASDIC as the British called their anti-submarine warfare detection equipment.

Our time at Gibraltar was also curtailed for us Midshipmen as we wrote an interim Navigation Exam which turned out disastrously for most of us and served as a warning for our coming exams in August of 1946 for the rank of Lieutenant. After a brief few days we left Gibraltar with few regrets to begin our last leg on the voyage home to Plymouth, Devon.

It had been arranged that dozens of RN officers who were not only leaving the ship but the Navy as well would host on our arrival a "back to civvy street" party on the last full day at sea. This took place in the very large wardroom to which the Warrant Officer and Gunroom Officers were invited. At the time we were crossing the Bay of Biscay which was like a mill pond with not a breath of wind. This was just as well as the party went on from noon through supper. The principal drink for the party was called the "Paymaster's Special" and was roughly half brandy and half champagne. With that kind of kick-start it was not long before some astonishing events began to unfold. One of the more striking happenings was the sight of the Chaplain of the Fleet (Anglican) doing a dance of the seven veils in a red Turkish fez and several yards of diaphanous material with the Chaplain of the Fleet (RC) yelling and clapping and shouting "take it off, take it off!" Admiral Lord Fraser took off his Admiral's No.5 jacket with braid up to his elbow and exchanged it with Midshipman Glen de Rosenroll with his white patches and Canada shoulder flashes. The Admiral then went around announcing that he was a good chap now. Suffice to say it was a memorable party tinged with sadness because we knew that we too would be leaving soon.

Finally the morning of our arrival off Plymouth arrived on July 11, 1946. The day started clear and right and we could see on the white cliffs of Plymouth and what later proved to be 100,000 people lining the cliffs waiting to see the ship come home. It was a stirring sight only to be rapidly obscured by a sudden fog descending. Glen de Rosenroll and I were closed up on the foc'sle deck standing by and the anchor and cables when suddenly from the bridge, a great length and height away, came the captain's voice on a loud hailer, "stand by to let go the starboard anchor." We looked at each other in horror; we were in charge and were about to anchor this forty thousand ton battleship. Fortunately the anchor was on the slip ready to go, the capstan brake was off and all was ready. Then came the order, "let go" and cable started roaring through the hawse pipe as the foc'sle officer reappeared. We anchored at five shackles

and waited for the fog to lift. Standing anchor watch and ringing the bell at one minute intervals I heard the thud of a diesel engine and no more than fifty yards ahead of us a small RN minesweeper swept by with their starboard lookout reporting, "I think there is a ship at anchor out there." An hour or so later the fog lifted and we entered harbour, first mooring to a buoy in the middle of harbour where we were cleared and examined by customs and health officers. By this time it was early afternoon and we commenced the slow and painful process of getting alongside in the dockyard. Tugs positioned us roughly in the center of the yard and a number of steel wire ropes were attached to capstans and bollards on the jetties. Then began a complicated series of orders given by a dockyard pilot to dockyard mateys on the shore. The cumbersome procedure took well over an hour accompanied by much shouting of orders before we were secured alongside and the long suffering relatives who had been waiting for a good six hours could finally come on board. To my surprise and delight there was someone down on the jetty to meet me, Ken Mollart, a chap about 30 years old, and so began my association with the Mollart family who showed to me great kindness and opened up vistas of a wonderful life for me. It transpired that Ken had driven his Jaguar all the way down from London (on farm petrol) that day to welcome me to England. By this time it was about 1700 and most had already proceeded ashore when I noticed the Admiral walking alone on his Admiral's walk (where it was forbidden between the hours of 1600 and 1800 to interrupt him). I realized that being a bachelor, having married into the navy and having no family, left there was no one there to greet him after the official welcoming was over. So I said to Ken, how would you like to meet Admiral Lord Fraser? He said that would be a great honour; so breaking every rule of protocol in the book, I took my new friend over and introduced him as someone who had come to meet me. The Admiral was delighted and chatted amiably and affably as he always did when meeting people and did not seem to mind my flagrant disregard for the rules. And so began my life in the UK and a whole new range of pleasant experiences and interesting times.

1946 (July): England

Ken Mollart and I set off in the early Devon summer evening into the Devon Hills, stopping at the pub for a beer and a sandwich, and I must admit I thought I was in Paradise. It was just beautiful. Little realizing how most people were living in the UK at that time.

So we arrived up in Basingstoke at the family farm, at a place called Bramley, close to Basingstoke, at close to midnight, where the family housekeeper had come down from London to be there to open up this wonderful old three-story brick Georgian farm house, and with hot cocoa and stuff sent us to bed. After a wonderful night's sleep I awoke to the wonderful aroma of bacon and eggs and so on, little realizing that I was living on a farm, and that other people didn't live this way in 1946. And so after a good hearty breakfast we set off for London, which was still about a couple of hours away, and we got up, and there, again, was my second, pleasant surprise, because the house was right across from Hampton Court. And there were boats going by, people paddling by, with this long, sloping lawn, going down to the edge of the river. It was just an absolutely beautiful place. There I met the rest of the family, Ken's father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Mollart, and Ken's two sisters, Pat and Sheila Mollart. Here I encountered a difficulty with the two ladies, because one was twenty-four and engaged, and I

was twenty years old at the time, so she was too old for me. The younger one was sixteen, and still in school, and was too young for me. So, although they were both lovely ladies, I was sort of caught in the middle. However it was the beginning of a long and happy association, because while I was there on that weekend, Ken found out I was going to get three weeks dis-embarkation leave from the Pacific, and he was going to race his little twelve-foot National class dinghy around the regattas off the south coast of England in Cornwall and Devon and Somerset, and he needed a crew, and he found out that I knew a reasonable amount about dinghy sailing, having been a sailing captain in Brentwood. And so he asked me to be his crew during my three weeks leave, which I was delighted to accept. We had a tent and a trailer and the dinghy behind us, and two sleeping bags, and a little cooking stove, which was to play a small role in our travels around the south coast.

So off we went. We started in Cornwall, and we then ended up in Salcombe, Devon, for a regatta, and we were able to pitch our tent on one of the pubs with a sloping lawn down towards the water in a beautiful setting. And there we met the pub owner's daughter, a big buxom Devon lass, I would guess around 22 - 23, that sort of age. Anyway, this lass took a great shine to Ken, thinking he was a cooking stove salesman ('cause we had one!), little realizing he ran a large engineering firm, his father having semi-retired. Ken being a very quiet, shy sort of fellow, and so she volunteered, being a local sailing girl, to take Ken out to the bay around the local waters, to learn the ways of the regatta and so on, to gain a little of the local knowledge which is invaluable in these kind of races. So when they got back, and Ken hauled the local dinghy ashore, she climbed out of the boat and stormed off back into the pub with a face like thunder. And so I said "Ken, what happened?" To which he replied "Nothing. She was very helpful to me". And then I notice in the little canvas for-peak that covered the bow forward of the mainmast there was a rip in the canvas, and I said "What happened here?" He said "Oh, she leant on the canvas and it ripped". I said "What did you say to her?" He said "Oh I said nothing, I think." And so I pressed this issue, and he said "Well, now that I think of it I might have called her a clumsy cow." I was afraid we were going to get tossed off the lawn, lock, stock and barrel. However, we were able to spend the rest of our time there, but not with the company of the pub-owner's daughter.

And it was pleasant little adventures like that we had as we raced our way around and ending up in Tor Bay before I had to leave. I went back to London, and I had to leave at the end of my three weeks.

I then took the train, the Great Western Railway, which was probably the best railway in England at that time, down to Plymouth from London, and a very pleasant train ride it was, and arrived back onboard on time, to find as the other group started to go on leave, an unusual amount of activity going on onboard the Duke of York. There was much buffing of corners and cleaning up and painting and scraping and so on, and generally buffing up the ship for the arrival of important visitors. And so I asked the quarter deck officer what all the preparations were about, bearing in mind that we were in a half-leave situation, and nothing in sight ahead of us that we knew of. "Oh," he said, "Haven't you heard? The Windsor Sea Scouts are coming to visit us for the day." So I said "Well, what's unusual about that, and why are we buffing up the ship so much?" And he said "Well, you may not be aware that the two Princesses belong to the Windsor Sea Scouts." And then he said, "By the way, you Midshipmen are going to escort them around the ship." And so that's when I met Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret-Rose, as she was then known. Princess Margaret-Rose was about 15, and the Queen, or

Princess Elizabeth was about 18. There was at least a two or maybe three year gap. Princess Elizabeth was already showing the greater sense of responsibility and bearing that she was later to inherit at a very early age. Princess Margaret-Rose, on the other hand, was a skittish little lady who really enjoyed her life and acting like a fifteen or sixteen year old of that time. Something that astonished us Canadians, was the fact that they were wearing flat-heeled shoes, and how tiny they were. Of course these were part of the Sea Scout uniform. In flat-heeled shoes Princess Elizabeth was five feat two, I would guess, and Margaret-Rose was five foot. So this, to us Canadians anyway, came as a real surprise. Anyway, we had a pleasant day touring these girls around the ship, and off they went by the end of the day.

The rest of our time was spent by us midshipman, both the RN and ourselves, preparing for our Lieutenant's exams that were to be held shortly in Portland, where another group of British ships lay, including HMS Rodney and HMS Nelson, which was still in commission at the time. We spent the next month preparing for our Lieutenant's exams, where we were to be examined in seamanship; we were to be examined in piloting, navigation; we had to submit our Midshipman's Journal, and we had to submit our star sights and navigational tasks that we had done in the Pacific, serving on the Duke of York. The exam took place at the end of September, I recall. We travelled over to Portland to join with other groups of British Midshipmen and our Canadian confreres, six of which were serving in HMS Nelson. I felt very sorry for the Canadians for two reasons. One is that they had been appointed to a battleship that never went anywhere, and I was nearly three quarters of the way around the world by this time, and shortly to complete the full, round the world tour in one year, when I went back to Canada in 1946. So, not only did they serve in HMS Nelson (this huge battleship, cut short in the end, with all the guns up forward, with the back end having been cut off because of these various Naval treaties the British had agreed to abided by that no-one else did) but the captain of the Nelson, who was to be the Chairman of our board, was a cantankerous and miserable old man who I think was very unhappy with his appointment to a battleship that never went anywhere, and stayed at anchor in Portsmouth Harbour. And so the result was the Canadian midshipmen never went anywhere, living under this rather miserable captain, whereas our experience in the Duke of York had been extensive and interesting the whole time, with an admiral who was always very friendly to the Midshipmen, especially the Canadians, and a Captain who was an equally pleasant man, and a Captain of a famous British cruiser during WWII. And so our experience had been totally different from our Canadian confreres on Nelson.

Well the Board started, and the captain of Nelson, the Chairman of the Board started off on a sour note, saying he'd heard all about these loose traditions of the British Pacific Fleet and how it was handled, and how the battleship life was on board the British Pacific Fleet. And this of course aroused our ire, because by this time we were fiercely devoted to the Duke of York because it was a very, very happy ship. Anyway, as it proceeded, the examining officers, most of them Nelson officers, who I think were equally pissed off at being on a battleship that never went anywhere, and so we were led to believe that we knew nothing, and would do very poorly. In actual fact, I got a second class, which was not bad, which means a seventy-five percent average, and thereby gained a few months seniority on that Board. After it was over, to celebrate, we went for a run ashore in Portland, that is the Canadians did, both the Nelson Canadians and the Duke of York Canadians, and so I guess we were about thirteen of us at that

time, and on returning to the Portland dockyard area, there was a pub which by this time was closed, and on it was a very large planted pot on a shelf, overlooking the entrance to the pub. For some obscure, inexplicable reason, we decided we wanted to take that pot down, and bring it back to the ship. And so, the largest of one of us, Vig Cardey, stood one of the other lads his shoulders, and of course in lifting up the pot, which must have weighed 50 pounds, even as big and strong as Vig, buckled under the weight, and the duo of people supporting the weight, and the pot, crashed to the ground, breaking open into a hundred pieces. So we decided that discretion was the better part of valour and we'd better leave the scene pretty quick, which we did, and just got down to the officer's landing as the boat was coming alongside, only to find the dockyard police there, waiting for us, and conversations ensued as to what was due to the pub owner, who by this time had turned up too.

One of our gang was Sky McCoor, a rather odd individual in my term; he was also the son of the Chief Justice of Ontario, a very senior judge, actually the Supreme Court of Ontario Chief Justice, and therefore had somewhat of a semi-legal mind, and became our negotiator, the end of which was an offer to the pub "Would ten quid do?" To which the pub owner replied it would satisfy him. The ten quid was handed over, and the dockyard police departed.

So, funny little things like that…that you remember so much of your midshipmen's days. We arrived back onboard and then back to the Duke of York, to find that we were re-appointed, and we were going to join HMS Implacable, a British fleet aircraft carrier. But since Implacable was too big to get under the third or fourth bridge, she was therefore anchored outside the fourth bridge at Hawes Pier. Being Canadians, we were ignorant of the British train system, and so we booked trains on the LNER (London North Eastern Railway) to Edinburgh, and then from Edinburgh we took a local train to Hawes Pier, which is inside the third or fourth bridge. It was close to midnight when we got there, looking for some way of getting out to the aircraft carrier, with our tin trunks and all. And, very fortunately, they had surmised that we had done the dumb thing and taken the slow train that stopped everywhere, and we were going to be late, and there was a boat alongside to pick us up and take us back up to the Implacable, and hoist us up out of the water and on to the deck. There, our sub-lieutenant who'd been our sub-lieutenant of the gunroom on the Duke of York had moved to Implacable (with the rest of us), which was just a well because the Duke of York was now going to be a ship at anchor, period. So we were very lucky to get transferred to not only an aircraft carrier, but one of Britain's best. HMS Implacable, the glamour ship of the Far East, as she was known, was a ship of thirty-three thousand tons, a hundred and thirty-three thousand horsepower, three screws and three rudders, and she handled like a destroyer.



HMS Implacable, 1944

She was a very versatile ship, with tremendous acceleration and tight turning ability. Her captain was a famous captain for reasons I never knew, whose name was Hughes Halach, and he was a superb ship handler. He was also a rather miserable SOB, and he was known throughout the ship as "Hughes Hitler," not to be repeated within range of any senior officers. Anyway, he was the one sour note in the ship, but then there were Implacable's extensive number of cabins – they had more cabins than they had officers – including flyboys, young sub-lieutenants. So there were spare cabins for the midshipmen, on the understanding that if other officers joined who were sub-lieutenants, they would get those cabins.

So joy upon joy we had a double-berth cabin in all our time on the Implacable, having abandoned the wretched hammocks we had been sleeping in for the last nine months.

Implacable was sort of a flying training ship, and there is an expression called "Car-Quals" which is "Carrier-Qualified," and/or re-qualifying Car-Quals as the case may be, and that was to take pilots, and qualify or re-qualify them for deck landing. Here, I was to be introduced to the SeaFire 47, which was a Spitfire made into a maritime aircraft, with contra-rotating propellers three and three, but rotating in opposite directions, which gave them much more wing stability when they were landing. Unfortunately, the Spitfire was designed to take off on grass fields, and had a very narrow undercarriage, very unsuitable for carrier landings because if you're coming in over the flight deck there are awkward upper air drafts coming over the flight deck, and so the aircraft does "this" a lot of times, and lands on one wheel on a narrow undercarriage, which meant that we had quite a lot of prangs –not serious ones. There was one guy, who was a young aeronautical engineer who had not yet carrier-qualified. His name was Thornton. And whenever Thornton's name went up on the board, if we were not on watch or duty we would go up and watch Thornton come in, in his Seafire 47, and he would never touch the deck, by which time they would realize he was going to fly into the barriers (we had two barriers up). There was a third one, for emergencies, and it would go up when they saw Thornton floating along, unable to get down that last two feet with his tail-hook. He flew three Seafire 47's into the barriers; bits of propeller flying all over the place, mangling the Seafire 47 but doing himself no damage, and you'd watch him climb out of the wreck, and he would take off his helmet, go straight up the superstructure the carriers have on the starboard side, right to the commander in his flying bridge to report himself in. When he had pranged three Seafire 7's, one after the other (which they just pushed over the side), he allowed that he wasn't going to carrier qualify, although he was a test pilot on land. We did these manoeuvres, called "Clockward Mice," for about two months in the northern Scottish waters, and coming in, usually at night, to anchor off the Firth of Forth bridge for the evening.

The Scottish gals were wonderful dancers. I would get ashore as often as I could, and spend the night listening to the big band sounds that were now popular, and drag my sore feet back to ship in the wee hours each morning.

1946 : Norway

And then we got a break. It was determined that the Implacable would pay the first post-war visit of a British warship to Bergen in Norway, and going up the Norwegian fiords into Bergen was an experience. Implacable was capable of about thirty-three knots, and the Captain, to give him his due, used to handle it like a destroyer. And so we'd go racing through the fiords at about thirty knots. Fortunately there weren't any houses down on the water, as they would have been given a bath, so to speak.

We were the first post-war British ship to get into Bergen, which was a strategically important during the war, as it had a heavy water plant. In order to prevent it from falling into German hands, a group of young Norwegian physicists managed to destroy the plant. The group mostly escaped, although a few of them were killed. Many years later, when we were living in Spain in the 1980s, we met one the brave physicists involved in destroying the Bergen heavy water plant.

When we finally did get into Bergen, we anchored out in the bay, and prepared to go ashore. Since we were the first post-war ship in Bergen, there was a grand reception planned for the ship's crew. On top of that, the British Consul had, in a great moment of foresight, invited 100 young Norwegian women onboard. We thought we might have some tough competition with the pilots who were onboard. Interestingly, the women had all been vetted to ensure that none of them had been in contact with the Germans.

These young ladies came onboard, and we Canadians that the British were no competition to us, and we each landed a date for the night. However, at the end of the evening when we were ferrying the women back to shore, as we approached the docks we saw a large and rather unhappy collection of young Norwegian men waiting to retrieve their girlfriends. Our ferry's skipper quickly summed up the situation and went full throttle ahead (a good 20 knots, which the Norwegian men could never outrun) and dropped our group of sailors and their dates way down the other end of the docks, giving them a healthy lead over the boyfriends, and therefore plenty of time to safely escort their dates home.

The next day we got ashore and met the girls again, and of course we ran out of time, but all through the visit I learned only one phrase of Norwegian, which was how to say "I love you."

Before Implacable left Bergen, the foc'sle officer announced to me and another of our midshipmen crew, Red Wilkes, that he was getting married to a local Norwegian. He asked if Red and I if we would be a part of the bridal party. His bride to be was the daughter of a wealthy local dentist. This was my first experience of a grand Norwegian wedding.

The gathering started at 10:00 A.M., with the actual ceremony starting around 2:00 P.M, but then it just went on from there until 4:00 A.M. the next day.

1946 – 49: Returning to Canada

The winter of '46/47 was very cold, and our ship was not ready to return to Canada, which was the plan as the crew I had been travelling with had been away for close to two years now.

Eventually we attained passage back to Canada in early '47 on the Acquitania, a beautiful four-funnel ocean liner that was a sister-ship to the Lusitania. The Canadian government had commissioned the ship for a time to ferry ex-patriots and servicemen around the Atlantic.

There was a young war bride with the unlucky name of Bubbles, especially odd given that she was the daughter of a British lord. So there we were on this luxurious ship with the wonderful company of Bubbles, who liked the Canadian sailors very much on account of their sea legs, which made for good dancing partners (the other passengers couldn't keep their balance when the ship rolled).

One other thing I remember from the ship. Some of the ladies were of doubtful virtue, and a few of them were turned back when they got to Halifax. That was an eye opener to us, as they were sent straight back to England, so word must have got out about their trade.

We got the boat train to Montreal, and on it was Bubbles who was to meet her husband, a Canadian Major. The boat train stopped about 10 miles outside of Windsor for some reason, so there was Bubbles stuck far from her new husband, who was waiting in Montreal.

One of the enterprising young naval officers got word out to the husband, and he made his way to the train eventually, much to the delight of both of them.

When we eventually got to Montreal, we Westerners that were waiting to get out to B.C. had to wait about five hours to get the Dominion. So we identified ourselves as officers to the station manager, and asked where we could go to kill some time. He said there is a nice place only a few blocks away, with some simple name like Mother Hubbard's or some such. We had not been there long, enjoying pretzels and beer, and in comes a very large piano player, who played a variety of tunes, including some classical – and played very well After a few of these songs, we had to get going, and we never paid or tipped the guy, and left thinking what a talented player he was. Well as it turned out, it was Oscar Peterson. What a treat that was.

The rest of the journey back to Vancouver proceeded without incident, and we arrived 3-days/four nights later. I stayed with my parents in North Vancouver, and caught up with old friends.

It was interesting catching up with friends who had not seen me since I was 14 or so, and the same applied for my family, who had shipped me off to Brentwood private school, and then I was at Royal Roads and then off to the war. So it was interesting learning about my family and friends again, after so many years.

I was just 22 at this point, so all I was interested in was getting out and not spending much time with the family. I remember looking back on that as a somewhat selfish time, but I suppose no more than other men my age.

I was on the roof of the Vancouver Hotel dancing away one night to the Dell Richards Band, who was still playing until the early 2000's, well into his 90s!

I also remember this beautiful dance floor at the Commodore Cabaret that had this spring dance floor that you could dance all night to and not be sore the next day. You were allowed to bring your own bottle, but you had to pay an exorbitant fee for the mix!

Not long after coming back to Canada, I was to be stationed back in England again, so I prepared for the long train journey across Canada one more time.

I crossed the Atlantic again on the Acquatania, but this time with quite a difference. The ship was full of passengers that had paid their way. Two of the ladies were daughters of Nigel Bruce, of Sherlock Holmes fame. Very lively, attractive ladies they were. One was married to some noble (a Dupont III, I believe), whom she was divorcing, and the other to an RAF pilot.

We headed back to England on what we thought would be the normal great circle route. But instead we headed south to Bermuda, and we picked up a bunch of Royal Navy sailors, about 200 hundred of them.

So there were ourselves, some UK sailors, and American passengers. It was a memorable voyage for several reasons. One was that as we left Bermuda, we ran into some very heavy weather. These large waves ran up the port side of the Acquatania, which was not stabilized as they are today.

