



My Naval Career 1954-57

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*To
my untidy
comrades who
shared these experiences
and the dogged petty officers
who strived to make
us sailors*

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Thompson, W. Grant
My naval career 1954-1957 / W. Grant Thompson ; J.L.
Granatstein, editor.

Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-9781693-7-4

1. Thompson, W. Grant. 2. Canada. Royal Canadian Navy.
University Naval Training Division--History. 3. Canada. Royal
Canadian Navy--Officers--Training of--History. 4. Naval
education--Canada--History. 5. Naval education--Canada--
Anecdotes. I. Granatstein, J. L., 1939- II. Title.

V440.T46 2010 359.2'2320711 C2010-906685-5

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www.breakout-ed.net
www.sevenyearproject.com
www.breakoutnetwork.org

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Publisher: Inta D. Erwin
Design and Layout: Joe Stevens, Ballmedia Corporation
Book Cover Design: Kevin Patterson, Artistic Web Services
Copy Editors: J.L. Granatstein, Bob Knight, RJ Knight and Associates Limited
Proof Reader: Elena Vincent
Project Director: Patricia Mitchell

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Grant Thompson's *MY NAVAL CAREER 1954-1957* in the University Naval Training Division (UNTD) is a humorous and nostalgic memoir of his experiences in reserve officer training while at university one-half century ago, followed by an earnest plea for the UNTD's restoration. His stories illustrate why such military training at our universities was the training grounds for an entire generation of Canada's best and brightest in medicine, business, politics and the arts. Their unique experiences occurred in the ships, bases and field exercises of the Canadian army, navy and air force. In exchange for summer employment, the army, navy and air force introduced military basics to the future leaders of Canada. There was no requirement to serve in the forces upon graduation. The military and the country both expected to benefit from the creation of a wider, more knowledgeable base of citizens familiar with the military's work as a national institution. Would Chief of the Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, have been able to speak of the 1990's as "the Decade of Darkness" in the Canadian Forces, a period when knowledge and familiarity of the forces in the public had shrunk to the lowest level in decades, if the Reserve

Officer Training on university campuses in Canada had still been in existence?

Imagine a nation-wide university or college program that would help develop and improve the initiative, self-discipline and leadership potential of students while developing their sense of citizenship and responsibility to their community. What would such a program look like? A model once existed at Canadian universities, but was short-sightedly discontinued in 1968.

Prior to this date, each of Canada's three military services ran a separate officer cadet program on most Canadian campuses. The Army had the Canadian Officers Training Corp or COTC, the Navy ran the University Naval Training Division or UNTD and the Air Force program was known as the University Reserve Training Program or URTP. Throughout the decisive decades of the 20th Century, these three programs produced leaders of business, politics and the military. When they were abolished, important programs emphasizing leadership, citizenship and service were lost to the university experience. The impact of this lapse in the education and development of the future leaders of the country needs to be addressed if we are serious about our national efforts to improve Canadian society.

Breakout Educational Network has published this book because it believes that renewing the connection between the university and the military, and the connection between the student and the military, is an important factor in building Canadians' connection with their responsibilities as citizens. Why? The military is an important national institution that has become disconnected from the concerns of the public, yet defence should be an issue of concern for every citizen in a liberal democratic society. It costs a lot of money, its deployment puts our sons and

daughters in harm's way and its members are all armed. This is not to suggest that every citizen be armed or even a member of the armed forces. Rather, it is to recognize that the civil-military relationship in a country like Canada requires that the public be both *strategically aware* of the context in which the nation exists, and *civically engaged* with questions related to national policy. This means having the knowledge and ability to hold politicians and generals to account. This, in turn, presupposes some knowledge and interest about these issues on the part of citizens. Where are citizens likely to get this? The university would be a good place to start.



Restigouche Division Ready for Action. Halifax 1955



FOREWORD

Let me tell you about the Old Oars. It all began at Grant's house, actually. He had invited some of us over to see his films of life at sea with the UNTD. That's right – films.