So there we were at 5:00 having our beer in the lounge, and the ships starts healing 20-30 degrees, which is a lot. Our group in the lounge were sent flying, and as I rose from the wreckage that was the lounge furniture, I see this hand coming out of the debris holding a full, un-spilled drink. It was one of my navy term-mates, and believe me this impressed us no end!

I arrived at the Canadian Defence Liaison, at #10 Haymarket in London, and we were told that the Royal Navy had decided to close Greenwich for structural repairs. So CDL London told that we were on our own for two months, on a ration of $80/month, which was not enough even when combined with our pay of $120/month. (The pound was worth $5 Cdn at the time.)

The first break that we got was when I and another Aussie were told about a lady up in London, Lady Frances Rider. Lady Rider greeted us and after a brief visit with her, she told us she would put us up in one of her nicest places, since we were one of the nicest men she'd meet. It was up in Dorset, at a home run by a family of five daughters, named Pass.

We were invited to a fancy ball, and my Aussie mate, Frank, and flipped a coin to see who would be the date of one of the more attractive Pass daughters. I won, and so we went down to the local pub in Dorset, and I had the unusual good sense to stick to the local beer. Frank did not, and went through more than a few of the infamous Dorset ciders, which were very strong. Riding back before the ball, Frank went flying by me down a hill drunker than a skunk, and drove straight into our host's garden wall. Thankfully he was not hurt, other than his pride.

The Pass's daughter was a beauty, and I inevitably fell in love with her. It was a wonderful month, but Honour Pass, the family matriarch, did not approve of me, and I'm never sure why. I was always fond of her, even though I was the one who had the unpleasant task of trying to convince her that she should not give her wealth away when she died, which was her plan. Having lost our family's wealth once in the Depression, I spent many hours trying to convince her that she would not want her children to be poor.

Our month was up in Dorset, so I made plans to visit a friend, Sandy Coats, in Loch Fyne, Scotland. The name Coats did not mean anything to me, but when I got there, I remember passing a large house with the name Coats' House on our way back from the ferry. Sandy mentioned that it belonged to his uncle, who was Lord Glentanner. The family, as it turned out, owned Coats' Cotton.

I had a nice time in what is a beautiful part of the country, and then headed back to London. I had been tasked by my father to visit the family lawyer in Blackpool. There was a small estate from my father's brother Donald, who had left it in trust to us nieces and nephews, which my father had used to help me with my schooling. My father was never sure if there was not more to the family estate, and wondered if the grand home and subsequent estate of Col Birch was ever fully accounted for. The lawyer was a very nice guy, Hugh Singleton, and took me around Blackpool, but he did not disclose much.

I enjoyed the summer in London near the Thames, staying with various folks including the Mollet's that I mentioned earlier. I loved watching the boats going up and down the Thames in this enchanting, pastoral setting.

But I was running out of places to stay for the remaining weeks, and I got a cable from one of my term-mates, was going to take some youth group on a tour of south of France, and into Andorra and Spain.

The youth did not like the trip, which I found disappointing, but the trip to me was full of wonderful lamb stews among other local dishes. This was a delight given that England at the time was still under ration, and many foods were out of reach of even the well-off.

Back in England in early '47, I stayed with one of my relatives, Captain T.R. Jones (a cousin of my father). He had been the chief venereal disease doctor for the Royal Navy. He lived in Notting Hill Gate, a lovely spot in London. Their daughter, Nesta, was a beauty, and it was inevitable that I fell in love with her.

There I learned some good life lessons. Because of the food rationing, my relatives (who were not poor) lived an austere life. But Nesta showed me the London night life, which was not that different from the Vancouver clubs, except that you could by a bottle and leave it in a locker for your next visit, if there was any left. I met a number of infamous and seedy folks in those clubs, all of whom were very colourful.

Finally, Greenwich College was renovated, and I began my course there. The quarters were sparse, and there was no running water in our rooms. Instead we had a china bowl to wash with, and each morning a WREN would bring in hot water to fill the bowl. So that lessened the hardship, as we were all quick to use the opportunity to chat up the WRENs.

We were grouped with a bunch of fresh young Dartmouth naval cadets (or Darts), who were much younger and less experienced than us, who had traveled the world by this point.

So we Canadian midshipmen stuck to ourselves, and despite the early curfew that was set, we found a number of creative ways to skirt it, which often involved sneaking around the sentry that watched over our quarters, and much climbing up pipes and jumping over walls.

At school we were studying maths and sciences, pure academe, and the Darts seemed to get more immature by the day doing things like throwing spit-balls and so on. This was a real surprise to me, and a reminder of how far I and my Canadian mates had come.

There was one particularly obnoxious lad, the son of a very famous British naval captain, Bernard Warbuton-Lee, who won the Victoria Cross for leading the attacks on the German navy in the fiords of Norway (during which he was mortally wounded). The son had suffered, I think, being the son of a very famous and decorated naval officer. We had a mechanics professor who seemed incapable of controlling the ruckus that the young Warbuton-Lee was constantly causing. One of our classmates, Mike Fellows, who was a fine boxer and fearless fellow, got fed up eventually and walked over to Warburton-Lee, popped him hard once in the mouth, and then again in the nose. To my surprise, the British Dart cadets did not stand up or retaliate.

The Frobies were different. They came in at 17 after passing their O-levels and then serving one year onboard HMS Frobisher doing intensive naval training. These lads seemed to have a greater maturity and experience, and at that age it can make all the difference.

My friend Tony Weston and I ended up in the same class with a naval instructor named Peter Osbourne. An Australian actor, he had met and performed with Dame Sybil Thorndike and Sir Lewis Casson during their Australian tours. So impressed were they, Dame Thorndike and Sir Casson brought Osbourne back to England before the war to get him started in London theatre (the pinnacle of the theatre world). But no sooner had he gotten on the London stage and he was called up to war. Joining the navy, he served the war out, and then decided to stay on as a naval instructor at Greenwich.

Osbourne nevertheless maintained many friends in the London theatre scene, and it soon became clear to us that he was gay. One of his good friends was playwright Terrence Rattigan, who is now considered to be one of the finest British playwrights of the 20th century.

For a mess dinner, Osbourne invited Rattigan. My chum Tony was a real theatre buff, and was terribly excited at the chance to meet Rattigan. So we had this fancy mess dinner, and Rattigan got along famously with Tony. Rattigan invited us both to see his latest play, *The Winslow Boy* (also one of his most famous, it turned out), which was playing at the time. We jumped at this, and went off to see not one but two of this performance; one in the audience right up front, and one from the wings so that we could see the production side of things. It was really fascinating…a one-of-kind experience.

We went down to Glyndebourne Opera, where we heard Peter Pierce singing, and met the owner and producer of the opera, Benjamin Britten. Pierce and Britten were also lovers. Tony and I were having a

great time meeting all these famous and talented people, but we also realized that there was a theme forming: there were a lot of gay men who seemed to be quite interested in having us around. We joked later that we were lucky to have kept our "virginity" during this time.

We moved into Portsmouth to begin our sub-lieutenant courses at the various schools there. These schools taught professional courses like gunnery, navigation, damage control, etc. One of the schools, Stanhope, had a large model of the Prince of Wales that they would use to illustrate how a ship can sink. One engineering officer who taught us firefighting told us a great story where the local firefighting unit had to be engaged to help put out a fire on a ship that was in harbour on the River Clyde. The local firefighting unit arrived in full force and before the navy knew it, the locals emptied what seemed like half the River Clyde onto the ship. This certainly put out the fire, but in the process sunk the ship!

One of the other places we were at was HMS Dryad, the navigational school. The wardroom at Dryad was the wartime headquarters for Eisenhower during the invasion of Normandy. There were many of the original wall-maps left up that depicted that invasion plans. Fascinating stuff to us young officers.

One Saturday afternoon, I get summoned to office to take a call. This was unusual, so down I went and I hear this familiar voice saying, "Birch-Jones, it's Fraser here. My flag lieutenant has abandoned me for dinner tonight, so how would you like to join me?" I said that of course it would a pleasure, but that I did not have a ride. Not a problem, he said, I'll send my driver. So there I was in a bit of a dilemma: do I tell the duty officer that the commander-in-chief's driver is coming to pick me up? I decided to let it lie, and made arrangements to be picked up outside the compound. It was just as well, since the admiral himself showed up to pick me up, and I can't imagine the eyebrows this would have raised.

We had a great tea and dinner, and I was driven back later thinking of earlier times under his command. It also reminded me of an earlier time during my first course in Gosport, in the middle of winter. We learned to fly Tiger Moth aircraft. If you got 10 hours solo time in during the 8 weeks of the course, you got licensed.

I was not a great pilot, and our instructors would fly with us and put us through stalls and exciting stuff like that, and were quite good natured. But there was a ground officer who did not like Canadians, the only officer I ever met who did not like Canadians. I was never sure why, but one day he walks into our course and says, "Which one of you is Birch-Jones?" I put my hand up, and he looks at his note and reads, with no shortage of disdain "You are invited to a luncheon onboard HMS Victory in honour of Field Marshall Montgomery." So off I went to this luncheon aboard HMS Victory, and I can assure you I was the only one-striper there – the place was full of gold braid! What was happening outside of the luncheon was that Montgomery was trying to enlist the support of Admiral Lord Fraser in his bid to become CGIS, or Chief of the Imperial General Staff. During the luncheon, Lord Admiral Fraser announces that the youngest member here should give us a speech – looking at me while he said this. By this time, I had had a few drinks so I was feeling bold enough to give it a go. I recalled my first tour in the spring of 1945, when we Canadians were heading to the Pacific to fight the Japanese. When the Japanese got news of this, they promptly surrendered, and we never fired a shot! The cruiser that we were supposed to meet was heading home, so we were now ordered to meet with the HMS Duke of

York. This was, I noted, quite a disappointment to my Canadian comrades, because not only was the Duke a British ship, but it was a flagship to boot, and we expected better. Well the audience was wondering what kind of nerve this one-stripe Canadian kid had, when I turned from sarcasm to sincerity and said "In all honesty, if every ship I served on is half as happy as the Duke, then I will have had a blessed career." Well they loved this, and afterwards I was in the head and the admiral walks in to conduct his business and asks, "What are your plans for the rest of the weekend?" I said something about getting back to Gosport, and he quickly pointed out that a Saturday night in Gosport is cruel and unusual punishment, and would I instead like to join Montgomery and him for the football match?

So in no time there I was entering the football stadium to a cheering crowd, because of course Field Marshall Montgomery was a hero of the war. He asked what my plans were after the match, and insisted that I stay the night with Montgomery (or Monty, a nickname he allowed some to use) at the admiral's house. I of course said I would be delighted, but there was the small problem of not having any kit. Not a problem says Admiral Lord Fraser, I'll send my driver to collect it for you, just let Gosport know. So I called the Gosport duty officer and told him to get the steward to grab my overnight kit. Being none too pleased at what he thought was a poor joke, he asked "Now why would I do that?" "Well," I said, "Admiral Lord Fraser's driver was coming by for it." "Bloody hell," he said, and slammed the phone down.

The Admiral both drank and smoked, and Monty frowned on both, but because he was the guest and in effect a subordinate, he put on his best face and overlooked our indulgences. At one point in the evening, Fraser sent me and the major that served the field marshal away while Monty and he discussed some business. It was quite an evening.

I finished up my training in Portsmouth, but not without incident. There were about 180 of us sub-lieutenants in the various schools, and there was going to be a grand ball in London to celebrate on the Saturday night. The Thursday night before, which is the usual night for our Greenwich mess dinner, we thought we would plan some celebrations of our own following the mess dinner…sort of a warm up to Saturday. But the organizers got cold feet because word had it that some senior officers would attend, and that would put a damper on things. Nevertheless, the dinner went ahead and at the end of the evening we were not quite sure if we should continue with our planned fun, but things just started to get going, and before I knew it I was playing traditional "Silly Bugger" games like Billiards Five where you threw billiard balls toward the end of the table and ran back to catch before they bounced back. There was much pushing and shoving while you ran around to catch it before it bounced back. It was then that I met Prince Philip, who did not think twice of our carousing.

With all the drinks flowing freely by this time, we got the not too bright idea of taking all the rifles and throwing them in the river. This was not the idea of the Canadians, but nevertheless I ended up being the only Canadian in this exercise. After grabbing the rifles from the rickety shed that held them, we met the gunnery instructor trolling up and down the river, who was a clear impediment to our plan. We then got the idea that we would surround him with part of our crew and lash the group together while the rest of us tossed the rifles in the river.

Of course, this type of nonsense does not go unpunished, so afterwards we decided that if we all stuck together it would be harder for the Commander of the school to punish a large group. Well that didn't work, as many of the crew abandoned us, and left about eight of us to face the wrath. We got one of the best blasts I've ever received, and then the Commander left us for the Captain to speak to.

The Captain's admonishment was relatively low key, and so our spirits started to soar in the hope that we might get out of any kind of confinement and therefore make our graduation ball in London (where many of us had dates to see for the last time).

So after ensuring that we thought long and hard about ever doing anything so stupid again, he let us go. No detainment! We scrambled our things and headed off to the Savoy in London for our ball, knowing we had dodged a bullet.

After that, we Canadians went down to Southampton for departure to Canada on the Acquatania once again. An ex-Duke of York officer was put in charge with transporting us from Portsmouth to Southampton. The officer told us he'd be by about an hour before we were due in Southampton. So there we were waiting for this guy, and at the last possible minute he showed up with these two amphibious "ducks," and proceeded to load us up and drive us in these quirky vehicles.

We arrived barely in time to clear customs and board the Acquatania, and as we were just slipping out, a squadron of three trainers flew by us, dropping a mile of toilet paper as a farewell gesture. It was a fitting end to my great times there – a time I will never forget.

One footnote to my time there. This was also the time that the first American musicals were coming to the west end theatre stages in London. I was able to see *Oklahoma*, which was such a departure from the traditional English musicals. On to the stage came this massive guy in drag singing the lead, and the British were agog at first; eventually of course all of the American musicals would sell out for months on end.

The second one I saw was *Annie Get Your Gun*, and for this one the British were somewhat more prepared. I met Curly, who sang the lead, and he was a fantastic character. And then finally I saw *South Pacific*, with another unforgettable male chorus.

1948 to 1949: HMCS Crescent

In late November, 1949, my friend George Whither and I were appointed to HMCS Crescent as sub-lieutenants. We were surprised at the warmth of the welcome we got from the officer of the watch. And we soon found out why: George and I were to take full-time duties all through Christmas while the officers broke for the holidays.

For a complete accounting of my days on HMCS Crescent, you can read the article that I wrote for the Maritime Museum of British Columbia magazine, *Resolution* (Annex A).

1949 (February): Skagway, Alaska

We had arrived back in Victoria and the Mainguy commission, which consisted of Rear-Admiral Rollo Mainguy, Louis Odette, and Leonard Brockington, conducted their week-long hearings, which were supposed to be held in confidence. This meant that once the evidence regarding Crescent's unrest had been given, i.e. the original representation made by the ship's company, the documents were to be destroyed. Much later on Louis Odette, one of the three members and a Montreal lawyer, confessed on his death bed that he had kept his copies, and they were to be released when the last member of the ships company died. I am now the only surviving officer left, presumably those copies will be released when the last member dies. After that was over, we all went off on a leave and started the summer training program with reserves from a US submarine, which used to come up and do submarine exercise just outside of Victoria.

There was one memorable trip. By this time, I was the navigator, since Ken Boggild had left the ship, as did the ship's doctor, Dr. Green, and the Chinese-Canadian interpreter who then went back to Hong Kong and married one of the granddaughters of the Tiger Balm king (Tiger Balm being a very famous ointment sold worldwide at the time), and took out a law degree and settled down and practiced law in Hong Kong for the rest of his days. Anyway, we had one memorable trip that year and that was in the fall. As a single ship we went up the BC and Alaskan coast into Skagway where we spent several days there as a sort of friendly visit. We had been on a run ashore investigating the taverns of Skagway, which is about all there is to do there. The Captain came into the ward room and said, "To my knowledge, the navy has never visited the Canadian Army in Whitehorse."

Now, there was a big element of Royal Canadian engineers in Whitehorse because they had been building the Canadian part of the Alaska highway. There was a big army base there and the captain decided that it was a good idea if we paid a formal visit to the army base. He said, "I will write the warrants for you and if they bounce, you will pay the train fair." So we went off to catch the train at 9:00 in the morning with rather thick heads. We had a parlour car seat right at the rear of the train. The caboose for some reason or another was right in the middle of the train and it was the steepest non-cog railway in North America. It literally went right up the side o the mountain on the trail of 98 and went right down the other side! It was a full gauge railway, but it was non-cog, and it had a steam engine and we panted up to the station because we were a little bit late, and the conductor who was waiting for us said, "Don't worry, lads. We're waiting for you!"

We sat down in this Parlour car with swivel seats (very comfortable!) and the cars had settling lamps and a pot belly stove to keep it warm. It was a very ancient train but it was very comfortable. As we puffed up the side of the hill, feeling a little bit dry, there was a knock on the parlour car door and there was an old guy dressed in an old army jacket and a with a grizzled grey beard. "Here," he said, and he produced three cold beers. This was an absolutely priceless boon to us at the time. His name was Kelly and he was very friendly. He said "in a little while, I want you to come up to the caboose in the middle of the train and meet my friend the conductor." So sure enough, about an hour or so later, we were invited up to go into the caboose and there the conductor was waiting for us with paper cups. He produced a bottle of Crown Royal. It was incredible, because the cost of those things in that part of the world was

about 4 or 5 times what they are down here. Anyway, we had really quite a pleasant journey until we got to Whitehorse.

Kelly wanted to take us to supper. We had to tell him regretfully that we were going up to the Canadian army mess. We met the major, who was to be our conductor for the trip and he took us up to the mess and after quite a long session of several drinks in the officers' mess we went to dinner. After dinner, by this time fairly late at night around 10 o'clock, the major announced that maybe we should go up to the air force station on the hill because there had never been a meeting of navy, army and air force in Whitehorse before. So off we went on Saturday night, and we arrived at about 11 o'clock in the officers' mess. There wasn't a soul there except for the duty officer. The place was quiet as the grave. We demanded hospitality from the duty officer, who was a young flying officer, and not knowing what to do, he called the group captain. The group captain was somewhat annoyed with being disturbed on a Saturday night, and so he said "Take them down to the guest house and get them to sign the book, give them a drink and send them home." So the flying officer dutifully gave us a drink, conducted us down to the RCAF guest house and asked us to sign the book. The signature immediately above mine was Field Marshal Lord Alexander, who was the Governor General of Canada at the time. So I thought that the occasion was well worth the time of going down to the guest house and signing the book. From there we went back to the mess and by this time it was about 11:30 at night and the Major said, "Well there's only one place still going at this hour of the night, and that's the nurses' residence." So off we went to the nurses' residence where we sang songs and had some more drinks. We sang a song that I'll never forget. It's called "Cecilia Tarantella" and they played it all night, and it sticks in my mind to this day. It was a very memorable visit.

The next day we went to catch the train feeling more or less in the same shape that we did when we started off the trip. And there, sure enough, was Kelly. Kelly conducted us with some ceremony into the parlour car, but he'd never come in and sit down with us. He said "I'll see you gentlemen later." Well the next visit to the parlour car was three old ladies of indeterminate ages and rather large girth! They said "You nice young officers should have nothing to do with that smelly old man. He's really just a lot of trouble and a big pest!" And then shortly after Kelly appeared, he said, "You young officers should look out for those ladies, they're looking for husbands!" So we were warned against Kelly and the widow ladies during the trip back home. As we got passed a local station, of course by this time it was Sunday morning, people had heard about us being on the train so they turned out onto the platform to see us going through. I can remember one station just before we went up on the top of the hill to go down the other side, it was like the little train that could. It got nearly up to the top of the hill and didn't make it. It had to back down so having waved our way out of the station, we then came back going backwards, still waving! The train took another much longer run at it, and there we went just over the top of the hill and down the other side. That was our Whitehorse/Skagway visit, a very memorable experience. A lot of fun. We went back down and came down the West Coast on the outside of the island, and rolled our way back into Esquimalt.

This was 1949. Then a month or so later, the two younger sub-lieutenants joined us from our junior team so we were a group of four. By this time, we senior subs had been promoted to lieutenants, so the balance was the same. We had taken the place of more senior lieutenants who by this time had left the

ship. We were then told that we were going to payoff at Christmas and Crescent was going into an extended refit and conversion to get a whole new super structure and new lot of equipment, particularly action information equipment, new radars and a much improved operations room, which the Americans called the CIC (Combat Information Centre).

So we paid off, and about half the ship's company and all of the wardens went to HMCS Sioux. The Sioux was an old-time British Destroyer with a fairly ancient gun armament, but she was also the first new all-bunk ship in the Canadian Navy, as opposed to hammocks. Also, cafeteria messing as opposed to messdeck messing as it was in the Royal Navy. We had electric galleys as opposed to oil fired galleys, and generally was a vast improvement even though the gunnery and fire control equipment was fairly ancient stuff. We had two directors, one was a surface director, and the other was an anti-aircraft director with a 285-type radar which could never have possibly spotted the fast and modern aircrafts that there around at that time. However, she was armed with squid, which was an advanced head throwing anti-submarine weapon. She had one additional feature which made her fairly unique out in the Far East: we were fitted with what the navy called a "High definition warning set." In actual fact, it was simply a navigational radar – a commercial navigation radar set. It was accurate to about 10 or 15 yards, and gave us the navigational ability that was far superior to the older warning radars that of the British type. This was to result in some adventures we had when we got out to Korea.

About this time, it was after Christmas, I remember we were given some leave and my brother Ron and I decided we'd go down to California in this car that I had just bought from Dick Carle, one of my term mates who had gone off to his long term gunnery course in England. This car was about 3 months old, a practically brand new Hillman Minx. Anyway, we drove down to L.A and stayed with a friend of my father's, who was an American businessman. He was immensely hospitable and we had a grand time down there, so much so that we almost over-stayed my leave, and we had to drive back from L.A. to Vancouver non-stop. My brother and I took turns driving, while the other curled up in the backseat for 2 or 3 hours at a time and made it all the way to Vancouver in 36 hours which is pretty fast going. And it was just as well because when I got back on board, the captain said, "Well, I'm glad you're back because we're just about to pick up a full load of war ammunition, and we're going to Korea."



The Hillman Minx

1950: Korea

By this time it was June of 1950 and the Korean War had started. At first it was called a "Police Action" within the UN. Of course with the Russians on the Security Council as one of the Permanent Five, the UN action would never have gotten underway had the Russians not made a basic blunder. The Russians often used to boycott meetings and walk out of them thereby delaying the proceedings. They thought that if they did that in the UN Security Council that it would stop the proceedings, but in actual fact what happened was, when they walked out, the UN Security Council passed a resolution saying that police action was to take place to prevent the North Koreans from going into South Korea and to send them back to the North. It has since been correctly named the Korean War, because it was a major war. Within about a week, we had stored ship. By this time we had a properly trained ship's company, unlike the departure in the previous year. We had a full war-load of ammunition, we had a ship's doctor, we had extra officers to up our watchkeeping ability, so we could do cruising watches all the time. Off we went as fast as we could, led out of the harbour by HMCS Ontario with Captain Pullen who was dying to go himself with a cruiser, but the three destroyers were sent under the command of Jeffery Vanstone-Brock, who was a captain at the time. I have a picture of HMCS Sioux steaming out of the Esquimalt Harbour in line ahead following Ontario. The reason why Ontario was there was so she could fuel us partway down as we were going 20 knots, and most destroyers don't have the range to do a 20-knot passage between here and Hawaii. They could do it at 15 but not at 20.
So we fuelled part way and Ontario turned around and headed back to Esquimalt.



HMCS Sioux

We fuelled again in Pearl Harbour, and went on to fuel again in Guam. We got to Sasebo, Japan, three weeks after the Korean War began. By this time, such was the lightening speed of the changes that were happening in that war, all that was left of South Korea that was not occupied by the North Korean Army (which was Russian trained, equipped and led), was a 40-mile perimeter held by a combination of what was left of the US forces that were there and the South Korean Army, but it was holding.

I should mention that upon our ship, the Sioux's, arrival in Japan, as we were cruising around the harbour that was by this time full of warships, looking for our buoy to secure to HMS Jamaica, a rather ancient looking British colony class cruiser was flashing "RPC, RPC, RPC" at us. This means "Request the Pleasure of your Company" when you're secured. So as soon as we were secured, all of the officers got in one of our boats and off we went to HMS Jamaica. They turned out to be one of the hardest drinking

ships I think I've ever encountered. The commander had been known to say in the wardroom "If the drinking doesn't speed up in this wardroom, I'm going to shut the bar."

After that warm welcome from the British, we went back to our ships; however, within 48 hours we were given the first job which was to escort an army merchant transport ship, which was full of occupation troops from Japan. These troops were to hold the perimeter. I can remember seeing the ship that we were to lead out of the harbour and escort, lined with all of these young, green occupation troops, who had of course, never seen a war of any kind. They were all very soft and green, and I remember thinking, "They're going to get slaughtered," because they had no idea what they were getting into. I'm sure a whole lot of them were. However, the perimeter did hold.

There was one slightly embarrassing moment on that trip because their captain was a US merchant marine, and he refused to be escorted by us because we weren't American. He was told in no uncertain terms that he wasn't going to sail unless he was going to follow us. And having been given that order, he fell in line and followed us. Unfortunately, we took him into the perimeter alright, but into the wrong bay. So we had to turn around and take him out and into the next bay, much to the embarrassment of the navigator. However, I gained that the perimeter held, and by this time, it was the end of July, beginning of August. Our next patrol was about a week later and off we went for these long patrols, and by this time the decision had been made that the Commonwealth forces, that is the British, Australians, New Zealand and Canadian, would cover the west coast of Korea (i.e., the Yellow Sea) and the US navy would do the east coast. This was a very smart move on the part of the US navy because the east coast was deep water right close in; whereas most of the time when we were operating inshore through the islands, we were operating in very shallow and confined water. Out in the ocean it was fine but when you were doing the inshore patrols at night, it was very shallow water. One of our first duties was to be an escort to the British aircraft carrier. We had about three of these destroyers and three Canadian destroyers and some British ships including the aircraft carrier. The interesting thing is that the Rear Admiral in charge of the British forces was another Brock, and was a distant relative of our Captain Brock. So we did routine duties and anti-submarine manoeuvres, because although the North Koreans didn't have submarines, the Chinese did. They were based just across from North Korea on the Chinese side of the Yellow Sea. They were within easy range of working, but the Yellow Sea is so shallow that any submarine operating there would have some difficulty. Nevertheless, we did ASW sweeps when we were screening the carrier. One of us would get detached, and usually it was Sioux because of our superior navigational facilities with these commercial radar sets, we would do the in-shore patrols. There we would meet up with a Republic of Korea officer who we called the "John Paul Jones" of the South Korean Navy. He modeled himself on General Patton, and he wore a shiny helmet and shiny pistols on either side of his belt. By this time almost all of the coast was occupied and there were various plans as to where we would go if we needed to evacuate people.

Then General MacArthur began to make his presence felt and within a matter of weeks, all of these evacuation plans were scrapped. The general who was in command at the time, General Matthew Ridgeway, said there was going to be no retreat. He said it was going to be offensive from hereon in. So within two months, the landings were planned and executed and by the middle of September we all went up the river to stage the Inchon landings and we accompanied with minimal casualties. In fact I

think the Americans may have lost one or two but that was all. The North Korean Army was all well south by this time and heavily over-extended.

The Americans also landed on the east coast and cut off 150,000 North Korean Army, more or less the major bulk of their major offensive army. They just closed them right off, altering the whole course of the war. They started driving north and clearing them out and of course Macarthur went on and said, "I will be at the Yellow River by Christmas." And that he was. This meant that there was a very big change in the war and our operational area and we started operating off North Korea right up to the Yellow River. Then we would even go to patrols right over the other side close to the Chinese naval base. The purpose of that was never clear to me but it was somewhat provocative to say the very least. Anyway, we were off and up by the mouth of the other river, and by this time it was Christmas Eve of 1950, and it was very cold. There was a slim sheet ice on the water, bearing in mind it was salt water so you could imagine how cold it was. The British were using a very powerful aircraft at the time called "Sea Furies" and they were pretty much all engine. The trouble is that when the engine stopped, they dropped out of the sky like a stone. We were on the forward edge of the screen on this particular day, and suddenly this Fury stopped and down he went. He was able to eject and so he floated down into the ocean. We had a pilot on the bridges who was listening on the broadcast to this guy saying "Mayday, I'm bailing out." We broke out of the screen without orders, because we were closest, and headed full speed in the direction that we knew he'd dropped into the sea because even though he was hopefully wearing an emergency suit, his time in the water could not be very long. We got up alongside of him but unfortunately, we only had one whaler and one motor boat, and even though we used to start the motor boat engine in cold climates it was so cold that it wouldn't start. Fortunately it was a very calm day, so the captain stopped the ship right alongside this guy. We sent down a scrambler net and gave him a line and asked, "Can you make it up?" and he said, "Oh yes, I'm fine!" He reached up to grab hold of the scrambling net, but his legs wouldn't move. In other words, his legs were numb. I was on the deck by the boat deck at that time, so we sent a couple of sailors over the side with slings and we put a rope on him and hauled him up onboard and filled him up with hot tea and so on. The temptation is to give him rum but you're not supposed to do that when he's that cold, so tea it was. Although I'm sure they gave him some other things later on.

Then the Furies gave a fly-by as we had told them that we had picked up their downed pilot. He was fine, a cheerful Irishman, and we sent him over to the US carrier a few hours later.

By this time we were doing 45-day patrols, some of which were the in-shore patrols at night. One of the things that used to go on when we met up with the John Paul Jones of the Republic of Korea Navy, he would ask for our automatic small arms, and about 60,000 rounds of ammunition. I was the ship's gunnery officer so I was responsible for all of these stores obviously. So with some trepidation, but on the captain's clear order, I lent him our sub-machineguns and I think we had some automatic carbines and so on, and about 60,000 rounds of ammunition and off he'd go ashore. This was the time that the whole of the coastline was held and there would be flashes and light all over the place as he sort of blew his way into the town.

We did a lot of minesweeping as well during my nine months in Korea. In one seep, we found a whack of mines in this harbour that we were passing. There were old Japanese sea mines, some unrecognizable ones, and some Russian ones. We started destroying them bit by bit with a machine gun we had rigged on the bow, and the Japanese and unknown mines were easy to take care of with that gun.

The Russian ones proved to be a problem. The machine gun was not working, so we switched to the larger guns, and then finally we went with the 40mm Bofors. And while the 40mm would get close and explode beside the mines, we couldn't seem to detonate them.

The Bofors were power operated, so we could not aim quite as accurately as we would like. Finally we did make a direct hit, and the mines went off with a huge roar. They turned out to be very powerful mines that were using post-WWII explosives and technology. When the first one went up, I recall an unwary sailor who went up to pick up some of the debris that came on deck, and he only did that once…they were white hot!

Another time, we also became entangled with a mine wire on our starboard bow. We were up the Chin Pao River, and we had to shut down our starboard engines and back our way out…gently. We eventually cut loose of it, and were thankful for that, having spent an entire 24 hours wondering about our fate.

Upon our return to Canada in April 1951 on Sioux (which was the first ship back), we were astonished to see the number of people in Esquimalt to greet us. There were about 40,000 people in the dockyard at Esquimalt, and then another 100,000 people on the banks of Dallas Road.

The captain had been booked for a number of speaking engagements, not all of which he could make. So he delegated a number of them to be, and I was warmly received by various military institutes where I gave fairly detailed accounts of our activities.

1950 – 52: Halifax

I was then moved to Halifax to HMCS Scotian, which was a reserve unit. There was some dismay that I was going to a reserve ship, but I felt that it was a good precursor to the long gunnery course that I hoped to attend in Whale Island, England.

It turned out to be an interesting period, because I was working with a group of very experienced people – a total of 5 master mariners in the officer group aboard Scotian. This was a period of great changed in the navy, as we had come from 100,000 in number in 1945, down to under 7,000 in 1951.

The navy wanted to recruit back up to 22,000. So I was busy doing the recruiting officer duties for the entire Maritime region, along with an alcoholic petty officer, and a (thankfully) sober female seaman driver. It was a huge responsibility, and considering the army was sweeping through the Maritimes with a major and a handful of lieutenants, captains and sergeants, it was looking like a lob-sided fight.

The navy had started these naval entry programs through the universities, and this was seeing some success. I had about five university recruiting officers reporting to me, each of whom were Lieutenant-Commanders (me being a lieutenant still). This was a little difficult, given the gap in rank, but it worked out well. Thankfully, I had a terrific secretary who was the model of efficiency, and we were quite successful in achieving our regional targets.

It was in Halifax that I also met Joe Sear, the fake doctor. The real Joe Seer was a doctor in New Brunswick, and the imposter Joe (who was a US navy medical corpsman) stole the doctor's papers and ended up joining the Canadian Navy. The imposter Joe was put in charge of sick pay at Stadacona hospital.

I got to know him quite well, as he would send recruits on after attending their medical. He had a slightly Bostonian accent, and he would listen carefully as I made comments about doubting the suitability of this recruit or that one.

There was a British submarine that had been berthed in Halifax. The officers invited me down to lunch on the sub, and these were often liquid-filled lunches. I noticed that there were a bunch of officers working in this tiny area with a tiny table (it being a sub after all). So I asked the commander of Scotian if we could lend the British sub's officers some office space while they worked on the mound of paperwork that always accompanied a visiting ship or sub in harbour. Over time, that area of Scotian expanded to become Sixth Submarine Squadron, or SM6, a permanent facility for the British Navy and their sub crews.

To give their thanks, the sub crew would invite me down to lunch fairly often, and I thought of Joe Seer and his insatiable curiosity, so I asked if I could bring imposter Joe down for one of the lunches.

So along comes Joe, a large man, and me for lunch. Being new, the crew repeated their instructions to Joe: under no circumstances are you to touch anything. Now, the toilet facilities on a sub are a little different than most in that they involve pressure, and you can't always assume that you can flush as per a normal toilet. So there we are having lunch, and Joe gets up to go to the loo, and moments later we hear a loud whoosh…Joe had "flushed" the toilet only to be dealt a blowback of some 300 lbs of pressure.

He came back through the passageway soaking wet, and of course they wouldn't let him back into the boardroom, so they took him up on the conning tower and onto the jetty and turned the firehouse on him.

Years later when I learned of his sham, it made me think of all the discussions we had about which recruits were suitable, and his keen interest in my opinion…turns out, I had greater insight into these kids than he did!

The other thing about the submarine that was interesting is that captain and his crew were the maddest bunch of officers I have ever known. He decided he would give a reception in his sub, and he invited the

whole of Halifax. This included the mayor, the Catholic and Anglican bishops, all the Canadian senior officers including Admiral Menge, and me.

The Admiral's wife was also invited, and she positioned herself conveniently in the torpedo room so that she could sell tickets to her one of her charity causes. The result was that the guests would see Mrs. Menge coming out of the torpedo room waving her tickets and the guests would retreat the to the other end of the sub, and it got to the point where the captain had to ask her to cease and desist, as she was ruining the trim of his ship!

I also got to know a fair number of CBC folks, because the head of CBC facilities was an ex-navy colleague, and these were some of the liveliest folks in the area. Great parties, and they had lots of hilarious recordings that would never make it to air! I was invited as a result to speak a number of times on the local CBC radio station about various navy subjects, which I quite enjoyed.

During this time I was also preparing for my long gunnery course in Greenwich, England. I used the last of my days in Halifax to practice up on my maths, which would be important in this course and in which I was not very strong.

My appointment came to an end, and I was sent off to England again. The ship I was to travel on was leaving from Montreal, and a friend drove me up so I was able to avoid the painful train ride from the Maritimes. With my mates Brad Wilkes and Andy McMillan alongside, we joined the ship, and headed to England.

1953: England and the Married Life

The first tragedy we learned when we arrived in Greenwich was that the WRENs had all left and were replaced by commissionaires, which was a distinct loss in our eyes, since there was still no running water and we would no longer be greeted in the morning by WRENs.

Shortly after arriving and starting my courses, Peter Gleneaste, our senior course officer, pointed out that there was a WREN officers course taking place at Greenwich, and that there would be a reception for each of the courses. Whoever planned the cocktails made a shambles of it because the drinks they served were much too strong, and most of the WRENs were 20-ish and did not have a lot of experience with alcohol, and they were dropping like flies in no time.

I noticed Angela, who seemed to be holding up fine. She was a little older than the other WRENs, almost 25 at the time, and worked in audience research at the BBC. She was a pretty blonde, and I asked her if she would accompany me to the dinner in the main hall.

She said she would be happy to, but first she needed some time to put some of these drunken WRENs to bed, thanks to your bartender! And that was the beginning of my romance with Angela, who would become my first wife.

By this time, I had been given permission to live outside the school and I got a place in Blackmead, coincidentally named Mrs. Angela's Boarding House. We've all seen plays and shows on boarding house life in England, and it was very much like that – a very mixed group of people that I never really got to know, but were never dull.

My Angela had a group of friends in London that she would visit regularly, and so I got to go up with her and get to know them. They were a lively group of Bohemian-types – very bright. We had agreed that we would not meet or talk or eat together at Greenwich, and that when we left to get together in London, we would leave separately from the college and/or my boarding house. As a result no one knew we were dating. But the relationship moved quickly, and in no time we were engaged. So we needed to tell each of our senior officers that we planned to marry.

But there was a complication. Although Angela had regularly attended the Anglican chapel in Greenwich on Sundays, when she went to London she would go to the Catholic church. So I asked her, are you Catholic, and she said "No, but I was." It turns out one of her aunts was a mother superior in London.

This didn't bother me of course, but it was a problem for Angela, as she confided that she had never told her parents (who were both still Catholic). She was brought up in one of the leading convent schools in England, where her Aunt Queenie was the mother superior.

So the problem became more poignant: how to tell the parents that we were getting married, *and* that we were doing so in an Anglican church, *and* by the way your daughter is an Anglican. This would be very hard on Angela's mother, who would get a licking from her sister, the mother superior, among other family (all Irish) and friends. Angela's father, a kind and gentle soul, was likely not going to be bothered as much, as he himself started life as an Anglican Yorkshireman, and converted to Catholicism out of necessity to marry his Catholic fiancé, a woman he loved very much.

So this was concern for me, because we were to marry and leave for Canada in a matter of months, and it was looking like it was going to be an unhappy last few months in England for Angela.

Angela's brother Brian, whom she was very fond of, had agreed that he would stand in at the Anglican ceremony at Greenwich, if that was where we agreed we would marry. Angela sent Brian back to Scotland where he was working at the time with the latest plan: at Christmas dinner when all of us were to reconvene with their parents, Brian would break the news that we were marrying, and doing so in an Anglican church (and by extension, that Angela was to become an Anglican). After Brian left, I persuaded Angela that the unhappiness and stress was not worth it, and why don't we marry in a Catholic church in England with the family, and then we can have a small confirmation ceremony ourselves back in Canada in an Anglican Church with my family.

So we agreed on this, and along came the Christmas dinner. The problem was, we had not told Brian about the change in plans, so we had to wait in ambush for Brian and cut him off before he broke the news. So there I was hovering around the outside of the house before dinner and up shows Brian full of liquid courage, fully expecting a family brawl.

We had a lovely old priest with whom I had no qualms, and a beautiful ceremony in Wallasey. On top of everything else, Angela's uncle was the mayor of Wallasey, so you can imagine the embarrassment explaining that his Catholic niece had left the flock!

Years later, when we were living in Ottawa and Angela's mother was visiting, she thanked me for that, and I was very glad to know that it was the right decision.

I had invited almost the entire course group at Greenwich, and all agreed to attend on the condition that we make the ceremony in the morning, with a wedding luncheon after, so that they could make it off to the Grand National, which was being held that same day. The ceremony also coincided with Lent, so there was no music, but it was a great ceremony with a naval guard of honour, and then off they went off en masse to the Grand National.

We went back to Portsmouth to live together in a house I had found in Emsworth, a delightful little fishing village about 20 minutes by car from Portsmouth. The house belonged to a navy commander who was serving out in Hong Kong. It was a two-storey brick house with central heating, and an AGA cooker, which were the new rage at the time. It was a grand way to start off life together. We had also invited Admiral Lord Fraser to the wedding, who was not able to attend as he was going to be in South Africa. But as a gift, he gave us a cheque for fifty pounds, which was a chunk of money at that time. With this cheque I bought a golden lab puppy, Buffy…and therein began our problems.

Buffy was a wanderer, and we did not have a fenced-in yard. So off he would go, god knows where half the time. It turns out, he became fond of trotting off to the bus stop and lining up, and hopping on. So Buffy would get two or three stops away before the driver realized Buffy was not attended by anyone, so off the bus he would go. Buffy had tags, so invariably some kind soul would ride him back on their bicycle, and none would ever accept anything for their troubles. But they would accept a visit to the pub, so I spent a lot of time taking these friendly folks out to the pubs as a show of gratitude for returning Buffy. Knowing that this was going to be a problem back in Canada, we found Buffy a nice farm in which to wander far and wide, before we returned to Canada.

Angela had just learned to drive at the time, and we had just bought a new Austin A40, which was an export version since we would eventually have it sent over to Canada. This meant that the driver side was on the wrong side for English drivers. On a trip to work one day, Angela was driving and had a serious accident. I got a call from a constable who informed me of the news, so off I went to stay with her until she recovered.

We wrapped up our time in England, and sailed for Canada. When we arrived in Canada, we took the train across the country, and then landed in Vancouver, where we stayed for a couple of weeks with my parents. Although my parents were delighted, I sensed that Angela was uncomfortable in some way. Years later, she confided that it was because she felt there were some marital problems at the time, and seeing that I did not have any sense of this, she did not want to bring it up. It turns out, of course, she was right as my parents did separate within a few years of that time.

Nevertheless, we were on the hunt for our own house in Victoria. We were after a fully furnished house for rent, and this was not an easy find in our price range. Eventually the real estate agent put us onto a cottage on Cordova Bay, not on the water but near it, and it was a fairly modern cottage with central heating. It was all wooden (cedar), and sat on the edge of two acres of dogwood forest. It was a very nice little place, but it had its disadvantages.

The first was, it was in Cordova Bay sitting in farmland, and next door to it was a gravel pit, but it was not in use. As it turned out, we were never much bothered by this. The other issue was that it was a bit of a commute to where I worked in Victoria. And lastly, it had no phone. At that time, phones were hard to get installed, so all of this added up to Angela feeling quite isolated during the day.

We had got a dog, Dinah, who had been terribly neglected. We nursed her back to health, and to show her gratitude she would regularly jump up on our laps – not a good thing when you're a full-sized Labrador!

My duties as parade training officer at HMCS Naden were interesting. In those days, the barracks life had a lot more parade and ceremony as part of the daily routine than they do nowadays.

Each morning there was a 20-minute ceremony where the various schools and training centres at Naden would join to raise the ensign. And every Friday there was a formal gathering with a ceremonial guard and full band. One of my jobs was to train up the armed guards as well as the ceremonial guard and band. If the marching ability of any particular platoon or company did not please the commanding officer, then they would be instructed to march past again and again, until they got it right.

Having a large marching band was new to me, but I thoroughly enjoyed it, and the director of music was happy to have a gunnery officer to whip the boys into shape. I wore these large black boots with black patent leather "gators," and I had this whistle that could stop the trainees in their tracks.

One of the more interesting aspects of my duties at Naden is that I was the divisional officer for all of the gunnery officers. These gunnery officers were all trained at Whale Island like I was, but ranged in age and rank, the most senior being Petty Officer 1st Class.

I therefore had to take charge of their records, and most of these guys had joined the navy as boy seamen before the war. Their records made for interesting reading. Having joined at 15 or 16, most of them had spent a week or more in cells for some indiscretion or another (likely coming back to ship drunk). With the older Petty Officers, they had marvellously colourful stories to tell, which I really enjoyed listening to.