Now, Grant is retired from the University of Ottawa after a brilliant career as professor of medicine and chief of gastroenterology at the Ottawa Hospital. He is much sought after worldwide as a lecturer and presenter on the subject of what is going on both above and below your belt. Books like *The Ulcer Story*, *The Placebo Effect*, *Understanding the Irritable Gut* and *The Angry Gut*, have won him praise from reviewers for “his unusual ability to communicate effectively and in an entertaining way to physicians and public alike.”

You will find that same unusual ability in the following pages. Except that here he turns his pen to the halcyon days of his youth and particularly to those matchless and unforgettable times at sea and ashore as an officer cadet with the RCN(R) in the 1950s. Those were the days he somehow captured on film. How he escaped the penetrating gaze of a gnarled old petty officer we will never know. But he did, and in the doing captured for posterity

some valuable historical footage. Those were the films we had come to watch.

After beer (light) and popcorn (fat free) we decided that others might like to revisit those unique times, vanished decades ago with a stroke of the Defence Minister's pen, when the University Naval Training Divisions offered young Canadians the opportunity to learn how to be men, to discover their Canadian citizenship, and to put away much-needed cash.

So the Old Oars were born. Grant, of course, became Doct'oar; Bob Duncombe - Bobby Oar; Bob Wooton - Poet Oar; Jim Maxwell - Geograph'Oar and Peter Milsom, the only one who had actually become a senior serving officer - Pete'Oar. I was Senat'Oar. We covered the country from BC to Newfoundland and Labrador, and in the subsequent reunions that we organized we found that many from all across Canada shared our enthusiasm for the indelible memories of those days gone by and the crying need to revive it in some form.

Out of the seminars and the mess dinners that the Old Oars have organized on Parliament Hill over the past five years, have emerged a network of Canadians who shared a unique time and place in their lives and in the life of their country. In the 1940s, 50s and 60s university students from all across Canada had the opportunity for training in the armed forces and a chance to encounter their country and to find their own Canadian identity. They learned the essence of leadership and many of them were and are prominent in all walks of Canadian life. All of us who had that unique opportunity would say firmly: bring back that partnership between the armed forces and the university; bring it back, albeit perhaps in a new uniform, but bring it back. It is an unmatched investment in leadership training for both the private and public sector. So say all of us.

This book will mean so much to all of those young men and women who experienced UNTD. And this book will capture all those who were once young and carefree and adventurous and committed. This book will captivate all those who were once young Canadians in their late teens and who enjoy remembering what those imperishable years were really like. And hopefully it will be a call to service for today's young Canadians.

The Grant Thompson you will find in the following pages is funny and warm and very readable. It is his story. But it is also the story of a little bit of Canada that should not be forgotten.

Senator Bill Rompkey



Introduction

In September 1954 I became a premedical student. I was new to Toronto and my classmates were new as well. I confess to having been intimidated by the big university and the large city. My parents provided my tuition and board, but due to the financial difficulties of the time the prospects for a summer job to supplement this were bleak. Moreover, I was daunted by the enormity of the studies I was undertaking.

The Fifties were boom times for Canadians and the economic prospects for those with an education were limitless, but achieving a degree was not a given. The failure rate in premeds was over 30% with further attrition in medical school. In this environment, the reserve Navy had many attractions. It assured a summer job, provided some cash during the year, promised some education that might prove useful, and above all it provided a provincial boy an opportunity for travel and adventure.

The following are recollections of my experiences during three years in the *University Naval Training Divisions* (UNTD), a reserve officers training program for university students. This

excellent program was begun in 1943 in response to the need for new officers. It continued until the 1970s when it became a casualty of the detested Canadian forces amalgamation, and the growing national aversion to all things military after the Vietnam War. In addition to exposure to naval tradition and basic military training the UNTD provided an unparalleled opportunity to see Canada, meet Canadians from coast to coast and even cruise these coasts as far south as the Caribbean and Mexico. (Canadians acknowledged only two coasts then.)