Back at home, Angela was getting to know some friends locally, one of whom was the local Anglican minister, who also enjoyed my home-brewed beer.

The other friend was a local farmer who was fascinated that Angela had worked at the BBC.

On Fridays, my divisional ceremony would start after lunch and go on for a few hours from start to wrap. I would then join the officer's mess afterward for the Friday hour, where drinks were half-price, and

where I was expected to join colleagues. But I would arrive home rather late for supper, and a few drinks too many, and this did not go over well at home with Angela, and I certainly could not blame her for that.

All of this parade activity culminated in the springtime in a formal Sunset Ceremony to be performed for the public. The director of music threw himself into the preparations for this with me. The ceremony would be performed in front of the Victoria parliament buildings, and then for the Pacific National Exhibition.

The ceremony was a great hit at the parliament buildings in Victoria, and then we headed to Vancouver to perform for the week during the Pacific National Exhibition, or PNE.

We used to assemble in the dark at the PNE by the stables where the horses were kept overnight from the day's racing and presumably the next day's racing as well, and that was in complete darkness. The grounds in front of the grandstand were flood lit and at my request, the area was flood lit at the mast head which was close by. The group that was assembled in darkness was comprised of a 50-piece band, and the three field guns crews composed of 75 cadets in units of 25 to each gun, which they would carry using drag ropes to march onward. We would assemble at exactly 9 o'clock and Bill Herbert would give his opening dialogue, describing what was going to happen in brief detail, and giving a brief history of where this ceremony came from. It was traditionally a British ceremony primarily carried out by the Royal Marines based on the Sunset Ceremony when it was a call to people to come into the fortified part of the town when the gates would be closed for the night, where they would be safe. At the same time, the flag would be hauled down in a ceremonial fashion.

This was the essence of the Sunset Ceremony. As soon as Bill Herbert had completed his opening remarks from a CBC sound truck, I would give the order "Guard and band, by the right, quick march!" in a loud voice. With that, we would march out of the darkness into the spot light. It was certainly a moment for me, as well as for the crowd because there was always a sort of roar of appreciation when they saw us all coming out in our blue uniforms and the white ribbing that the sailors wore. Then we would commence the ceremony which took approximately 30 minutes. It consisted of marching, and counter-marching through the band and the guard and the various halts and about halts and so on. This was all done to the beat of the big bass drum, so there were no orders given until such time as we came to the gun salute, which is a rapid firing of blank cartridges into the air to show that the rifles were proven empty.

During the actual Sunset bugle call, the three field guns fired 25-pound blank cartridges with a rather thundering roar, which may be familiar to some who have heard the field guns in the promenade in Victoria in front of the legislative buildings while the symphony performs the 1812 Overture. It was the same type of performance. We did that for 12 nights, and we started off with something like only 2500 in the stands for the first night. After that, it was standing room only in the grandstands and of course the PNE officials were delighted with the reception that it got. And as well they should be.

There were one or two amusing incidents that I remember: I insisted that everyone be on deck, on parade, at 0800 each morning at Discovery. When we assembled one morning I can remember it was

about 0801, a large yellow convertible drew up with 3 pretty girls in it, and one large ordinary seaman called by the name of "Big Canoe," who was a very good looking young man. He got out of the car, grabbed his rifle and fell in. He was the closest one to being adrift in the entire period. He was very tall and his name really was Big Canoe, so the sailors christened him "Little Kayak."

All in all, it was a very successful and happy performance. So we went back to Esquimalt, and did it a few times more in Victoria the following spring, and it set the standards for some time to come until it was modified to become the Ceremony of the Flags as it was deemed too British for Canadian consumption after the 1960s.

1954: HMCS Venture

Early in the year of '54, we were blessed with the birth of our first son, Christopher. He was a beautiful baby, with a slight bit of jaundice that gave him a glowing peaches and cream complexion. I thought they all looked like that, but all our friends were quick to point out that they were usually quite pink.

We also decided to move at this time to Quadra Street, into an area close Lt. Governor Major General Pearkes lived, as well as to our good friend Hugh Plante. At that time Angela had Dr. C. Mayer as her obstetrician and paediatrician, one of the best on the island, but he was losing his eyesight. After coming home with Christopher, Angela was not feeling well. Dr. Mayer was quick to diagnose the problem, which was a large ovarian cyst that needed to be removed. Dr. Mayer informed us that one complete ovary had come out, and most of the other. If we were to have children, then we shouldn't delay. Prophetic words they were, as along came three more children in four years, and another final one a few years after that!

With Christopher settling in at home, and Angela recovered from her surgery, we settled in to family life.

During the summer, I gave up my duties as parade training officer and was assigned to the regular officer training plan, or ROTP, and cadet training in one of the frigates for the summer months. This was to prepare me for my next job as a term lieutenant in HMCS Venture which was starting up in the fall of 1954. So off I went, and this time I had ROTP cadets from Royal Military College (or RMC, Kingston), Royal Roads (Victoria), and College Militaire Royale (or CMR, Quebec) for summer training in the frigates. It was rigorous and quite good fun as we toured around the gulf islands teaching the cadets anything to do with seamanship and sea handling. I remembered it being a very busy time and of course, nice weather, and pleasant places for touring around the Gulf Islands.

We never went very far on those particular training cruises as I remember, but we did accomplish a lot of seamanship.

In September of 1954 I joined HMCS Venture, one of four term lieutenants. Now Venture was an interesting training establishment set up specifically to fill the gap that was widening all the time from the ROTP cadet intake of executive or surface officers in the navy and pilots. The ROTP cadets wanted to become engineers or electrical officers or supply officers, but they didn't want to fly, and they didn't

want to become ship drivers, so it was specifically set up for that purpose. Interestingly, it was based on the old Royal Roads format that I had known as a cadet back in 1943-45. In fact, it was often called "a Royal Roads in waiting." The navy having lost Royal Roads as an officer training establishment and it had been incorporated into the RMC system and was in fact, adjunct to the RMC at this time. So this began a very busy two years of my life as a term lieutenant. It was a job that was all-embracing and you were there literally seven days a week. You were there Saturday morning and Sunday morning. Saturday morning was for seamanship training and evolutions and learning ship handling in the 75-foot twin engine ferry boats that the dock yard had in use of transporting people around the harbour. We also did some sail training in one of the ships attached to HMCS Venture. The cadets had an academic and professional training program, and they also went on long training cruises on HMCS Ontario, and in my old destroyer HMCS Sioux.

I can remember my first training cruise with the cadets when I was assigned to Sioux. I was the divisional and training officer for a group of 40 cadets and we were going down the American coast, through the Panama Canal and into the Caribbean. When I joined HMCS Sioux as the training officer for the cadets, the captain was Robert Murdoch, and he told me that he lost his navigator and the previous term lieutenant. So he said "You will be the navigator for this trip." I somewhat protested because I had a fulltime job as a training officer of the cadets but he would have none of it. Then I pointed it out that I was a gunnery officer, not a navigational officer and he said "You've navigated before, haven't you?" and I had to admit that I had. Also, what I'd thought was a clincher, I said "I only got a 3rd class certificate out of HMS Dryad."

However, that did not deter him at all. So I went over to Ontario which was going to be the ship that we were to take passage with down the American coast, and reiterated that I was pretty rusty in my navigation to the first lieutenant navigator of Ontario. I pointed out to him that my positions, which you are obliged to send to the senior ship, might be a little off at times and would he please not be too sarcastic when he found that out. He replied "It's simple. All you really have to do is follow me." What he was saying was that we should follow Ontario as we go down the coast. That sounded fine to me, and off we went with all the equipment and a hopped up HF (high frequency) direction finder, which is a radio beacon that picks up signals down the coast and gives you a bearing. I had no idea of its accuracy or when it was last calibrated but off we went.

As we proceeded down the Juan de Fuca Strait in a heavy fog, Ontario sent a message by light saying "Detach and proceed independently down to San Diego, where we will re-joining you." So off I went down the coast, a thick fog the whole way, turning into the Santa Barbara Channel by a place called Honda Point. This was the place that in 1923, seven American ships piled up on the shore in the fog, one right after another, this being the day before radar. They literally ran themselves ashore at high speeds in the fog and all seven ships were lost (known as the Honda Point Disaster, which is well known in nautical circles). Being reminded of this, I was careful that we got around the point. Of course, we did have radar by this point and so it was a somewhat simpler task. It worked pretty well as we were fairly consistent as to where we said we would be, and we rejoined Ontario off San Diego. The next stretch was a long one through the Panama Canal, which was very uneventful as you are completely in the

hands of the American pilots. Even with a warship, the canal pilots take over and navigate the ship through, and the captain is not allowed to interfere or say a word…not a natural state for a captain!

When we got outside on the Atlantic side, Ontario said "Detach and rejoin at Barbados" where Ontario was going to anchor and we were going to go along side. By this time, Brian Judd, the navigator of Ontario, was sick. The assistant navigator had taken over, and he was an ex-Canadian National Railway skipper from the days when the CNR traded by rail and ship all the way down to the West Indies. So he knew the Caribbean like the back of his hand. I got along well with him, his name was Joe. So we were once again detached and we were to rejoin two days later. As we were going up the channel, I noticed that we were in the wake of somebody. We just kept going up and up this wake. To my astonishment and delight when we got within visual range, it was Ontario and we were going straight up their wake. That was a very successful rendezvous, and then we went to Barbados and anchored just clear of the yachts so that when we turned on our anchor, as you do when the tide changes, we would just miss the yachts (but not by much). We were within swimming distance of a nice sandy beach if you wanted to go ashore that way.

Barbados was a very pleasant experience. This was 1955, and the island was way ahead of itself, interestingly enough. The governor was a farsighted man and when he realized what was coming, he had already integrated the social life of Barbados. It used to be that the governor's parties and receptions were whites only, but in Barbados, they were fully integrated. This, I believe, was the first West Indian Colonial island to do that. We found the atmosphere there very pleasant. They were great people and there appeared to be no major problems at the time.

On our return coming back through the Panama Canal, we were told to follow Ontario, but not to “station keep” because that would use up of fuel unnecessarily. We were told to keep within distance of a few miles range of Ontario, but not station keep. This was just as well because we went non-stop from the Panama Canal to San Francisco. This was a very long way for a Destroyer to go without fuelling. We got to San Francisco with only 15% fuel left, which is very much below the acceptable limit, of course; however, we made it without difficulty, and without any bad weather.

I should mention that on the way down from San Francisco, we had a little adventure. We were going to go alongside Treasure Island which is at the base of one of the big bridges across the bay, where the US Navy is based. In order to do that, we had to make a right angle turn across the current which runs at about 5 or 6 knots. It seemed to me by the tide tables and what I could see of the water running past the buoy, that the tide was not running very strongly. I completely misjudged how strong it was. The result was when we turned in to go alongside this long pier, fortunately a 600 foot pier, all of a sudden the tide took charge because the bow was in still water and the stem was in current. Instead of going alongside at a comfortable angle, we were almost at a right angle to the jetty…which is the wrong way to be. And so to my dismay, the captain started using full power, and he went "full astern," and then "ship full ahead" and then "full astern," backwards and forwards until we were charging up and down alongside the jetty about 100 feet off and still making no contact. Bill Hughes was on the pier, and he saw us rushing at full speed towards the rocks, which were right at the end of this jetty, and we got the captain to get ship going astern just in time before we charged back into the bay and went charging back

in again. We did that about 5 or 6 times before we finally got a line on it. I remember complimenting the ship's engineer because that many full aheads and that many full asterns really drains the boiler water of steam almost faster than you can produce it. I was amazed at the power that was available for as long as it was. When you use full power it means that you use all available steam, there is no holding back, and so it was quite an exciting landing. No harm done to anybody, and better still, none to the ship.

During the long transit that we made at sea, I found that I was watch-keeping as well. I was doing the last dog and the morning watch so that I could catch the evening and dawn stars. I had an assistant officer of the watch who was under training, and he was probably one of the worst officers I have ever unfortunately had to stand watch with.

I can remember him writing in the ships log that was going to be signed off by me, that we had colours at sea. When I pointed out to him that this was only done in harbour, I asked him why he had done this at sea. He said that it was done yesterday, and I told him that yesterday we were in harbour and today we were at sea, in case he hadn't noticed. I don't mention his name but I remember that incident particularly well because Bill Hughes thought this was a very funny occurrence coming off of watch.

When we got back to Esquimalt we resumed our heavy schedule. I had a division of 40 cadets and then the second years joined and I had another 30 added on, so I had about 70 cadets to look after which is a very big number to look after because you have to know each individual well and make a certain amount of judgment on their progress, characters and abilities; therefore it was a very demanding job. It was one that I enjoyed so much because these lads were full of life and adventure and mischief. They were everything that young lads in their late teens should be. My division won all the sports competitions and virtually all the competitions they had at that time, and there were quite a few of them. I can remember the boxing competition. We weren't doing too well to start with until we got to the heavy-weight division, because we had a big amiable lad by the name of Fred Hallis, and he was our great white hope. He became known as "One-Punch Hallis" because that's all that his opponents could last for when they got into the ring with him! So we managed to take that competition as well. Second thing that I was always particularly proud of was the fact that not only were we the top division, but we graduated more cadets at the end of the first year and the end of the second year than any other division. In the first year, we had taken in 163 cadets and the end of the first year was really the weeding out time. We went from 163 to 93 cadets. It was a 40% loss; however, it felt better to get rid of the lads who were not going to make it through the first year, rather than try and carry them through the second.

An interesting feature of this was that the judging process was partly academic, so the school masters, "schoolies" as we used to call them, had a 50% say in the progress, and if they weren't going to make it academically, they would report this and turn thumbs down on various lads. In turn, we term lieutenants were judging them for officer-like qualities, and leadership potential and we had about a 40% say, and the rest was decided by our various senior officers. It was very interesting that some of lads that the schoolies wanted who were academically bright, we didn't want, and some of the lads that we wanted, the schoolies didn't. We had some interesting discussions! I remember rescuing this one

lad who lived in the out-ports Newfoundland from the schoolies by saying "He'll do better next year," and he did. He made it and eventually became a rear admiral. And in case he didn't remember, I was always quick to remind him!

I should mention now a much later period in my life very briefly. Since then we have had many Venture reunions, about every 5 years. I've always found them as a source of enjoyment because those young men who graduated, some of them stayed in the service and others just did the seven years short service commission and went on to become fliers with various American airlines, where they made a lot of money. So all of them that turned up at these reunions were very successful and confident men, and full of life and fun. It was always a great pleasure for me to go back and see how they had faired over the years, and into retirement.

1956-58: HMCS Crescent

After the first term graduated in 1956, I was appointed as the squadron gunnery officer for the 2nd escort's squadron, and this consisted of a mixed group of ships, some new and some old. The senior officer's ship was HMCS Crescent, which by this time had had a conversion, and her equipment was very similar to that in the 205 class. In that squadron we had Crescent and six other ships. We also had the frigate squadron attached to us for a short period of time, and these were the WWII converted frigates that had been made much more habitable. All of these ships by this time of course were now bunk ships and all electric galleys and cafeterias and so on. So began my time as a squadron gunnery officer on HMCS Crescent, the 2nd escort squadron between 1956 and the winter of 1958.

This was a very happy time. The 1st squadron commander and ship's captain of Crescent was Paul Taylor who had been my captain on Sioux in the Korea days and we were there for the first year of the war. The second captain that I had was Mickey Sterling, who retired as a rear Admiral, and that too was a very happy time. We had a group of fairly senior squadron officers on board the ship who did double duty as squadron officers and ship's officers as well. We did some very interesting trips. One of exercises that we did with the US, with which we had formed a very close association. The Canadian navy was quite advanced with our thinking of integrating helicopters with ships to do Anti-submarine Warfare sweeps (ASW), and convoy large ships for protection in screens. Integrating helicopters into the screens was an interesting process and we used American helicopters at the time, and they were anxious to work with us because we were much more advanced than them in this strategy. We spent a lot of time down in San Diego going out for about one week's training of 5 days working, and 2 days for the weekend. The interesting thing about this was that with the advent of the nuclear submarine, which by this time had appeared first of in the US navy, and shortly thereafter with the Russian navy, these ships were capable of great underwater speed being steam-driven turbines. They could go 35-37 knots underwater which was more than we could do, so therefore we needed a vehicle that a ship could carry which could go faster than that. In fact, with the dip cycle of the helicopter, you could get a dip speed of 50 knots. A dip cycle was when you lowered your dunking sonar into the water from the helicopter, did two minutes of sweeping with an active sonar, you pull it up out of the water and flew ahead at about

150 knots and then dipped again at another fixed distance and did another sweep. This gave the helicopter screen a speed of advance of about 50 knots if you were lucky enough to encounter a nuclear submarine. The diesel driven submarines with the detection equipment we had by this time and the weapons we had were essentially beaten by the surface fleet. It was only the advent of the nuclear submarine which changed the whole ballpark all over again, and once again we were very much on the defensive.

This time in San Diego resulted in a real bonus trip for us. We were assigned, for the first time as a foreign navy, the job of through-ocean escort of a US transport group that were carrying a brigade of grains to Japan, and this was 1957. A through-ocean escort was the one that took them all the way to Japan. As we approached Pearl Harbour, there would be a pack of diesel submarines waiting to attack our transport group, which consisted of six heavy transport ships of 15,000 tones that were carrying this large marine brigade of grains. They would attack for several days and then we would have the wrap-up inside of Pearl Harbour. Then we would leave and go through another attack phase during which time we would be augmented by US navy ships to help us through. As we approached Japan, the same thing happened. We would be attacked by another pack of submarines. It was a very busy and successful time for us and we learned a lot about screening and attacking submarines when you have a whole lot of them coming in at the same time. It was very valuable experience for us, a real prize that we were allocated the job of through-ocean escort. I believe we were the only navy to ever do that for the US navy.

When we got to Yokohama we had some pleasant experiences there because by this time it was largely rebuilt and the war had changed substantially. While in Yokohama we were able to travel to Tokyo by fast train, and we did so on our shore leave because it was only a 25-30 minute trip. To my astonishment, the whole area that we had seen as being devastated by the fire-bombing was completely rebuilt by this time. There was little evidence of the war. It was an extraordinary feat of rebuilding. Again we were able to tour around and see the sites. One Saturday morning, the ship was open to visitors. I was unfortunately the duty officer for that period and all the other officers had gone ashore. Neither we nor the Japanese were prepared for anything like the crowds that turned up. There were some 70, 000 people trying to get onboard. I marvelled at the crowd control abilities of the Japanese court police in controlling these crowds. As they surged forward in huge numbers, the police would turn and walk with them and then they would turn and stop them so their advance was a series of short ones until they got close to the ship where the police held the line. Of course they'd have to come onboard single file, up one side along the ship on the upper deck and down the other. But either way, the Japanese were intensely curious to see our ships, and wanted to get onboard.

There was one delightful incident that morning before the ship was open for visitors. A little troop of Japanese Cub Scouts and Brownies, of course they didn't call them that, but they were the equivalent and they came onboard in their little uniforms with their teacher. And to my intense embarrassment, they presented us with a stylish Japanese doll in a glass case. Well I was completely unprepared for this, and was wondering what on earth I was going to do, so I sent for the duty petty-officers and said, "Open the canteen." He told me that he hadn't got the keys, and I decided that I would take some further action with that and told him to break open the lock. He was horrified at that, so I sent for the

shipwright and he sawed the lock open. I got into the canteen and took out a picture of our ship and a few of the ship's mementos which I then presented to the teacher in charge of this group. Honour was restored but it was a moment of intense embarrassment when I realized that I had nothing to give them, and everything was locked up.

The behaviour of the children was remarkable. They were I think the most presentable and neat looking kids that I've ever seen anywhere in the world. After we left Japan, we proceeded towards Okinawa for a fuelling stop, and we held anchor a long way out in the harbour, so there wasn't a lot to do. As usual, we thought of a couple of pranks. Herbie Norman, another junior officer, had gone ashore and met a librarian from Iowa who ran the local English speaking library, and she not knowing a lot about the navy was enchanted when we invited her on board for a dinner one night. Fortunately the captain was onshore visiting the local UN dignitaries and having dinner there, and so we were able to perpetrate this trick. We decided to all dress up in our number 10 jackets (the long white ones with the buttons down the front) but without the shoulder boards, and act as stewards that night. So when Herbie Norman came onboard, we treated him as the captain. We set him up in the ward room to dine with the lady from Iowa. Throughout the evening we served them in very formal ways. There was the soup steward, there was the wine steward, the main course steward, and the dessert steward, and the coffee steward. We came in all in sequence and she said "My you've got a lot of stewards on this ship!" We then decided that we were going to take this one step further. We piped on the officer's pipe system warning the ship's company to disregard any of the pipes they heard. We had been ordered to shift anchor, and we were to close up at sea stations and be prepared to move the ship. We reverted back to being officers and taking off our number 10 jackets, and going into our other uniforms. We told Herbie that the ship was ready to remove anchor and asking him if we could "proceed, please?" and so on. We kept interrupting the dinner making these reports about this series of anchor moves, again him not being able to say anything about this! This was all cut short by the arrival back of the captain with the US navy. By this time we had managed to whisk Herbie and his gal back to shore. That was one of the harmless games we played when we were anchored in Okinawa. Needless to say, the lady from Iowa was very impressed with the courtesy and service she received onboard.

We did one further trick of a similar type, and this time we were able to leave and go down to Hong Kong where we spent seven days. We were then slated to go down to Saigon in South Vietnam. This was the time when the war was just about to begin against the North Vietnamese. We sent ahead the usual message to the authorities in the South and announced that we were non-saluting ships. Saluting ships are usually cruisers and ships that have special saluting guns for the purpose. We had no such kind of weaponry on board. The Canadian ambassador came back and said "I implore you to find some way to reply to the salute because the South Vietnamese artillery will be all lined up on the ready to fire the national salute back. If you don't fire a national salute there were will be severe hurt feelings and repercussions." So the captain sent for me and didn't say, "What are WE going to do," but said "What are YOU going to do?" Fortunately I had two gunnery instructors, both of which had been trained where I had. One of them said "I remember going to a lecture one morning on making up blank charges. It was a very boring lecture and I fell asleep, but I remember it." So I told him he was nominated, and that I

wanted him to go to the gunpowder storage which is on an island in the middle of Hong Kong harbour, and get us a barrel of gunpowder, and some 4-inch blank cartridges and make some salute rounds!

So he went off to the gunpowder storage and brought back a barrel, and about 50 x 4-inch cut down shell casings, some cardboard stuffing, and enough gunpowder to fire of 50 or 60 rounds. Also we needed the detonators to store in the end of the cartridges. As we proceeded out of the Hong Kong harbour at slow speed, the chief gunnery officer sat on the fo'csle (which we had cordoned off, lest anybody flicked their cigarette into the mix!) with his barrel of gunpowder by himself making up these 30-odd cartridges: 21 of them so we could fire the salutes and a few extras for practice and in case we misfired.

It turns out that the importance of us having the ability to return the 21-gun salute was because we were to be greeted in Saigon by the newly elected president, Ngo Dinh Diem.

We were met at the mouth of the Saigon River by a Vietnamese pilot. It's a beautiful trip, but the river winds and twist like a snake, and you're doing 180 degree turns all the way up. Since we were going fast, in order to make our arrival time, we had a rolling time of it.

Captain Serling, who seemed only concerned with the 21-gun salute at this point, kept ordering me to check on this and that…he was really quite fussed about this, it seemed to me.

Saigon was a beautiful city at the time, very different from what it was to become. Complete with colourful bicycles and ladies riding them with beautiful hats. It was a largely European city, being a French colonial city for so long. To my delight, upon our arrival we fired off our 21-gun salute without a hitch. I don't think I've ever spent so much time worrying about firing a gun, before or since.

We had seven days there where we were entertained by the Europeans, and the Canadian Ambassador was quite busy. At that time, Canada was helping prepare a truce between the North and South, who had just been separated along North (under Ho Chi Minh) and South (under the new American-backed President Ngo Dinh Diem) lines. As we all know, the truce never held, but we there in that brief period of time between to first IndoChina war (from 1945 – 1955) and the second more famous one (1957 – 1975).

It was one of the last peacekeeping exercises that I was to be involved in. We would visit various outposts where we had sent military personnel, most of whom were French-Canadian, interestingly enough.

The return journey was accompanied by a number of fuelling stops, including Guam, which is a huge harbour in which we had to anchor miles out. So we were left to our own entertainment, which included a recent penchant for pogo-jumping n the wardroom. The challenge was to see who could pogo-hop the longest without falling off. I was the winner as it turns out, going for 435 hops!

With only a few brief breaks such as that, we returned home and I must say that this tour was one of my most intense and interesting operational ones.

In 1958, one of the more relaxed trips we made was to the Portland Rose Festival, so we proceeded up the Portland River to the festival. It was an intense few days of celebration with the Americans. Portland contains a significant number of ex-Canadians who became Americans. So we were royally entertained, and our hosts, a retired banking couple, took us ashore and showed us a grand time.

I was also made a connection with a woman who lived down there who asked if I was related to Eric Birch-Jones. I replied that in fact he was my uncle, and she said to me with wistful look and tone, "Oh, he was the most marvellous man."

I'll digress a little about Uncle Eric. He was a champion skeet shooter, a championship fly fisherman, he was captain of the Uplands golf team, and he was selling stocks and bonds and drove a yellow roadster, this being the 1920s. He was quite a figure, but of course the crash of 1929 would affect him like it did so many of us.

In December of 1958, I was posted to the east coast, Halifax again, and we decided that we would drive south to California, across the southern states and up the eastern coast to New Brunswick, and then over to Halifax.

With four kids under the age of 5, this was probably not the best idea. So we packed up our huge Chrysler station wagon, and off we went. The kids were constantly restless, so eventually we determined that we could get some peace by giving them sea-sick pills, which knocked them out for a few hours each afternoon.

The Chrysler performed admirably until we got to the east coast of the US, at which point we had an unhealthy sound coming from the differential. We found a Chrysler mechanic who quickly confirmed that we needed a new differential, but that he would have to order it from Detroit, since our car was quite old. This would take a few days, so we had to find a place to stay, and we found a lovely seaside cottage, and spent our Christmas in this southern state (the name of which escapes me…possibly Louisiana).

It wasn't until we were settled that I realized we were not in the white part of the county, and that the owner, a very nice black woman, had generously allowed us to stay there, because of course the lines were pretty clear back then, and she certainly did not have to accommodate us.

We got the car back all fixed up, and we went up the eastern seaboard through Washington, and up to the New Brunswick border, where we crossed in the snow and promptly got a flat tire. We fixed that up, headed off to Halifax, and apart from driving in the snow for the first time, we made it without a problem from that point on.

We had reserved a place in Halifax before we left Victoria, but that was to be temporary while we looked for a more permanent place.

We found a place in Jollimore, up on a hill whose steep street emptied out onto the highway. This was quite dangerous for our kids. So without even knowing it I found myself getting involved in the local community and I became a warden in the local church, and Angela was on the parent-teacher's

association, with both of us advocating for a cross-walk. The municipality agreed to the request, but said that the community would have to fund a crossing guard if we wished for one. I was unsure of how we could get money to pay for this, so I started working with the local community groups, of which there were two. As it turned out, they were about to merge as one group and be granted a budget of $100,000. There was an election for the president of the soon to be merged associations, and before I knew it I was elected! And so we got our crossing guard.

I was also settling into my new job as chief gunnery officer with the Admiral's staff, which was a very interesting role for me. I inherited the job from an old-style gunnery officer named Gus Little. We had had some real problems with the new 3"/70 gun, despite the fact that it was a remarkable piece of workmanship. It was twin barrel, 70 calibre, 210 inches long with a 3200 second-per-feet muzzle velocity that gave it a longer range than any other. In addition to that it threw out a tremendous rain of fire by firing the 25 lb shells at a rate of two per second, per gun.

The turret moved incredibly fast, so that it could compete with fighter aircraft. The trouble was that it had an incredibly complex loading system. This involved an inner ring, an idler ring, and an outer ring in order to get the shells from the ship to the guns in the turrets, which were often flying around.

The torsion controls were constantly strained, and the guns would often "smash," or grind to a halt.

So myself and the ordnance officer buckled down to try and solve the problem. After much coordination with the crews that were working on the re-fits of the ships that were getting these guns, and new engines as well, we finally isolated the problem to the torsion sensors, and by reducing their sensitivity we arrived at a reliable state. I'm pleased to say that from that point on, the ships that were re-fitted with these new guns operated without fail.

One of the lesser and more pleasant challenges I was given was to coordinate the review of Lord Carrington, the first lord of the admiralty, who was coming out on behalf of Bickers-Armstrong, the manufacturer of the guns, to review our progress on the solution, which other clients were having as well. I was given the duty of escorting Lord Carrington's wife, and a pleasant duty it was. My chief of staff, Commodore Landymore, said to me "Birch-Jones, make sure nothing goes wrong with her visit."

We had decided to take her on a tour with one of our "loon" vessels – lovely 70-foot boats that were sort of all purpose – of the Bedford Basin. The basin was of historical significance as it was where the Allied ship convoys would assemble during the war, out of reach of the German submarines that were just off the coast, deterred by torpedo nets.

I managed to dodge a bullet while talking to the Chief Petty Officer, the coxswain, who mentioned to me that he was quite interested in meeting the Admiral's wife, whom the coxswain was going to refer to as Lady Hamilton. I said to him, for god's sake, do not call her Lady Hamilton, call her "your ladyship" or anything else, but not Lady Hamilton! (Lady Hamilton being the mistress of Lord Nelson in the 1800s.)

Shortly after this time, there was a change of command within the naval command. Commodore Landymore was promoted to Rear-Admiral, and Mickey Sterling had been promoted to Commodore and

became the Commander of the Canadian Fleet, or CANCOM. Rear-Admiral Landymore arranged for the regional officers to provide a briefing to the new Commodore on the state of the Atlantic Command. I was able to say something in that briefing that quite interested the Admiral and his new CANCOM commander. In the second escort squadron this past year, from whence I had just come, we were able to fire more guns more accurately than the entire Atlantic command during that time. (I left out the "from whence I had come" part.)

My point was that there was no standard established for gunnery officers in the navy, and that this should be addressed. And they did, much to my delight and satisfaction, because I had gathered the statistics and made the case, and while I was quite far down the line, this was something that they acted on.

After being three years on the Admiral's staff and chomping at the bit to get back to sea, I was told on a Friday that I would be posted to HMCS Restigouche as Executive Officer (or XO) on a tour of the Mediterranean, beginning that Monday.

1962: Azores and Gibraltar

I spent the entire weekend with Lieutenant-Commander Fox, who briefed me on the duties of an XO, this being my first time in the role. I was drowned with information about the ship, and I was taking over from a very competent XO.

With six 257 class ships in the 5th Escort Squadron, we sailed Monday morning and headed for the Azores, our first refuelling stop. It was on this leg that I had my first disaster with the Restigouche crew.

The Azores were very hot when we arrived. Restigouche was carrying the squadron commander, so we were the alongside ship. The fuelling was going slowly, so I persuaded the captain to let the crew ashore for a visit to this beautiful island.

There were many tavernas and senioritas within the sight of the ship, so we instructed the crew to stay within hearing distance of the ship's horn, which would sound in two hours and signal the end of their shore leave. The rest of us officers remained on board, and settled into the heat.

No sooner had the crew reached ashore, when they realized that they could pawn off Canadian Tire money to buy drinks. Having found this useful information, a couple of the sailors came rushing back to the ship and whipped around the mess collecting all the Canadian Tire money they could lay their hands on, then proceeded ashore once more armed with fistfuls of these bogus bills. They had a merry time with the beer and the wine and the senioritas. So two hours later when we were finished fuelling and they were called back to ship, they were a very merry bunch indeed! The captain wasn't entirely pleased, but we sailed with our crew intact at least.

We sailed onto Lisbon and we had not been long there when a large black car with the Canadian Ambassador to Portugal arrived, and I sent a message to the Captain that we had a dignitary arriving. The ambassador got to the point quickly: the tavernas owners (and likely the senioritas) in the Azores had complained to the governor, who had in turned complained to the Canadian foreign minister, who sent for our ambassador to address this fraud that had been perpetrated. After about an hour, the ambassador left with sufficient replacement funds raised from around the ship's company. You can then imagine the reception I got when the captain got finished with the ambassador and came to blast me for my brilliant idea of shore leave in the Azores. And of course, the whole thing went down to the ship's cat before it was through, but I had to take the blame and responsibility for that.

We then proceeded to Gibraltar, where there was a big fleet undergoing the "British Dawn Breeze Exercise," as it was called, and it included most of the NATO nations including the French. The only exception to that was that the US Navy was not there. It was being run as a European fleet exercise with the British controlling it, with the headquarters staff based in Gibraltar. The difficulty of having sailors ashore in uniform in Gibraltar was that the same kind of bias used to exist in the big hotels there against sailors in uniform. In the first weeks while we were there, having left the Halifax shores in the middle of winter, and with the ice and snow sliding off the ship as we entered the Gulf Stream, we arrived in Gibraltar in a ship that was in somewhat of a rusty and stained condition. So the first week of warm

sunshine was spent frantically scraping and painting the ships side so that we one more appeared at our best.

During the course of this I decided that we should have a Wednesday Make and Mend because the ship's company had been working very hard. I organized a bus tour to go around the island and up to the peak. Several of the sailors saw that there really was not much to be seen other than the monkeys and the apes at the top of the island, and on the way down they got off the bus, found themselves a local grog shop and some loaves of bread, got some baskets and proceeded with this equipment ready for a beach party! They went off to try and find a beach for this party, and the beach turned out to be right alongside the RAF Merry quarters. After the usual beach party of copious bottles of wine and grog, and some bread to sop it up, they started wandering around and got into the RAF Merry Quarters, where they were promptly chased off by the RAF Police. So looking for something else to do, they then noticed the strong wire fence topped with barbed wire which ran down past the water's edge. It looked as though at low-tide you could wade out and walk around this fence. The three of them decided that this would be a great idea, but at this time the relations between Gibraltar and Spain were particularly bad and there was a half mile area separating the two states of Gibraltar and Spain. At the other end on the Spanish side, they had armed guards, and on the Gibraltar side they had the Gibraltar police. As these three bold lads stepped out onto the no-man's-land, and started across towards the Spanish side, the guards came out with their rifles pointed them at the sailors and said "Stop! You're under arrest!" Realizing that they had done something not too bright, they turned around and started walking back towards the Gibraltar side, at which point the Spanish guard began to fire at the feet of the sailors (on the ground beside their feet). One of them decided that this was not a very appropriate thing, and walked back towards the Spanish guard, pulled the rifle out of his hands, unloaded it, threw it back at him, and said "If you do that again, I'll kill you." He then proceeded to walk back. By this time the Gibraltar police were on their way out to arrest these lads who were way over their heads.

They were promptly arrested by the police and hustled back over the border and back into the arms of the welcoming police. They were then taken off to the Gibraltar jail. When we got the message that they had three of our lads in the local prison, I thought that the captain would literally take off into orbit because he was a red-headed Scot to start with, and he was absolutely furious. He told me to get into the jeep and see what I could do. So I went off to the chief of police to see what I could do, and the chief was very understanding, and somewhat intrigued by this particular incident. He asked me that if he released them, would they be suitably punished, and I can remember telling him that "If the captain could have his way, they'd be hanging from the yardarm right now. Fortunately, our regulations are shut so that that is no longer possible, but you can believe that they will be punished without any question." With that, he released them to me, and off we went back to the ship with these three somewhat subdued lads, wondering what was in store for them.

The captain ordered me to convene a board of inquiry and get the full evidence of what happened, and get it all written down and so on, so that he could decide to court marshal them, or shoot them or whatever else he could think of. In the mean time, once I concluded this particular task in the morning, I decided it would be a good idea to go back and thank the chief of police for rescuing these lads having now got the full story. So I got in the jeep and went back and thanked him for rescuing these guys. He

was rather astonished, and said "I think that this is the first time that I've ever been thanked by a ship for putting his sailors in jail!" Anyway, this turned out to put us in very good stead, because the story went around the fleet very quickly, and I can remember being greeted a night or so later in reception somewhere else by some of the British officers saying to me, "Very polite ship, lieutenant." And I could not understand what they were talking about until I realized that the story had gone around so fast. The long and short was that the captain gave them the maximum summery punishment which is the least damaging, because they would not have their seniority destroyed, they would not leave their badges, and they would not lose their jobs. A Court-Martial would have been necessary for that. Anyway, they were given the maximum summery punishment which I think at that time was a $500 fine and 30 days stoppage of leave. This is a fairly severe punishment, but nothing like the effect that a reduction in rank would have given them, which would have cost them tens of thousands of dollars in pay in the long run. That was the end of that particular incident, but I can remember that two or three days later the captain sent for me, and he had a strong Scottish accent saying "Number one, don't you think we've been a little harsh on these lads?" and I laughed to myself at the royal "we" because all of this was entirely the captain's doing as far as the punishment was concerned. So he decided that we would cancel the stoppage of leave, but we couldn't cancel the fine because it was already on its way to Ottawa, so they paid the fine and they regained their freedom. The British were quite amused by this incident rather than annoyed, and the story went around. We were quite a famous ship by this time.

Then we went out on our exercise leave of course, but I should mention that at one stage we were alongside a very large French destroyer and our sailors were somewhat horrified to see the petty officers coming out in their blue jackets and pounding them against the ship's side to get the cockroaches out of the jackets. This was a bit of startler. We put up extra rat guards on our lines to try and stop the cockroaches from coming on board our ship because they're not only quite large, but they're an extremely hearty bunch and virtually nothing kills them – even fumigation will always leave some of them.

After the exercise we went back to Halifax and had a short period alongside, and a bit of leave.

Then there occurred a big change within the squadron both for me and everybody else. We got a new squadron commander. The previous one had been Captain Nixon and his forte was very much ceremonial of the peace time variety and he expected meticulous respect being paid to him whenever he came onboard, and that we were always alert. The person who relieved him was Captain Tuffy McKnight, and they could not have been two more different people. Tuffy McKnight cared little for the ceremonial but cared a lot for operational efficiency and swift reaction to whatever circumstances happened at sea. In the harbour, he really could have cared less about the ceremonial, so I had to change my emphasis in dealing with the commander from the ceremonial to the operational. At the same time, I got a new captain and his name was Bernard Tilly. He has an interesting story: of French and Belgian extraction, he had served in the French navy at the start of WWII, when the French got overrun and the war for them was ending. But before being captured, Tilly and another French naval mate stole a tug in France (which in itself was no great achievement) and drove it across the channel to Dover, England. However, they managed to attach a nearly completed French submarine and tow it across to Dover and present it to the British. This got him a commission in the RNVR because he spoke

fluent English, and he spent the rest of the war with the British navy. After the war, he came to Canada and went to McGill. There he took a degree in Geology, I believe. When the Korean War started and Canada started recruiting naval officers from various nations, including ex-British officers, Tilly joined and became a short service member. By the time I was serving with him, he had risen to the rank of Commander.

Tilly was a man of considerable intellectual powers and knew a great deal about European history and the influence of history upon war, and war upon history. He and the squadron commander fortunately got along extremely well together; however, there was one particular difficulty in this regard. The squadron commander, Tuffy McKnight, was a man who could drink literally all night, get 2 hours sleep, and appear on the bridge the next morning showing no effects whatsoever. Captain Tilly was just the reverse. He couldn't drink anymore than 3 or 4 drinks without showing it in every possible way and so whenever the squadron commander was living on board and we were in harbour, I always knew that the captain would be in poor shape the next morning if he spent the night with the commander.

1964: Cyprus

With our new squadron leadership, we began preparations for the second Dawn Breeze exercise in the Mediterranean, two years after the first one. Again it was the same kind of exercise with the British running it; although this time, there was no French navy. We had the aircraft carrier with us, HMCS Bonaventure. After a round of briefings, we set off to sea for the exercise. In the middle of the exercise, we got a message from Bonaventure saying "We are being detached from this exercise. Proceeding to Halifax to pick up 300 trucks for the Canadian army and take them to Cyprus." The Canadian army had been sent to take up peace keeping in Cyprus now that a truce had been declared between the Greeks and Turks. So off the carrier went and just at this time, in very still waters off the coast of Casablanca, we got a submarine contact. It was a very firm, clear contact and the water at that time was isothermal right down to 600 feet so that sub had nowhere to go to find a layer to hide under. It was quickly determined that it was an intruder submarine. It wasn't a diesel nuclear sub as it was proceeding quite slowly. We were told to maintain contact and hold the sub down. However, we had no consort to assist us, no aircraft were sent, and the carrier Bonaventure was half way back to Halifax. We singlehandedly held this sub down due to the good water conditions and eventually a Portuguese P2V aircraft – which is a long range anti submarine patroller aircraft – was dispatched to aid us. However, there was no way that we could make contact with them on the radio, no matter what circuit we tried. So after some time trying with no luck, off the aircraft flew and there we were on our own again. The squadron commander was onboard, Tuffy McKnight, and one of the local rules that had been established by the NATO commander was that the first ship to force a Russian submarine, non-nuclear, to the surface after his air was exhausted, would be presented with a case of Jack Daniels' best bourbon. We, by this time, had been holding this submarine down for 24 hours. The way you do this is you use your sonars to tell what his range is from you, and what depth he's at. If the sub signals by a red flare that they are coming up for an emergency, you let them come up. But if he does not signal that he is in any distress of any kind, you can hold him down. So the captain and I shared the watches on and off, controlling this operation

and keeping the sub down. One time in my watch, he started coming up, about 3 or 4 in the morning – dawn was just about to break. On my orders we ran over the top of him, and the officer of the watch gave a startling yell as we did so. You could see a little light from the top of the tower. Now the officer of the watch didn't know that he was just about 150 feet down, coming up, and of course we went right over the top of him. He quickly went right back down. The submarine was very crafty. He didn't fly any high speed darts away, he very slowly made his way to the Casablanca coast line and the 100 fathom line because he knew that once he crossed the line, he'd be getting into shallow waters, and it would all be broken up. The sonar conditions would deteriorate several hundred percent immediately. For a single ship to hold submarine contact in bad weather conditions is difficult if not impossible. By this time, we held him down for 36 hours and he would be getting close to the end of his reasonable air time. It'd be getting pretty stuffy down there. He just quietly altered his depth, trying to find the depth where there was a layer, but there wasn't any. He was a very cool customer because he didn't try to do any dodges or high speed darts away from us. He just went about 3 or 4 knots preserving his battery life until he crossed the line, and then he did a dart and we lost him. It was an interesting 36 hours. We knew the sub was an intruder because he wasn't one of our submarines, so it was undoubtedly Russian. They were often there.

The intruder ships would stand off in the distance monitoring all of our signals and messages. The submarines were down below listening to what was going on up top. That's the way the game goes. At the end of this exercise it became evident that we were to stay behind and the rest of the ships were to go home, and we were to wait for the carrier Bonaventure to arrive. Of course, this took some time because not only did they have to cross the Atlantic one way, but they had to take several days loading these trucks and transports and then cross back to Gibraltar.

We went back along to Gibraltar and stayed there when the rest of the ships had sailed. Actually, we went to Lisbon first and stayed a couple of days there (under somewhat happier circumstances this time), and then all the rest of ships sailed, giving us 3 cheers as they left. We went from Lisbon around to Gibraltar, which is a very short run and of course, and we were then faced with the problem of what to do in the two weeks we had to wait for the Bonaventure to come back. The captain and I decided that our landing party badly needed more training and more experience, so I got a hold of the Colonel of the Battalion of the Middlesex regiment, which was the regiment in residence of Gibraltar at the time. I asked them if they would send us an experienced officer to help train up our landing party. So along came this major and he was a middle sized young man. He was very blonde and smoked cigarettes at the end of a holder and had a very rich public school type voice. You could see that the sailors didn't know what to make of this guy at all. However, when they found out that he had been in Malaysia, fighting the Malaysians, he had been in Kenya fighting the Mau Mau and in the Turkish-Cypriot fighting, he was really a cold hard killer. After awhile he managed to establish his reputation, but beforehand he had come down to give a lecture to the entire ship's company in the main cafeteria. I could see that he was going to tell some kind of story. He said, "When I was in the infantry school's instructor course, they always told us 'you must start off your lecture with a joke.'" So he said, "There was this kindergarten class and the teacher said, 'Now children, I want you to tell me a story using the word charming.' And so little Mary stuck her hand up and the teacher said, 'Yes, Mary?' and Mary said

'Yesterday I went home and my mother served tea in the parlour and I got to serve the cakes and it was charming.' 'Very good Mary,' said the teacher. 'Now Billy I want you to tell a story about whatever happened yesterday, but I want you to use the word charming twice.' So Billy stood up and said, 'Well teacher, I went home and I went into the parlour and there was my father reading the newspaper and my sister came home and she said 'Dad, I'm pregnant,' and he looked at her and said 'Charming, fucking charming.'"