The events I describe occurred more than a half century ago. My memory is aided by a log I was required to keep, and the photos and 8mm movies I managed to take and preserve. Some photos are from *The White Twist*, a cadet-produced annual magazine. However, many of my stories are exclusively from memory so that while the plots are true, the details may be less so. It's a curious phenomenon that long-range memory blurs bad times and undoubted failings and sharpens triumphs and fun. Therefore, these anecdotes are neither biography nor history, but rather happy recollections of a period that fellow UNTD cadet and author Peter Newman described as,

"...a few shining seasons in the youth of our lives."



Vigil off Vancouver Island 1956



My Naval Career

So, I Joined the Navy

My cousin was six years older than I. As a boy, I didn't think much of her, principally because she was a girl and didn't play ball. However, she redeemed herself completely by marrying a pilot in the *Royal Canadian Air Force*. I thought it would be neat to be a pilot myself and was determined to join and learn to fly. That is how in September 1954 I found myself in the Air Force queue at the combined services recruiting office on St. George Street, Toronto. Profound was my disappointment when the recruiting officer promptly rejected me on the grounds that it profited the Air Force little to teach medical students to fly.

"Come back in a few years son, and you can give the flyers physicals."

Smarting from this rejoinder, I passed into the hall where opposite stood an enormous sign, "*Join the Navy - See the World*" that fronted the naval recruiting station. In the navy queue were several of my new classmates who urged me to join with them.

“Why not?” I thought. So began my naval career - not exactly down to earth from my dream of flight, but rather down to sea.

The memory of World War Two was very fresh in 1954, and the Cold War was in full rhetorical flight complete with nuclear threats. The Korean War was not long over, so national defence and war fear were in the public mind. However, it's safe to assume that my colleagues and I had no quaint Queen and Country notions. Like the wartime volunteers before us, we were young and naïve about war. Our minds were more focused on travel and adventure, and the practical prospect of summer employment during our university years. Looking back, I marvel at our insouciance. The draft was in effect in the United States and Americans of our age sought any avenue to avoid it, even coming to Canada. It was clear that in any imminent hostility we, like they, would be among the first to be called. Nevertheless, I remember no hesitation on that score.



Navy ID

“Better to join as an officer than at a lower rank,” we rationalized. The navy provided a wonderful opportunity for a university student in the 1950s, a mind-expanding experience, but I’m doubly blessed that I never had to fight.

My credentials satisfied the officers on St George Street, but final acceptance depended upon a physical examination and a board inquisition. I remember little in the excitement of the time, but I do recall that my new classmates were shocked when one of their fellows failed the board.

I spent four months in each of three summers with the Navy, one at Halifax, the other two in Esquimalt, near Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. I experienced many unique and amusing incidents. We were required to keep a log, but some of what follows are items that I omitted from the record for reasons that will be obvious. An epilogue relates how my navy memories were rekindled.



East Coast

Halifax, Here We Come

Fresh from examinations in Toronto, a contingent of officer cadets boarded the *Ocean Limited* for Halifax. It was a 1500 kilometer party (1200 miles I would have calculated then). My parents came to see me – their only son – off to sea at the tender age of twenty. I boarded the train with them behind me just as a cadet rushed into the car shouting, “Grant, wait’ll you see the bar!” I expect that increased rather than lowered my mother’s anxiety.

Late that night the train stopped at Levis, and I looked across the St Lawrence at the sparkling heights of Quebec. The Chateau Frontenac rose from the headland like a Rhine castle and the lights of the old city below glistened like diamonds in the still-wintery air. Busy ferries danced like water-bugs among the ice flows that still raced as the river current battled with the tide. It was at once a thrill and a fairyland. Then the train tore through the Quebec night and we awoke gliding amid the vast forests and still-frozen lakes of New Brunswick and later through the rolling hills and tiny hamlets of Nova Scotia.



Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Stadacona

Arrival at HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax was a jolt. From the ordered mental discipline of university we found ourselves in the frenzied, but controlled confusion that passed for military discipline. Not an easy transition for the free spirits we imagined ourselves to be. Unquestioning obedience to dubious authority was new to us - and probably good for us as well, although we'd scarcely have admitted it then. My single greatest adaptation was to a wool navy uniform complete with sweaty plastic collar and itchy service hat. We seemed to wear this outrageous garment everywhere except in bed; and even then if we suspected a surprise inspection. Good thing we never met an enemy, we'd be too busy dressing and scratching to shoot. My view of the world became the back of the comrade marching ahead, punctuated by the shining of the unshinable and the pressing of the unpressable.

We had five days to prepare to go to sea. Our kit was collected from various points about the barracks, where we were outfitted with such items as compass, greatcoat, signal book, journal, mess kit, gas mask and detailed instructions on how to

avoid venereal disease. (The below decks sailors, on the other hand, were replete with stories on how to *get* venereal disease.)

Points of reference changed. A ceiling became a "deckhead", a wall became a "bulkhead", and a toilet became simply a "head". We were indoctrinated to salute superiors and be saluted to by others. The difference was not always apparent to new recruits, and a mistake could earn you three trips around the barracks at the double. A mis-made bed or un-pressed trouser could postpone your leave. Being late for parade at "oh seven hundred" entitled you to spend your leave cleaning the heads.

Those five days in May are a blur. I longed to see Halifax, but the rush to prepare us for sea left little time off and practically no shore leave. I remember looking out the barracks window through a perpetual drizzle to see ships passing to and from Bedford Basin, and the still-red metal of the newly-completed Angus L Macdonald Bridge that spanned the harbor to Dartmouth. It was a motley collection of undisciplined wannabe sailors that finally clambered aboard our ship weighted down with heavy greatcoats and duffle bags containing our new kit. (In later years my duffle bag, marked with my naval service number, served many masters including my daughters at camp and a son at hockey.)

HMCS Quebec

HMCS *Quebec* was a Colony Class light cruiser and one of the largest ships in the Canadian Navy in 1955. We Canadians inherited her from the Royal Navy, whose generosity might have been prompted by the Japanese glider bomb she received down her smoke stack in the South Pacific in the Pacific campaign. She seemed never to have recovered, and was doomed to neuroses,

chronic disability and a terminally frustrated captain.

She was reputed to be capable of 30 knots. Determined to demonstrate this, the captain repeatedly announced speed trials during our voyage.

“There will be a speed trial at 1100 hours!” the Tannoy would announce. The crew then secured everything capable of budging. No storm at sea inspired more activity. The reason for such preparation was soon obvious. Twenty-two knots...23 knots. With each increment of speed a new volume of oily black smoke belched from the funnel. I wondered if the bomb might still be in the stack. The ship’s vibration increased. By 25 knots, nothing would stay put. By 26 knots fixtures became unfixed, and the mushrooming black cloud of smoke became ominous. At 27 knots the speed trial was terminated to save the ship from disintegration, and her crew from terminal seasickness.



HMCS Quebec

Our captain was a WW II vet with a British-style double-barreled name. In those days such names were uncommon and seemed comical to us colonials, as did the captain who himself

seemed pompous and aloof. He didn’t share our mirth at the failed speed trials. While we sweated away in the aforementioned uniforms, he appeared to lounge on the bridge with slacks, service shirt and a baseball cap. This earned him some animosity. He must have sensed this as one day he lectured us on the privileges and absolute power of a ship’s captain. We young democrats thought this outrageous. Enforced respect hid much private derision.

We Go to Sea

As the ship was provisioned for our six-week cruise, the cacophony of barked orders, rattling cranes, whistling bos’uns and confused recruits was intimidating. Our mess was below deck at the waterline where a single scuttle (porthole) provided a barely life-sustaining ray of light and, if seas were calm, fresh air. Immediately below us was the boiler room. Thirty of us in *Restigouche* Division were housed in a cabin the size of an average living room. In order to accommodate so many, we slept buttock to buttock in hammocks slung from hooks fixed to the ceiling...er, *deckhead*. When there was a drill, we had to struggle out between the tightly fitted ‘micks’ (hammocks), scramble to our lockers along the corridor adjacent to the mess and appear on deck “at the double”. It was a scuffle in the dim daylight and chaos in the dark, for the drills were conducted at all hours. It could be fire on the bridge (we wished!), man overboard, or simply a muster on deck in which we were timed and compared unfavorably to other divisions, especially the dratted *Fraser* Division. When awakened for a watch by the bos’un’s pipe, a petty officer followed up by bellowing “Show a leg!” If your leg failed to appear outside your hammock, he delivered a sharp blow to your canvas backside.