This broke the sailors up, so whenever two sailors were passing in the ship they would say, "how are things?" the answer would always be, "charming."

That landing party really made great progress. They would get up every morning at 0600. and do an hour of PT and a half-hour run to get back into shape. There were about 30 sailors doing this. The deck officer shined up their equipment, painted their steel helmets all black, and made the webbing all dark. They then went up to the top of the hill to be abused by the Middlesex regiment as an unruly and hostile crowd, and they got pelted with everything they can think of including rocks. They enjoyed it and hoped that when we landed at Cyprus, they would have to do some kind of withdrawal duties. What we were concerned about was whoever we had onshore, we might have to get them off in a hell of a hurry because there was no guarantee that the Greek and Turkish troops would stop fighting as they said they would do. Of course the green line was going to be established. When the carrier, Bonaventure, arrived we sailed off from Gibraltar to Cyprus.

Now, if you look at a map of the Mediterranean, you'll realize that Gibraltar is at one end and Cyprus is right at the other. We had a 40 knot headwind the whole way making it a fairly uncomfortable journey. Off the coast of Libya, I was on watch and I saw this line approaching the ship on the radar, which was about 50 to 70 miles away. I couldn't understand what this black line was because it was a relatively cloudless day, and then suddenly the sun began to become obscured and we were in the middle of a sandstorm 75 miles off the shore!

It got into everything and you have to stop the ventilation fans from running for awhile because once the sand gets into the motor and elements like that you have some trouble. However, we managed to flush it all out and keep on going. That was my first experience of a sandstorm at sea.

When we got to Cyprus, we were too big to go alongside. So for a long, slow period, the trucks and jeeps and light armoured vehicles were landed by barge. In the meantime, we were being entertained by the Greek recipients, who by this time had miraculously acquired UN buttons and were all full of praise for the UN. They gave us a luncheon one day that was quite interesting: the Greeks maintained that they really didn't know what the UN troops were doing here because there really wasn't a problem in Cyprus, and that it was all blown out of proportion by the press. Although I never asked, I'm guessing the Turks would have said the same thing!

1966-67: Headquarters and Margaree

I was posted back to Ottawa in 1966, where I arrived to work in the newly created common training command, which included training directors like me from the air force and army. The political masters had decided to unify the three services, and it was not a happy time.

I was working with Colonel Stan Waters, who realized fully that the navy was going through a very tough time because of the unification process. In one Friday meeting, there were two of us naval commanders there and Col Waters said, "Well gentlemen, I realize that this is a difficult time for all of us to take in all that is happening within the services and headquarters, but bear this in mind is that in this vacuum that we're now living in, you as lieutenant colonels will be making decisions that 2 or 3 stars will not be making a few years from now." He was right of course, we were able to do all kinds of things. I can remember one of the things that I did was that I was dragging my heels on the subject of common service drill because the navy had never liked this foot stamping business that the army delighted in. So I was trying to escape this task of writing a common drill book for the three services.

Colonel Waters sent for me and said, "I want you to make sure that the air force has FN Rifles, they're drilling and working with old Lee Enfields. I want you to get rid of them and put the FN's into service with the air force."

So I said, "Yes sir" and I went off and did a fairly quick search to find out how many 303 rifles they had, and it turned out to be 30,000, so I went back to Colonel Waters and said, "Well sir, I've got the answer as to how many we need, but I don't have the answers as to where I'm going to get them!" He said, "Take them from the militia, they've got tons and they don't need them." So I wrote out an order to the army militia saying that they were to surrender 30,000 FN rifles and wrote to the air force saying they were to take on those rifles, and that they were to commence giving training and instruction for rifle drill using the FN rifle as per the army and navy drill books.

That went off all right, and then the dreaded moment arrived when Colonel Waters sent for me and said "You've been dragging your heels long enough! I want you to produce a common drill book for the three services including foot drill. I'd like an outline of what you plan to do in 30 days." I decided that what I'd do was send for an army Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), a naval chief gunnery instructor, and from the air force a warrant officer who looked after drill and ceremonial. I got an RSM from the Canadian guards, I got the chief gunnery instructor from Cornwallis, which was our basic training school in Nova Scotia, and one poor little air force guy who was about the mousiest guy I've ever seen. Alongside this very large chief petty officer with a great black beard who looked rather like Blue Beard the pirate, and this huge RSM who, when he stamped his feet on the floor, I felt sure he'd go right through.

Anyway, I told these three gentlemen what their task was and said, "I've obtained a fairly large office space for you which is about 40-50 feet long, and you're to go and practice foot drills there and giving orders and command, moving each other around until you produce a satisfactory foot drill that will be common to the three services and you have three weeks to do it. Good luck."

So off they went into this space, and shortly after that I started receiving complaints from the joining office for all the noise of thumping, crashing, yelling and shouting that was going on. However, it all went fairly well and they produced the manual, and that was the introduction of the common drill into the three services which I played a very reluctant role in. The next thing I remember is that Stan Waters sent for me and said, "I want you to go out to Winnipeg and visit the RCA and observe their winter manoeuvres in which the German army are going to take part, and bringing their equipment. You will spend a week with the artillery there and observe what is going on with the German army, particularly the mechanized corp." I said, "Sir, but I'm a Naval Officer." And he replied, "You're a Gunnery Officer, aren't you? It's the same thing. Tanks carry guns that are stabilized and so do ships. You know how those work, they're the same thing only on land."

I must admit, I spent a fairly interesting time watching the German army go through the manoeuvres in their very efficient looking tanks. They were the big T38 tanks at the time as I recall. One of the things I remember is that the Germans (who I thought would have learned their lesson well enough back when they were in WWII, where they suffered terribly during the USSR winters, particularly on the retreat from Moscow) well it turned out that their winter clothing was nowhere near adequate to survive a really strong Canadian winter. So they finally had to borrow Canadian army winter clothing in order to continue their exercise. They went back to Germany knowing one sure thing: that they needed a new outfit of winter clothing.

The rest of their equipment seemed to stand up well under the rigorous Canadian climate and of course 100 miles north of Winnipeg, at the Royal Canadian Artillery Headquarters Base, it was obviously a pretty severe winter.

I got a ride back in an army staff car, and on the way back along this prairie road highway we encountered heavy snowstorms and before I knew it we had a white-out and the road disappeared. I thought "How is this guy going to see if we're on the road or not?" Everything looked white right in front of us, but some way he managed to keep on the road all the way down, and my opinion of army staff drivers rose considerably when we arrived safely in Winnipeg.

That was my first experience of driving in winter in a severe snowstorm. Then I went back to Ottawa and again a few weeks later Colonel Waters sent for me and said "I want you to go out to the new training command headquarters." What was happening there was that in the unification process, the services were ordered to send their training headquarters staff to Winnipeg and set up a tri-service training staff of navy, army and air force. In other words, all of the training would be run from that area. It wouldn't necessarily be conducted there, but it would be run from there. This was particularly difficult for the navy because we lived on either coast – a long way away from Winnipeg and more than that, nothing, perhaps even the most basic training for the navy, was suitable in a place like Winnipeg.

However, off I went and I met two army colonels, one infantry and one armoured corps, who had a great deal to do with the setting up of this organization. I can remember one of the colonels telling me that his naval advisor had seen a lot of action during the war, and it turned out to be a fellow by the name of Ken Mackenzie, who had been a schoolie with me in Venture when I was a term lieutenant 15

years before. Only this time, he was there as a naval advisor. Of course he had a string of ribbons because he'd done all kinds of things during the war including fighting with the 8th Army in the desert. He'd been in Italy, Sicily, and so on. So he had a huge string of campaign ribbons but they were all from the army. And now he was a naval schoolie and knew nothing about the sea-going environment at all. He was a schoolie with a good soldier's background. So I tactfully said that they were a little short on the naval advice. The navy eventually sent some more naval officers to this place, but it never really got off the ground as a naval training command, and I think that they were able to get it back largely into Halifax afterwards for a brief period. Those were my days in the training field in headquarters, livened up considerably by the direction and force and antics of Colonel Waters whose mind was always working at 19 to the dozen, keeping up with what was going on.

What was going on at headquarters not really very pleasant. The chief of personnel was an air vice-marshal, whom even the air force didn't like, which says something. We were not too happy living under the thumb of this air vice-marshal. As the chief of personnel, he was our boss as well. Eventually a reprieve came through and I was appointed to command HMCS Margaree, a destroyer helicopter carrier of the original 205 class. So in the summer of '66 I was off to take command of my first destroyer.

But first, a story goes back to when I was a command gunnery officer in 1961 in Halifax, and it involves a totem pole called "Hosakwama." The story behind the Hosakwama was when the Canadian navy started to withdraw from its long association of training with Royal Canadian training establishments, including HMS at Whale Island where I had been as a long gunnery officer. A fellow gunnery officer by the name of Hal Lawrence living in Victoria, devised a plan that on the final separation between the RCM and the RN in reference to gunnery, that we should send an appropriate memento to be put in place at Whale Island to commemorate the more than 50 years of association. Several of the gunnery officers and the chief gunnery instructors that had been trained there over the years became admirals during their service in the navy. So a very famous Vancouver Island Indian artist by the name of Chief Mungo Martin was commissioned to carve an eight-foot totem pole called Hosakwama to commemorate this station. It was duly carved in Victoria and paid for by all the chief instructors and gunnery officers who had all trained there over this long period of time. It sat in HMCS Naden, close to a year or so before a destroyer could be found that would be going around to the east coast and would take it to Halifax. It eventually arrived in Halifax when I arrived about the same time as staff gunnery officer to the admiral. There it sat outside the gunnery school for about another two year period in the rain before a suitable group of ships and people that could properly escort Hosakwama to the UK-and handed over to the UK in a ceremony at HMS Excellent, the RN Gunnery School. A number of senior officers had volunteered to go and make this presentation including our admiral, Admiral Pullen, who was a gunnery officer. Also the vice-chief of the Naval Staff also said he would go. But one by one for one reason or another, they all fell by the wayside. Finally it fell to Commander Husher to be the presenter at this ceremony.

At the same time, I was designated to accompany Hosakwama on the destroyers of the 5th escort squadron who were going to Portsmouth and taking the totem pole over, and to help make the presentation. The navy decided that would get all of the Indians in the navy at the time together to accompany it and appear in their various Indian robes and do their dances during a pot latch between

the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy. Little did we know what chaos that would cause. But anyway, that was the idea. A bunch of about 15 or 16 of our aboriginal people from the various nations were assembled at the gunnery school in HMCS Stadacona, where we found to our astonishment that many of them knew very little about their tribal dances. So for a period of about several weeks, you would hear hands to Indian drill in the early morning while they practiced tribal dances, under the sponsorship of the gunnery school and some experts who could teach them. We found a young officer by the name of Bill Shed who was a sub lieutenant attending university at the time, a very bright young man. He was put in charge of this Indian detachment. The 5th Escort squadron was chosen to do this, but before we embarked the totem pole across the water, I got a phone call from Bill Shed and he said to me, "Do you have a little bit of spare cash you could round up?" and I said, "How much are you thinking of?" and he said, "Oh, about $25." So I asked what it was for and he told me that it was for some glass beads. I found the $25 and that was the end of that conversation. Eventually Hosakwama was embarked in HMCS Kootenay, and it was not long after we past Newfoundland and I was on my daily walk around the ship looking at Hosakwama who was wrapped in canvas by this time and was lying in the after-end of the ship, that I noticed underneath the canvas that initials were being carved in by our various sailors. So I thought, "I've got to put a stop to this." I got the three chief gunnery instructors to do night rounds, at least once a watch around the ship so that people wouldn't carve their initials into the totem pole! Having done this, I went on my rounds the very next day and I peered at the black metal face-plate attached to the pole and etched, not carved, but etched right into this plate were the words "Made in Japan."

I thought that was so funny that I said "I'll leave it." When Hosakwama was dug up, the RN would have found "Made in Japan"! Anyway, we got across to Portsmouth and we were astonished at our welcome. I should mention that at the same time that Olands brewery had donated 600 cases of beer for the potlatch, so we had a huge amount of drink for this occasion. When we got there the squadron gunnery officer, Willie Hayward, suggested that I should lead the parade through Portsmouth escorting Hosakwama. We had assembled a suitable guard for the parade, and Whale Island had lent us a gun carriage fully equipped with drag ropes and reverse drag ropes and we were to march through the streets of Portsmouth with Hosakwama on top of the gun carriage. This is the same type of gun carriage that is used in the royal funerals – not exactly the same but very much like them.

I declined this honour because I said, "Willie, it's all your responsibility because they're your men from the squadron, so you can take the parade." Little did I realize that Willie would have had a reunion with various gunnery types, more recently qualified than I, and he was in pretty sad shape the next morning when he had to march through the streets of Portsmouth accompanied by the Indians.

I should also mention that Bill Shed was either the nephew or the grandson of a Sioux Indian chief, and he had managed to obtain from either his uncle or his grandfather a full Sioux chief's headdress. Now if you've seen this in the movies, it's a marvellous piece of work made of eagle feathers and starts from the top of the head and goes right down to the ground. He was wearing this and the other Indians, armed with tomahawks etc., would stop and board various buses – much to the terror of some of the Portsmouth citizens. Portsmouth responded to all of this very well by giving a school holiday for the

occasion and all the kids were invited to this Indian potlatch. Again to our astonishment the BBC was there, ITV was there and even more astonishing, the French Television was there to record this!

Well when we eventually got to the parade ground, and the ceremony began with speeches and so on as to why we were there, and why Hosakwama was being presented and for what reason. At the same time, the captain of Whale Island had been draped in a rather smelly old Indian horse blanket, which was all we could find. And he was made to smoke the Peace Pipe, which is passed around to all concerned. The guards of honour of course were still standing there at ease, Willie Hayward was standing there with his sword resting on the ground. Willie, still feeling the effects of the night before and the long parade through the town, began to get very tired. He started to lean forward and his sword began to sink into the grass. I had this horrible vision of Willie toppling to the ground as he lent on his sword more and more, right in front of the BBC, ITV and the French television crews!

However, I managed to give a loud whisper to him, which seemed to bring him around, and he aroused himself sufficiently to keep himself awake through the rest of the speeches. At the same time, Bill Shed, wearing his uncle or grandfather's wonderful headdress, emerged with all these glass beads on his arm. He marched over to the Captain of Whale Island and held out his arm with all these beads, and said "Here, take back beads, and give back country."

The Captain accepted the beads with no promises of giving back the country. That was one of the highlights of that particular ceremony, and then the potlatch began! Well, the cooks at Whale Island had prepared an outdoor roast. Whale Island had a pig farm during the war, and they still had this piggery on the island, so they were roasting a couple of pigs over a great big spit. The trouble was that the chief cook had not bargained for the wind factor, and the wind was busy blowing the heat away from the pigs, which were slowly turning. The result was that the pork, which is rather important to be well cooked, was not being adequately cooked. By this time, everyone was into the British beer from Wattley's in barrels, and the Canadian stronger beer from Oland Brewery. General chaos developed as a result, not from the potlatch! However, we survived that day and it was quite a great gesture.

Of course, there is an aftermath to this story. Over the years Hosakwama stood at the entrance to Whale Island, and an island it is. Then in a great windstorm somewhere in the 1980's, Hosakwama blew down. By this time he was already rotting somewhat and the strong wind blew him down off his face plate, and there he lay on the ground. Very unfortunately by this time, HMS Excellent had been closed down and the gunnery school moved to Plymouth. There it sat as a government building but not in use at the time. One of our senior officers by the name of Freddie Ackland, who by this time was a Rear Admiral, was over in the UK with a squadron of ships and went over to Whale Island just to see the old place where he had qualified as a gunnery officer. There he found Hosakwama abandoned and laying on the ground, the RN having left without him. So what to do? He decided to bring it back to Canada. Eventually it got back from Halifax to Esquimalt where the son of chief Mongo Martin was asked to look at the debris and decide what could be done. He looked at it and said, "I'm sorry, but I believe that the wood is passed it. There's no way we can resurrect this, and to carve another one would be very expensive, much more than the original version." So it was decided that a smaller version would be

carved and it would be put in the chief petty officers' mess, having just been built right on the headlands at Esquimalt, where it now sits to this day, and that was the end of that.

That was the story that I remember very well, having had such a great part in it.

Back now to 1966, where my wife Angela and I had already made the decision that she and the family would stay in Ottawa, where we had just bought a very nice new house where they were very comfortable with good schools nearby. So we jointly made the decision that I would go down to Halifax and live onboard the ship where I had quite comfortable Captain's quarters. I arrived at the beginning of July to begin my command time. At that time Margaree was just coming out of refit, and of course as all new captains are, I was just as anxious as anybody to get out going. This required a process that we had to go through involving trials and work ups. The trial period was interesting, especially the power trial. This was the first time I'd commanded a ship at sea, so off we went.

By this time it was late August/September, and I can remember it was a nice night, and one of the requirements of a full power trial was to run at full power for about 4 hours in a straight line without deviating so that you would get a true measurement of the speed that you had obtained using full power.

The ship is not allowed to alter course for that time, as it would cause a deviation in speed measurement. We started the full power run at about midnight heading south in the open sea. It was a nice night, and I sat there in my captain's chair as the ship rushed through the water and there was nothing on radar and nothing in sight. There I was still sitting there when I asked myself why not call it a night. I told the officer on watch to call me if we encountered any shipping or there was a change in weather and so on. I can remember about 2 in the morning I got a call saying "Captain, sir, this is the officer of the watch," and I could hear the fog horn sirens starting to go. He said "The visibility has been reduced to about half a mile and it's getting thicker. We have several contacts ahead, perhaps 30 fishing ships. " I put on my dressing gown and went into the Ops room and looked at the radar, and the plot where I could see all these ships ahead. We were still rushing through the water at 30 knots, and the thick fog was setting in. So I stood there for a minute and saw everyone looking at me. I sort of turned around to see who they were looking at and, of course, there was no one behind me and I realized that they were all looking at me to say something or do something. I said "Phone the engine room and get me the chief on the line." So I talked to the engineering officer and said "I'm sorry, but we can't keep going at full power, we've got fog and a fleet of crawlers ahead of us so we'll have to abort and start later on." We started to slow down as quickly as we could and altered course to go around the fishing fleet. It was the first time that I realized that I was there to make all of the decisions and that everyone relied on me!

So the next morning we started north again, still in fairly thick fog. As the day went on, the fog began to thin and in our anxiety to get going we started up somewhat in low visibility but with the chance that we would run out of it, which thankfully we did. I can remember that to this day. This was a very proud and responsible time in my life as you realized that a lot of people depended on you and your judgment.

You can't dilly dally around, you've got to make decisions. Some captains failed this test to a degree but most of us were pretty good at it.

1969 – 73: CF Staff College and HMCS Provider

After my command of Margaree, I was posted to the CF Staff College in Toronto. Having spent only two years in Ottawa in our new home, we were to move the family again, much to the understandable dismay of everyone. We had not been in Toronto long when our marriage failed. Angela and the children moved back to Ottawa, and I took up residence in the staff college.

Although a very trying personal time in my life, my work presented great challenges and rewards. One thing I did not realize is that even though I was stationed at the Staff College, we would have some very interesting tours, particularly with the Strategic Air Command, SAC. The SAC had converted from the old Atlas Titan liquid-fuelled rockets of the early 60's to the solid fuelled rocket which literally could be fired off with one minutes warning. They were located in separate silos by themselves, totally without any human direction and in the middle of this ring of would be a central command post with two officers in it. That was the whole force, a far cry from the old Atlas Titan when they were liquid fuelled and there were three huge stages underground surrounded by hissing pipes and men running around in white lab coats with pistols strapped onto their hips. It was a really strange scene when you went to go down to see the old Titans.

The Minuteman was totally different: it was remote, it was silent, it was controlled. Most of the missile officers were working on their second or third master's degree while they sat down below there. It was a great contrast to see what had evolved over a 10-year period between the liquid fuel and the solid fuel rockets that eventually emerged with the minuteman.

Another tour we did which was equally as interesting was that we would spend a week in New York at the United Nations, with our good friend, Mr. Brian Erkhart, who was the secretary to the Secretary General. The Secretary General was our host and our guide, and in those days we still had a very good reputation with the UN for all of the peacekeeping we did in the past and were continuing to make. The interesting thing about the UN was that what we learned there was that the political side, which gets the most publicity by far, is really only about 15% of the work that they achieve. The other 85% that they do is working with all of the organization like the WHO and UNICEF, for which they get little or no recognition. The political side is a seen to be a failure, which it is, and the other side which seems to work better gets very little credit and publicity – when in fact it is the main effort of the UN in New York.

I think that the UN since that time has sunk even further in terms of credibility and ability with the growth of the developing nations that have emerged from the colonial period, and whom now form the majority within the general assembly. I think that the UN has a long way to go to regain its credibility, if it ever does. Other business that we made of equal interest was that we would spend time with the US Marines and inevitably spend another week with the US Air Force down in Montgomery, Alabama. By this time, Montgomery was getting in better shape than it was in the early 60's when I was down there

as a student, because much had been accomplished in the world of race relations. There was much disagreement as to how they would get schools non-segregated and so on. Now it was a calmer situation than I could remember from my earlier time there.

Again on the personal side of my life, I was learning to live on my own in a small apartment within the staff college. Being single and alone in Toronto, I found that there was lots of female company if I should desire it, and my weekends of course were spent driving up to Ottawa and staying with friends and visiting my kids. This was a trying period because they were by this time in their teens and, of course, teens have busy weekends. They had to make time for me and so on, so it became a real trial.

The years sped by and by this time I'd been at the staff college for 2 years, and I was chosen to be the deputy director. Now the deputy director wasn't a senior in rank, but on the other hand it was a senior position in that you were more senior than your equals. What I was in charge of was director of development and running the day to day, week to week programs each year. I had a staff of 5 officers putting the program together and making it run. It was quite a major step up in responsibility, away from the grind of the teaching and marking and measuring role which is the prime role and function of the Directing Staff position, although I was sorry to leave that aspect in one way, as it was fascinating to get to know these officers and their different types, personalities and backgrounds and watch them develop as they went into this program and learned new things. That part of it I found extremely interesting. I felt that I was doing good write ups; in fact, mine were amongst the best they'd seen in terms of accuracy and fairness.

When I got to be the deputy, I got to travel some more. I got to go and visit the RAF staff college in England, and I was wondering why we were naturally in plain clothes at that time and everybody who was a commander kept calling me "sir," when in fact I was just a three stripe commander until I realized that their deputy director was a group captain. So they surmised that I was a group captain, and I told them, "You can drop the sir, because I'm not one!" Anyway, we had a very welcome and pleasant visit there. Beautiful surroundings. It was based on a lovely old English home and estate and rolling grounds, I think there was about 30 acres of grounds there. I think it was Kent. The head of the staff college was an air marshal so again he was one step up from our air commodore. By this time we had in fact an army brigadier general who was the head of our staff college.

Those years spread by and I realized that if I was ever to get myself sorted out and start life anew again I would have to get away from Toronto. I phoned my career manager and asked him if I could go back to the west coast and go back to sea one more time. By this time I was in my middle 40's and that was a time when most people didn't get to sea unless they were in a very senior position. He said, "Yes, I think I can fix you up with a training destroyer," and I said that that would be fine. I really wanted to go back to the west coast because that was where I came from. So they were quite sympathetic to this and I sat and waited for my time at the staff college to run out, having spent about four years there.

Then we had the usual visit of the senior officers from Headquarters. I mean, really senior officers as we had the vice-chief of the defence staff, we had the chief of personnel, and those kind of people who were all 3 star ranks. First of all the vice-chief of defence staff came down and he said, "Well, we're

encountering some financial difficulties, and we're going to have to lay off 3 or more destroyers." I thought, "Oh, Heavens, there goes my destroyer." Then the chief of personnel came down and one of his staff who was a commander who did the naval side said, "Well things are looking up a bit and we're going to be able to promote 2 or more commanders this year than we thought." And so I thought, what with them laying up the destroyers and more commanders coming down the line, there goes my ship. Sure enough, I called my career manager the next day and said, "about my training destroyer..." and he said, "I was just about to call you. I'm afraid that's gone." I said "Well, get me back to the west coast, I don't care I just want to be back." He said "well, they have literally no commander billets there." Then he thought for a moment and said, "I don't suppose you'd consider being the commander of Provider?" I thought about it for 2 seconds because it was a junior commander's position and by this time I was about 8 years in. I said, "DONE!" And so it was arranged.

I went and saw my friend the director of the staff college, who'd been a classmate of mine in '64 and he was by this time was a group captain. I asked him if I could leave a few weeks early from my position, and if they could get someone to fill my position. It was agreed that I could leave at Easter time, and so I flew out to the West Coast and spent a few days in Vancouver with my brother and mother, and then I caught a plane down to San Diego. It was a champagne flight. There was practically no one on it besides me and I was travelling in uniform of course. So I had the undivided attention of two stewardesses who supplied me with champagne the whole trip down! I arrived in a fairly merry state of mind when I got to San Diego. Fortunately the ship was out and was coming alongside a few hours later.

By the time I arrived on board I had my wits back together and arrived and reported myself to the captain. It was a very fast turnover with the commander that I was relieving. So began my life in HMCS Provider. At that time, the captain was a fellow by the name of Andy Fulton who had been my mate at Royal Roads. He'd come up very fast and was eventually to become a vice admiral. The fellow gunnery officer had a marvellous personality and I found myself getting on and being very happy in that ship. We had the routine where would exercise out of San Diego on the water and train for a week or 5 days, and come back in for the weekend. We would spend as much as 2 months down there working with the Americans providing underweight replenishment. Because of the small size of our navy and the fact that we had 3 underweight replenishment ships, 2 on the east coast and 1 on the west coast, we were far more practiced at the evolution of fuelling and coming alongside than the Americans were. Many American ships and destroyers and cruisers did underweight replenishment as little as once per year. The result was they were extremely cautious in coming alongside and very slow to get the gear out. In fact, one time with a large American destroyer, a big 4500 tonne-er came alongside and the chief quarter master, fitted out in his gear and lifejacket, was seen on the fo'csle where you'd transfer the lines, sitting reading the US Navy Publication which told you how to connect up!

One time one heavy destroyer came alongside, and you always warned them when you're tensioning down, because when the span wire has been connected to a strong point in the destroyer, there's a 15 tonne pull as you tension down. This can not only heal the ship over a bit, it will tend to pull it in. This destroyer captain, not being very experienced in this area panicked and started steering out. Now the way that this 15 tonne tension line works this span wire that holds the trays that hold the fuel pipes that go across, there are usually 3 trays of loops that go across so that you can move in and out with the

loops taking up the slack. This got steered out and of course the span wire is like a star reel in a fishing reel. When it gets a certain amount of tension on it, it will automatically pay out and it will pull back in when the tension is off. This guy kept steering out and out and out and I yelled over the phone to him, "Slip it! Slip it!" but he didn't get the idea that the fuel lines weren't out at this time, just the span wire.

What we wanted him to do of course was knock the clip off and let the span wire fall in the water and we would reel it in. In actual fact, he paid no attention to this and just kept steering out and out. Finally we ran out of wire. It went up through the system just at the time he finally got the message to slip it and so with the span wire fully extended, which is about 600 or 700 yards of it, absolutely parallel, it fell in the water being attached to neither end, so we lost the whole thing. It takes about 24 hours to get a replacement span wire in and so then he had the nerve to ask to come around to the other side to fuel.

We told him to bugger off and find someone else! It was quite a surprise that the Americans were not nearly as good at underwater replenishment as we were simply because they had practiced it so very little and yet they were the initiators and the people who developed it during WW2 in the Pacific, and were the acknowledged experts of underwater replenishment because of their huge fleets and the huge distances that were in the Pacific war.

That was the kind of thing that used to happen which provided a certain form of liveliness. There was an additional aspect of working with the Americans that added a certain amount of colour to the ship. Not having any Sea King Helicopters on board at the time because they were all on the east coast, we had a large hanger capable of carrying three Sea King helicopters. What we used to get were USNR Helicopters who would fly on board as a detachment. They would fly from San Francisco and quite often they would fly up to Esquimalt and fly on board as we were heading out to sea. They were USNR naval reserve pilots but most of them had been regular US navy helicopter pilots. All of them by this time were life-timers. They were a pretty lively bunch and they loved coming aboard the Canadian ships, because we had liquor on board! Although they didn't drink much at sea and certainly not while flying, they made up for it when we got into port. They were on the whole a pretty lively addition to the ward room. We had three helicopters which meant we had about eight pilots, because they fly with two, and the crewmen. It was always a very happy combo when we had the USN helicopters onboard.

I can remember one time when we were leaving Victoria for San Diego and we were going down the straits of Juan de Fuca, and we were taking on an aircraft and having it land on the flight deck which is particular evolution. Of course you have to have full firefighters and gear and that sort of thing, it operates like a full carrier. There was a flight deck officer who got the helicopters down. This is not the haul down system as we didn't have the haul down, but the free landing system, so they used to have to fly on and land under the direction of the deck landing officer who in fact was a Canadian navy pilot. We were proceeding down the straits when this young air force doctor who had joined us for the trip said, "I need to talk on the radio." So I said "Not now doc, we're busy landing an aircraft." And he said, "I think we've got a case of Hepatitis C on board." I said, "Ok, go on the radio and tell the PO to get you through to the command surgeon and do what you've got to do." They were told to land this guy immediately and they would pick up Hepatitis shots, come on board, and everybody was to have one. The helicopter immediately after landing was given this patient with the doctor who flew off back to Esquimalt, which

was only a few miles away by this point. He saw the command surgeon and possibly some of the other doctors and picked up a whole lot of vaccine and flew back on board all within a 45 minute period. This caused a certain amount of excitement and then of course the doc had the job of giving the entire crew, including the Americans, a shot in the ass. When he was on his 240th bottom, one of our officers decided he'd pull a bit of a skylark. He came flying down with a message for the doctor from the command surgeon, "Cancel program: Hepatitis C not proven." In actual fact, it turned out to be the case that it was, so we all got a shot and nobody got sick. This is the sort of thing that would happen regularly.

I can remember another time when we had a young sub lieutenant on board. And when I say "young sub lieutenant," he was an old sub lieutenant because he was about 25 years old. His name was Roger. This guy was a nearly qualified lawyer, but he got fed up with it and decided that he wanted to join the navy. He was a real orangutan of an individual. He was also the ship's diving officer. He was a clearance diver. We used to do an exercise for man overboard, which with a tanker of course was a little more difficult because of its size and speed. We could go 20 knots but it took us quite awhile to stop. So we had an exercise period whenever we were at flying stations, we would dress two divers in wetsuits and they would standby for a "helicopter crash" in the water. We would make it more realistic by getting someone in the wetsuit to be pushed out of the helicopter from a height of about 20 feet into the ocean. There he would be left to swim around until we picked him up. Of course the sooner we picked him up the better the score in this exercise. So whenever Roger had been acting up, I would say, "We're going to have a simulated helicopter crash and you're the crash!" However this backfired on me because Roger rather enjoyed being dropped into the water! The only time he felt somewhat uncomfortable was when he saw the tanker coming at him at 20 or 30 knots, getting closer by the minute. It was a race between whether the zodiak would get there and pick him up first or we would get here.

The divers would be already dressed in their wetsuits and they would jump into the zodiak, the zodiak would be dropped down close to the water and by this time we'd got up to 20 knots. This would be about 3 or 4 miles away that the crash had taken place. The zodiak would be dropped into the water with the outboard motor on the back, dry and running. As soon as they hit the water, they would increase the speed and zip away from the boat. We could pick up a man from a mile or two away in about 2 and a half minutes. It was a really fast procedure. It was a great system but it required everybody to be dressed and ready. The chances of survival wouldn't be a lot longer than that in some waters, so we'd have to get here very quickly.

Those were the type of things that we did, as well as long cruises where we would do these exercises where we were the underwater replenishment ship, often for the whole fleet. We would exercise with the Americans in Pearl Harbour, and the Australians and New Zealanders would join us and then we'd all move onto Fiji, from there we'd move onto Sidney Australia where the Aussies would run the exercises. Then we would go over to New Zealand and the little N.Z. navy would run the exercises. These were some really interesting little trips in that they were not only interesting for the naval point of view, but they were interesting from the point of naval business and were really a lot of fun. We took a 20-piece naval band with us on one deployment to the Pacific, specifically for the benefit of the Aussies and New

Zealanders. This was a first-class band, I mean it was very professional. It could do the big band sound and for that time in the 70's was still very popular. They were an enormous hit in Australia and we kind of rode on their success. The sailors' behaviour when we were in Australia and New Zealand was exemplary.

I happened to be legally separated by this time, so I was a single person. I happened to be lucky enough to fall in with the society of a well-known Sydney newspaper reporter. She asked me if I was married and I said, "No, I'm separated." So she said, "Well, you don't mind having your picture in the paper now do you?" What had happened to some Canadian officers in the past was that they had gotten themselves pictured in the paper surrounded by Australian women, which in turn got back to the wives and got some pretty short notes back in reply. I told her I didn't mind and she said, "Well, I'd like you to come with me to openings of restaurants theatres and evening do's because I have to report on them. It's always nice to have someone to accompany me." So that started a romance in Sydney which lasted the whole time we were there. Of course, I got taken out everywhere for free! It was very nice.

We went down to Melbourne, luckily enough during Melbourne Cup, which is a time when Australia stops dead for the entire week. The Canadian high commissioner gave the captain and myself a ticket to the upper lounge of the grand stand where they serve all day long, and there must have been 200-300 feet of food. All kinds of fresh seafood of one kind or another and champagne flowing all day long.

You'd go up in the grandstands for the start of the next race and the pretty little Aussie girls would come along with pouches, take your bet and if you won, she'd come back with a pouch full of money. That never happened to me of course but placing your bets was always a pleasant experience! There was some compensations on these trips and that was one of them.

Then from Melbourne we went on to Auckland where I had met the people that I had gone on an island trip with when we were in Fiji who were a young Kiwi couple, and a large but pleasant looking Kiwi girl that went with them as their friend. So I met up with them again in Auckland and had an enjoyable stay with them. Then from Auckland we went to Wellington and we took with us three senior members of the New Zealand communications world. One was a senior newspaper editor, another owned a radio station and the third one was a Canadian who was the head of New Zealand TV. At that time we had a Russian electronic intelligence ship following us. Now, why they were following us lord only knows, because our communications and radar equipment was fairly rudimentary. We pointed this out at sunset as we were going from Auckland to Wellington on a trip through the islands. It was just about sunset and the Captain and I were dining these guys in the Captain's cabin, and then we went up on the bridge and the captain said "Look there's that Russian ship," and they said "Oh that's just a Russian crawler. It couldn't possibly be following you." He said, "Watch!" so we reversed course 180 degrees and went around back the way we'd come. Sure enough the turned around and followed us. Then in another mile or two we reversed course once more and we followed on and the turned around to see them following us again. This intrigued the Kiwis to no end and of course it hit the press in a big way the next day. He was quite out of whack that this Russian ship was in their waters.

So there was a lot of publicity about this the day we arrived. When we gave our reception in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, all of the ambassadors that are there were invited. I was told to look out for the Russian ambassador and bring him up to the flight deck. So when he got there I escorted him up to the flight deck and the hanger where we have the big parties. By this time we had the swing band playing all the old tunes and so on. There were about 200-300 people there. The ambassador said, "May we go out on the flight deck?" and I said, "Oh certainly sir." He said, "Now where's that Russian trawler?"

So even the Russians had a sense of humour. By this time the engineer officer had been flown back to Canada to set up the refit and was going to return to the ship before we sailed but he was held up by the refit conference, so we decided that we were going to sail without him until headquarters said, "No way are you going to sail without him." So we had to wait an extra half day for him to arrive back. All of the people that had come down to see the ship off having been ushered ashore after saying goodbye and so on, were then invited back to come aboard for another few hours. We finally sailed and went on our way back to Esquimalt. Of course, by this time, I had spent about 2 and a half years in Provider waiting for Chesty Norton, my old friend and shipmate from subbie days and naval college, to retire as a queens harbour master, as I was supposed to be the next one, but Chesty had decided that he was going to retire early and he couldn't make up his mind as to when he wanted to retire and what he wanted to do. So he was kind of foundering around until finally he decided that he was going to retire, and I was relieved after two and a half years in Provider, 6 months of which I was the captain.

I spent a very happy time in that ship. I was 48 going on 49 so my last sea time was one of the most enjoyable in many ways. This was 1974. Hawaii, Australia, New Zealand cruises shortly after that when we got back to Esquimalt, provided we go into refit. The captain left and I became the active captain even though we were in dry-dock mode. During this time I was sitting up in the captain's cabin doing the paperwork and so on and the quarter master came up to me from about 3 or 4 decks below and said, "There's a Mr. Woods to see you, sir." And I said, "I don't know a Mr. Woods," and he said, “Well he knows you and he's dressed in a blue battle dress jacket." So I realized that he was a fleet auxiliary, who drive many of the auxiliary vessels in the harbour, and they wear a blue battle dress jacket and outfit. Anyway, I said "Send him up," and this big fellow about 45 and good looking came up. He said, "Hi Peter." And I thought I might as well be honest because I didn’t know him and said, "Well obviously you've got the advantage of me, you know me but I don't know you." He said, "Don't you remember? You and my brother used to ride horses in my father and mother's stable in North Vancouver before the war. I was 11 years old and I used to hold the horse's rein while you were getting on." I remembered this little kid holding onto the reins about 40 years before! He introduced himself as a fellow by the name of Malcolm Woods. So he was just freshly separated from an affair which had parted him with most of his savings and his car and he was somewhat in a distraught state. I remember his mother and father as being very handsome people before the war and in fact they were not only handsome but notorious. Anyway, I felt sorry for this guy and having lived on my own for about two years now, I was fairly experienced in the rights of bachelorhood and how you survived. It was clear that this chap didn’t have a clue how to survive or meet people or anything. He just moved into a small apartment so he invited me over for a drink and a meal, and I went over to him and gave him some advice as to how he

should get out and around and mix with people and so on. I said, "Make a life for yourself because that is what you've got to do under these circumstances." After awhile, one day I said to him, "you know, at the present time I have a lady friend over in Vancouver and I'm going over there each weekend. Really, I should get to know more Victorians more because I come from Victoria and I don't want to just live in the naval circle. I want to establish myself as a local Victorian."

He said, "Look, you've been very good to me. I'll tell you what. I know someone who knows everybody in Victoria. She lives in a little cottage down by the beach and I'll ask if we can go around and see her one evening." So he phones Sonia, who had met him under amusing circumstances and introduced him to the girlfriend who parted him from all his money. So anyway, he phones Sonia and asks if he can bring a tanker captain around, which I was at the time, but he neglected to say that I was a Naval Tanker captain. Sonia had just gotten divorced a year or so back from her naval officer husband and the last thing that she wanted to see was another bloody naval officer. Anyway, we set off one evening for Cadboro Bay where Sonia lived, but I went first to Cordova Bay, and so we went to back over to Cadboro Bay eventually arriving an hour late. Not an auspicious beginning.

We came into this little cottage down by the water and sure enough, Sonia was a very pleasant lady. For reasons that to this moment I will never understand, after about 5 minutes of pleasant opening conversation, I blurted out that I had a lady friend in Vancouver. She said, "Of what possible interest is that to me?" and I said, "Well, I just thought that I'd make the position clear." Why I said that, I'll never know. So we got off to a rather rocky start. Not only was I late, but I was another bloody naval officer. I had also blurted out about my lady friend in Vancouver.

Needless to say, our initial meeting was not a success. There was another party a few days later, and even though Sonia had made it quite clear that she really didn't want to see me again, I spoke to a mutual friend Gladys who said, "Well, if I were you, I would persevere. I'm inviting you to the party and she can't say no to that." So I went to the party and I managed to repair some of the damage. After that, things went fairly swiftly. By July 1st, we had decided that as soon as I was free to marry – I had been waiting out my three year divorce period – we would do so.

And marry her I did.

Annex A: The HMCS Crescent Mutiny

By: Peter Birch-Jones

Published in 1991

HMCS Crescent

The China expedition of 1949 and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking

By Peter Birch-Jones

The recent return of our ships from the war zone in the Persian Gulf reminded me of another trip in another time to another war zone. On that occasion the war zone was China and it was a civil war.

It was a Friday evening in late January 1949. George Wither and I, the two "subs", were sitting in the ward-room of *Crescent* contemplating a weekend of Officer-of-the-Day duties. Being the youngest and newest officers, it was naturally expected that we would do the weekend duties before setting out from Esquimalt on Monday with *Ontario*, *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan* for exercises in the Caribbean.

Just then, the duty signalman appeared with a message for George to decipher. Half an hour later, George rushed in and said, "I need the ship's Jeep right away to deliver this to the Captain at his home." He then added, "I shouldn't be showing you this, but as you're the navigator, you'd better see it."

The message was from Ottawa, and read something like this: "Crescent's participation in winter excercises is cancelled. You are to prepare for Far Eastern deployment and proceed with all despatch to Shanghai where you will place your ship under the direction of the Canadian Ambassador to China, T. C. Davis. Purpose of the mission is to remain top secret until you have cleared the harbour."

George and I didn't get much sleep that night. On Saturday all officers were recalled and told by our Captain, Lt. Cdr. David Groos, that the cruise was cancelled and we were going instead to China.

Meanwhile, other things were happening. We had embarked 25 naval reserves for the Caribbean cruise. We were instructed to transfer them to Ontario; we would receive 25 RCN personnel in return. The Master-at-Arms in *Ontario*, not having any idea what it was all about, gave us 25 men all right; but some had conduct sheets that ran to several pages. This was to become significant later.



The author of this article served as a sub-lieutenant in HMCS Crescent at the time of her deployment to China in 1949.

On Tuesday we were alone at the jetty and busy taking on stores, and by Wednesday we were on our way at 20 knots to Pearl Harbor, the first fuelling stop. After two more fuelling stops — the Marshall Islands and Guam — we arrived at Shanghai on February 25, three weeks after leaving Esquimalt. This was about as fast a crossing of the Pacific as a destroyer could make in those days with no underway replenishment.

At Shanghai we proceeded to a buoy in the middle of the river . . . and then our problems began. Canadian warships were simply not equipped for extensive periods at anchor or at a buoy. We had one motorboat, and one whaler that was of little use in these tidal waters with four-knot currents at times. We were entirely dependent on the one motorboat and as boats officer I was frantically running temporary repairs to its hull and trying to keep

the overworked engine going.

Then came the next surprise. We were politely but firmly informed by Vice Admiral Madden, flying his flag in HMS L*ondon*, an ancient but elegant eight-inch cruiser, that we were now part of the 8th British Destroyer Flotilla. We would do rotation duties in Nanking with RN destroyers *Cossack, Consort* and *Concord*. We would relieve *Cossack* in Nanking in two weeks. In the meantime we would conform with British routines. The latter did not involve much change, but they did not sit well with our ship's company. We were literally under the eight-inch guns of *London*, with her duty officers peering down on us with their telescopes.

At that time, Chiang Kai-shek's son was the mayor of Shanghai and martial law was in force with a curfew from dusk to dawn. Those who broke the curfew got arrested if they were lucky, and shot if they were not. Even so, the British, Canadians and Americans were giving luncheons and dinner parties as if there were no tomorrow. Everyone seemed to realize that the Communists were going to win. It was only a question of how soon and how bloody the takeover would be.