Among us was a cheerful Nigerian exchange student

named Okonkwo who was very black. In the chaos of our very first night drill, thirty naked bodies raced for the three tiers of lockers containing our lifejackets, gas masks and so on. The unfortunate Okonkwo's locker was on the bottom tier where the darkness rendered him invisible. He was nearly trampled to death in that initial drill, prompting him to change the location of his locker. Fortunately, he saw humour in the incident – another might have taken offence.



Okonkwo and fellow cadet

We were shown around the ship by a leading seaman while the crew readied to move the *Quebec* to a coaling station in Bedford Basin, and then to the armory to take on explosives. We learned our galley was up two ladders and forward on the ship. We collected our meal there, and balanced it like waiters back to our mess – in heavy seas it became a mess indeed. Our lifeboat stations were assigned and we were, we thought, ready for sea.

C. M. R. 307A FORM 4-42 (AMER) C. M. R. 307A (CAN)	
SURNAME <i>Thompson</i>	H.M.C.S. <i>Quebec</i>
CHRISTIAN NAME(S) <i>V. 73929</i>	PART <i>1st</i>
RANK <i>1st Lt.</i>	PART OF SHIP <i>As Stn.</i>
G. or T.	MESS <i>39</i>
	RELIGION

HMCS Quebec Mess Card

(Actual size)

At last armed and fully provisioned, the *Quebec* pulled up her gangplank, the shore party let loose her lines and slid silently from the jetty under a dull grey sky over silver calm waters. We were off to sea at last. I was stationed on the forecastle helping, rather watching, the men lowering shells into the magazines. The seamen seemed to treat the massive shells with rough disregard so I watched gingerly from behind a bollard when I noticed an unaccustomed motion. The ship gradually acquired a roll (and I a queasy gut) that amplified as we neared the end of the channel and entered the horizonless, restless sea. As I battled and finally suppressed an urge to vomit, I noticed another cadet appear from below onto the forecastle. His flaming red hair was revealed as he caught stomach contents in his hat, flopped prone headlong over the side of the deck, and began a long, lonely spell of retching. I suppressed another wave of nausea and struggled to maintain my footing. I learned that the stricken cadet was from the prairies and this was his first encounter with the ocean. From thence, throughout our time at sea, this poor retching wretch could be seen prone at his station on the forecastle unable to stand, to sleep or of course to eat. I believe he spent his short shore leaves in sick

bay struggling to regain weight. Upon our return to Halifax it was widely rumored that he promptly resigned from the UNTD and caught the first available train to Saskatchewan. He was never again seen by any of us.

The Cruise

Once clear of Halifax Harbor we began firing our four inch guns at a target towed by a smaller ship. The din and cordite-saturated smoke were overwhelming as the ship shuddered and reeled from the explosions. We did maneuvers with our two escorting destroyers, HMCS *Iroquois* and HMCS *Huron*. A few nights later we anchored in St Margaret's Bay, but overnight were again under weigh south along the East coast of North America. We were briefly joined by our navy's other cruiser, HMCS *Ontario*, which left after a day or two for Europe. We watched the sailors transfer a man between two ships on a jackstay and practice fueling at sea, routine "evolutions" that we were required to faithfully record in our logs. Meanwhile we gradually adapted to the ship's rigid routine and chaotic movements. Landlubbers all, we became fascinated with the sea. There was plenty of time to study it for long cold hours while on watch. To hide our inexperience, we challenged the sea from the railings in order to permit the salt spray to corrode our brass hat badges like those of seasoned sailors.



HMCS Iroquois from Quebec

We were cheered by shore-bound vacationers as we moved slowly through the Cape Cod Canal and passed the Pilgrims' Monument. That night, in Fort Ponds Bay at the northern tip of Long Island, we learned how the anchor is deployed. Sailing down the Eastern US Coast we encountered a dense fog. The dim daylight was marked by the dismal, repetitious croaking of the foghorns, punctuated by a regular shrill triple blast of the ship's horn.