These social activities caused us some problems. The only way we could grant shore leave after dark was by organizing small groups to use diplomatic vehicles that were exempt from the curfew. We were able to organize parties for about 30 men per day. But we had a crew of 167 — and Canadian sailors much prefer to go their own way ashore rather than be restricted to "organized" affairs.

The 13 officers, on the other hand, were run off their feet because the captain insisted that we accept all invitations. As the first Canadian warship ever to visit Shanghai, we were a novelty. Hence the flood of invitations. The international settlement was running more or less along pre-war lines, even though it was soon to disappear forever.

At last, to everyone's relief, we set off for Nanking — with a Union Jack painted on either side of the hull. The Nationalists, who held the south bank of the Yangtze, and the Communists, who held the north bank, had both agreed to allow British warships to transit the river by day as far as the capital, Nanking, stopping overnight at an anchorage called Kiangyin.

Our supply officer, not knowing what we faced in terms of food shortages, had purchased large amounts of fresh produce which he had to stow in and around the various gundecks. "Pay, you're making my ship look like a garbage scow!" growled the Captain. In addition, the Captain had agreed to transport a large quantity of beer in heavy quart bottles to the British embassy.

With a Chinese pilot embarked, we proceeded down the Wangpoo to the Yangtze delta where we took on another Chinese pilot. Though the Yangtze is several miles wide in places, its navigable passage is only about 200 yards. After a long day, we anchored at Kiangyin and darkened ship.

Next morning we continued upriver to Nanking. We arrived alongside Cossack in mid-afternoon and began a turnover of duties. We were reponsible for the safety of 27 Western embassies whose staffs, predominently male at this stage, would embark if they had to evacuate Nanking. If necessary, we were to lay down a creeping barrage by firing over the embassies, which were pretty much clustered in one area. To me it all sounded a bit hairy, but that was the British plan and we were stuck with it.

On March 14 *Cossack* departed and we were left to moor alongside two steel pontoons attached to the riverbank. The berth required the use of both our brows (gangways), one to the pontoon and the other from the pontoon to the shore. We had arranged for the British embassy to pick up their beer which we had off-loaded to the shore. As Officer of the Day, I was left to make sure it was guarded.

That evening the officers all went off to a reception at the Australian embassy. Groups of Nationalist soldiers, all armed, began strolling by and staring enviously at the ship, and the stack of beer. We had an armed sentry on the quarterdeck, another at the brow, and one on the foc'sle. There was one more on shore to watch over the beer. As he was leaving for the party, the Captain said, "I'm not leaving that chap all alone out there guarding the beer. Double up on that sentry position."

I sent for the Coxswain and told him of the extra commitment. "The men aren't going to like this, sir," he said, which I thought was a rather unusual comment. But I had an idea.

"Put it to the duty watch. If they want to turn to for about 45 minutes, we can have all the beer back on board and eliminate the need for two extra sentries." The Coxswain returned in short order. "They want to bring it back on board, sir." And so it was done. There were the usual



Above: HMCS Crescent was built in the UK in 1944 and acquired by the RCN the following year. She was 362 feet overall , could steam at better than 30 knots, carried four 4.5-inch guns, and had a complement of 167 men.

remarks about "the bloody Brits and their bloody beer", but that seemed quite normal.

By this time (2000), there was a heavy downpour. At 2100 I did rounds, noting only that it was a continuing deluge. At 2200 a dripping Petty Officer informed me that the brow to the shore had fallen into the river. So I turned out the long-suffering duty watch again and we hauled the brow out of the river. The Chief Shipwright nailed on some planks to make it longer, but how to get it back on the riverbank? The downpour and tide had caused the river to rise by about four feet and I was reluctant to order anyone to brave the current and steep bank. Just then, as luck would have it, the officers returned from their party and were promptly thrown heaving lines. Up went the brow again, and everyone repaired on board.

Later as I went through the messdecks, the men were sitting on benches and talking in subdued tones. I remember thinking how unusually quiet the ship had become.

Next morning, shortly after seven, I noticed an unusual number of Chiefs and Petty Officers walking about on deck. Soon, every Chief and PO was on deck, but no one else —even after "hands fall in" was piped.

I sent the Coxswain to find out where the men were, and he soon returned to tell me that a large number of the ship's company had locked themselves in the forward messdeck by lashing down the clips of the watertight doors. I reported this to the First Lieutenant, who came down on deck, and then went to report to the Captain.

At 0830 the Captain sent for the officers and we all crowded into his cabin. "Can anyone explain this?" he asked. We all had to shake our heads.

At 0905 the pipe "clear lower decks" was made, with no response except from the Chiefs, PO's and Leading Seamen. By now it had been ascertained that 83 men had locked themselves in up forward, virtually every Able Seaman and Ordinary Seaman in the ship. At 0910, by using a loud-hailer through a scuttle, Able Seaman Donald Rudolph was asked to come to speak with the Captain. Rudolph was one of those large perpetually cheerful

sailors who is popular with officers and men alike.

This prompted a paper to appear on the outside of the watertight door listing complaints and demands. In essence they said:

1. Relieve the Executive Officer;
2. No veto on Welfare Committee motions;
3. A routine that is Canadian, and one that won't be changed every few days;
4. Too many sentries for wet canteen;
5. More consideration from the captain;
6. First consideration should be the ship's company, not social functions.

(Item four was written on the mistaken impression that the beer on the bank was for a wet canteen ashore and not for the British embassy.)

At 0930, the Captain went to the messdeck and told the men he would see individual requestment later in the morning but would never agree to collective representation. He then said he would pipe "hands fall in" at 1000 and expected everyone to be present.

This was done, all hands fell in, and the normal work routine resumed. The mutiny was over. It had lasted two hours.

As promised, the captain arranged to see individuals "to state a complaint". By 1100 about 50 men had lined up around the foc'sle and outside the captain's cabin. By lunchtime he had seen about a dozen, and after lunch the rest decided to pack it in. No one else came forward. Other events were soon to overtake the crisis.

A few days later, we were astonished to learn that Athabaskan two weeks earlier had had a mutiny in Mexico remarkably similar to ours. As well, our aircraft carrier *Magnificent* was to have a mutiny three weeks after ours while in the Caribbean. There was a great deal of speculation about a navy-wide conspiracy, so similar and so close together were these three events. But the subsequent Commission of Inquiry— under Admiral Rollo Mainguy — found that no connection or link could possibly have existed, that the three "incidents", as well as an earlier one in the *Ontario* (from which 25 seamen had been transferred to our ship, remember), resulted from the difficulties that the RCN as a whole was experiencing in this postwar period.

Back in Nanking, we now turned our attention to learning about the state of affairs at our embassy. The First Secretary was Chester Ronning, a China scholar and former Professor at Peking University. He had spent his life in China and was respected by both sides in the present civil upheaval. He was reputed to be able to speak most, if not all, of the country's 57 major dialects.

Ronning's secretary was a young Chinese national, Tessie Wong. She was an outgoing, pretty girl who spoke very good English and loved everything Canadian. She was so proud that a Canadian ship was in harbour, took delight in everything Canadian, and wanted so much to come to Canada. Unfortunately, in spite of Chester Ronning's best efforts, she was unable to get out of the country before the Communist takeover.

At the British embassy, among the various attachés we met was the assistant naval attaché, a Lt. Cdr. J. S. Kerans. He was a dark and rather brooding man, spending his last two years as a passed-over two-and-a-half before mandatory retirement at 45. Little did we know he was soon to achieve fame and recognition.

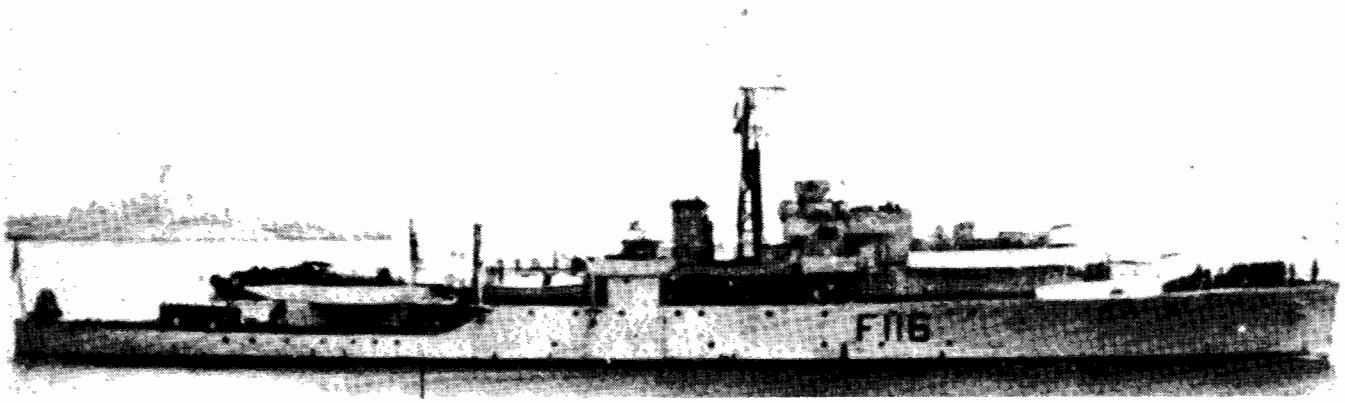
Also, we were to learn that our purpose in Nanking was not to protect embassy staffs from the Communists when they would inevitably arrive, but from the 150,000 troops of the clearly losing Nationalists who by this time were virtually starving.

Nanking was a pretty dreary place for the ship's company. There was absolutely nowhere to go. A field close by offered a rough softball diamond, and a dismal little hut became the wet (beer) canteen at night. That was it.

One event occurred that was to haunt me for months. A large junk crowded with people had been trying to cross the river to the north bank. The wind had dropped and the tide took over forcing the junk alongside *Crescent*. Out came boathooks and they gave every indication of waiting for some wind to continue the crossing. The British had expressly told us never to be seen taking sides or giving succour to Chinese nationals. So reluctantly we cast off their hooks and lines and the junk began to drift downriver to the accompaniment of heart-rending pleas and much crying from the women and children.

A few days later when recounting this incident to our British confreres, they told us two things. First, we had done the right thing, and second, the entire junk family would likely have been shot for trying and failing to cross to the north bank. This brought home not only the horrors of war but the particular ferocity of a civil war.

The rest of our time in Nanking, about a week, passed



***Above:** HMS Amethyst arriving at Plymouth in November 1949 following action in the Yangtze River. She was a sloop, or frigate, slightly smaller than a destroyer, and specially designed for Far Eastern service.*

uneventfully, with the Communists massing their armies on the north side of the river. On March 23, we were relieved by *Consort* and proceeded downriver. We were the last warship to get out without coming under fire and sustaining casualties.

On our way down from Nanking, and while anchored at Kiangwin, all hands were allowed on the upper deck "for air" after dark. A 30-day truce had ended and the war had resumed in earnest. There was much firing and tracers visible all night. Next morning, we sailed between a Nationalist warship and the target she was bombarding. She ceased firing, saluted by bugle as we passed, and resumed her bombardment after we cleared.

On March 25 we rendezvoused with *Cossack* and proceeded to Hong Kong arriving March 28. It was the first time the ship's company could go ashore and enjoy themselves. For the next several days, we exercised with *Cossack*, and at the same time we got to know the officers and ship's company of another British ship, A*methyst*, Lt. Cdr. Skinner in command. *Amethyst* was a sloop with three twin 4-inch gun mountings, somewhat smaller than a destroyer.

By now we were into April and awaiting word of what came next. The Communists hadgiven notice that they intended to cross the Yangtze on April 12, but this was postponed twice. Vice Admiral Madden became concerned about relieving Consort which was running short of supplies. He ordered *Amethyst* to relieve her by April 20.

On April 14 we escorted *Amethyst* to the mouth of the Wangpoo off Shanghai and conducting excercises en route with her for two days before returning to Hong Kong. *Amethyst* proceeded up the Yangtze, anchoring overnight at Kiangwyn. The next day she was continuing up the river when suddenly, at a place called Rose Island, the Communists opened fire from the north bank with mobile shore batteries and anti-tank guns.

The Communists concentrated their fire on the bridge and the forward steering position. The result was that the Captain was critically wounded, the first lieutenant wounded, and in the wheelhouse, the Coxswain killed. In the confusion, *Amethyst* ran aground on Rose Island.

Despite his injuries, Lt.Cdr. Skinner decided to land 60 of his men, many of whom were wounded As they attempted to reach the south bank they were shelled and machine-gunned. However, most made it and got back to Shanghai. Once the Communists saw that the ship was grounded, they ceased firing. At this stage, Amethyst was down to only four officers who were not wounded. The captain was dying and the ship's doctor was already dead.

In the meantime, *Consort* sailed from Nanking and arrived on the scene at 1500. She immediately came under the same devastating fire. The coxswain was killed in the wheelhouse and the ship had to be steered from the tiller flats as she attempted to take A*methyst* in tow.

It must be appreciated that the quarter-inch plate of destroyers and sloops had the resistance of tissue paper to anti-tank guns. At that range the shells went through the ships sides, killing personnel and destroying equipment inside, and continued out the other side. *Consort*

lost A and B guns, with both trainers and layers killed, leaving only X and Y guns which the gunnery officer was directing from aft in quarters firing.

The captain of *Amethyst* advised *Consort* that the situation was hopeless and to withdraw. This *Consort* did reluctantly, returning to Shanghai to land her dead (10) and wounded (4).

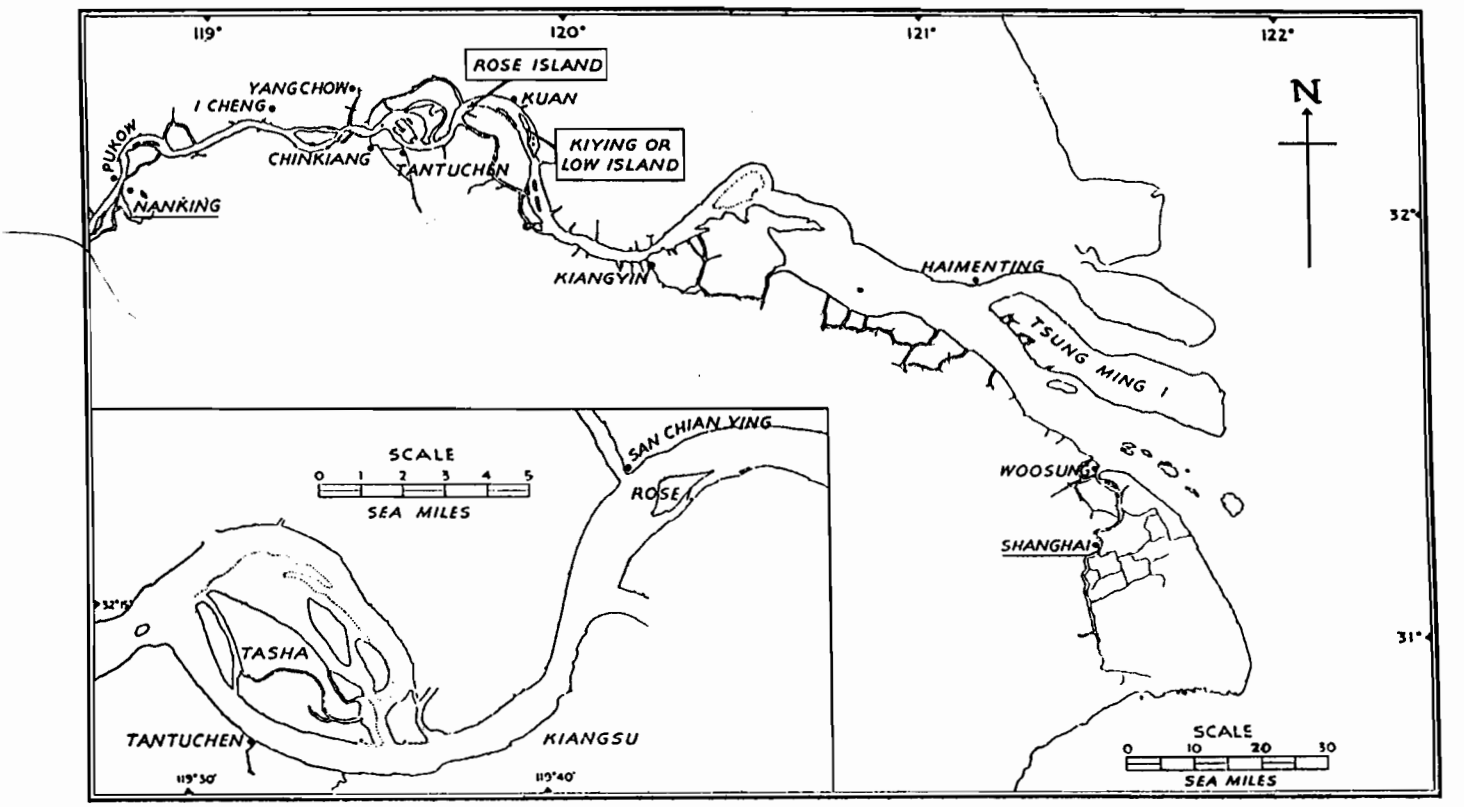
Next morning, *London*, the 8-inch British cruiser, sailed from Shanghai with *Black Swan*, sister ship of the *Amethyst*. They proceeded up the Yangtze to the stricken ship where they too were met by the same fire. Although London's 8-inch guns could have silenced the shore batteries, they could not depress sufficiently to hit the emplacements at such close range. In the exchange of fire, London's captain was wounded and the navigator fatally injured.

Again the ships had to withdraw, *London* having suffered 13 dead and 15 wounded, and *Black Swan* seven wounded. The Communists, poised for the crossing of the Yangtze, were able to bring up a nearly inexhaustible supply of anti-tank guns. It was a no-win situation for the navy, and the final act of gunboat diplomacy.

In the interim, up in Nanking it was decided that the Captain of *Amethyst*, who by this time had died, must be replaced. Lt. Cdr. Kerans — the assistant attaché we had met at the embassy two weeks before — was ordered to proceed by any means to take command of the grounded ship. He travelled overland for part of the way, and then bribed a sanpan to take him out to the ship in the dead of night. He took command April 24. *Amethyst* remained stuck where she was for the next three months until, of the night of July 30, with no moon and a high tide, she raised steam, backed off and proceeded downstream — without benefit of a pilot!

The following morning she raised the message, "*HMS Amethyst* has rejoined the fleet at Woosung. God save the King." For this remarkable feat, Kerans was awarded the DSO and promoted to commander. Upon retirement he became, I am told, a somewhat irrascible MP.

Meanwhile in Hong Kong we were getting snippets of information as to the extent of the disaster. Earlier, our Captain had sent a request to Ottawa that we join in the rescue attempt of Amethyst. The reply was unequivocal: "Under no circumstances are you to sail for any operational role without the explicit approval of this headquarters." At the time I was very disappointed. In retrospect,



however, I realize we would probably have suffered the same fate as our RN confreres.

We had one more minor role to play. On April 26 we were ordered to proceed north towards the Yangtze and meet up with Consort which was in fog and had no radar left. We were proceeding at 18 knots, as we ourselves were in fog, when suddenly we came out into brilliant sunshine. There, a few miles to the north, was Consort. She was down by the head, flying a huge battle ensign on the foremast, steering from aft, and doing 28 knots. She swept by us, and turning to follow, we had to increase to full speed just to keep up with her. *Consort* entered Hong Kong harbour at 28 knots, and did a spectacular alongside, still steering from aft. "Bloody but unbowed" was a most fitting phrase for her.

We spent the next several days in Hong Kong as the extent of the disaster to the RN ships continued to unfold. By this time, the Communists had crossed the Yangtze and headed north to Nanking which they captured with little resistance. They then advanced south to Shanghai. Chiang Kai-shek by then had shifted his government, first to Canton close to Hong Kong, and then to Formosa, renamed Taiwan, to establish the Republic of China on that island. He was to end his days there.

By now there was little left for us to do and orders arrived that we return to Canada. As we headed home, the mood was one of elation: we were once again a close-knit unit, anxious to have the ship looking her best when we arrived. The mood was tempered, however, by the news that a Commission of Inquiry had been set up. Many of those who had participated in the mutiny began to feel some apprehension, and there was much speculation and messdeck rumour.

We arrived in Esquimalt on June 4 to be met by a crowd of family and friends. Crescent was looking her best. As a temporary member of the RN's 8th destroyer flotilla, we had painted the gun barrels black, and I thought they looked rather smart.

We were soon to meet the Mainguy Commission members, and they addressed the ship's company in words to this effect: "We want to give those who wish to come forward the opportunity to give evidence which will be kept confidential. After the Commission has made its report, the evidence will be destroyed. We do not intend to lay either blame or charges; we want only to find out what is wrong with the RCN."


SPEEDY CANADIAN SHIP BACK FROM TRIP TO CHINA

SMILING SAILORS of H.M.C.S. Crescent line up as the Canadian destroyer slides into her Esquimalt base after dramatic trip to protect Canadian nationals living in China. Sweethearts and wives line dockside awaiting men who sailed out of Canadian waters in February. She arrived at Shanghai, Feb. 23, sailed Yangtze river for several months

Daily Colonist photo shows welcoming crowd in Esquimalt greeting return of Crescent on June 4, 1949.

That little speech may have had the desired effect of bringing forward those who were prepared to give evidence, but it set us back several months and revived old resentments.

My own feelings about the Commission and its findings remain ambivalent to this day. I think that the outcome was beneficial to the RCN, but I was surprised at the time at the lack of any blame attached either to officers or men closely involved.

The following Monday morning, we received a curt message: our black gun barrels were to be painted grey forthwith. No doubt about it — we were home!

There is a happy postscript to this yarn. After a lengthy and difficult time living under the Communist regime, Tessie Wong was finally able to leave China in the late 1970s and come to Canada. She is currently working in the library at External Affairs in Ottawa.

Peter Birch-Jones served in the RCN until his retirement in 1975. He is now living in Victoria.

A reunion in Victoria is being planned next year for those in the ship's company who served in Crescent during her China deployment. The event will be held June 4, the date the ship arrived back in Esquimalt 43 years ago.