Our first port was Philadelphia. To our chagrin, my mates and I were assigned to the first duty watch and so were confined to the ship. On the quarterdeck, one of my duties was, upon request, to permit members of the ship's company to re-board the ship after an evening in port. Around midnight, an inebriated sailor supported by four mates wobbled up the gangplank. The officer of the watch intervened and ordered him to sick bay, at which point

he became violent, struck two members of the quarterdeck staff and insulted the officer. That worthy promptly dispatched him in irons to the brig. He likely faced 30 days stoppage of leave and a fine, narrowly escaping a court martial.

The next day we were granted a “make and mend” leave and set out to make Canada known to Philadelphia, and Philadelphia known to us. Following that, we took a 3-hour bus ride through economically depressed suburbs of Baltimore to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. We were treated regally by the US cadets, who I fear showed us up with their smart marching routines and white uniforms. We suffered from the unaccustomed heat and drab khaki uniforms that refused to accept, let alone maintain, a press.

Back in Philadelphia we were entertained by the Colonial Dames of America an outfit analogous to our Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire. We dreaded the event especially in our wrinkled sweaty uniforms, but the girls were surprisingly comely and the evening turned out “quite nicely”. Next we visited the Valley Forge Military Academy. Surprisingly, horsemanship was featured at this reserve training institution and we witnessed some neat equestrian drills. In sum the Americans treated us very well, and we felt a little chuffed.



Lock up your daughters!

As we approached the Caribbean, we participated in seamanship evolutions, and classes in navigation, damage control and other disciplines essential to commanding a ship at sea. We learned towing techniques, fastening alongside, knot tying, sounding, and the theory of whaler sailing. We even helped deploy the “cat gear” a noise-making device dragged behind the ship to attract sound-seeking torpedoes. With a few exceptions (notably the prostrate cadet from Saskatchewan) we were accustomed to the ship by the time we approached Puerto Rico.

San Juan

One June morning at 0800 we glided into San Juan Harbor past the famous Castle Morro that defended this Spanish bastion in

the days of sailing ships. It was very hot and we sweated profusely in our crowded quarters. We longed to go ashore after our several weeks at sea. Accordingly, we pressed and groomed our uniforms in anticipation of the duty officer's inspection that, if failed, could result in cancelled leave. Just as we were finessing our wardrobe, a stoker burst out of the ladder door that led from the boiler room immediately below our mess. Steam belched forth and the already high humidity surpassed the dew point. Dismayed, we watched our trouser press unravel. In the mirror, some cadets regarded their disappearing shore leave with disappointment and tears.

Surviving inspection at last, my chums and I rented a convertible and found a beach where we cooled ourselves in the sea. It was hot, but we enjoyed what was for most our first experience in the tropics, and relished our unwonted freedom with top-down rides on the seldom-travelled roads.



The Author in Puerto Rico (standing)

That night, officers and cadets were invited to a dance held at the castle hosted again by the Colonial Dames of America.

These Dames were different from the Philadelphia Dames. As was apparently the Spanish colonial custom, the girls' mothers sat as chaperones in a balcony that ran round the vast hall. We arrived, a disorderly detachment of officers and cadets clothed as properly as our sweaty bodies and wilted uniforms would allow. There were no girls or mothers to be seen; just a bar that stretched across the other end of the hall. Well, what's a poor sailor to do? Why, live off the land using the available resources of course! With a noisy rush the throng attacked the bar. Most cadets were unaccustomed to alcohol. Much of Canada was still under the spell of the prohibition era, and among other draconian restrictions alcohol consumption by anyone under 21 was prohibited. This and the very late arrival of the girls had predictable consequences. When our belles arrived the Canadian Navy was splendidly drunk.

Too bad! I remember that the girls were lovely in bright dresses and flowered hair. As the orchestra struck up, those few of us who were not casualties attempted to dance. I recall being occupied by a fallen comrade, supine in the middle of the hall declaring he could not rise. Somehow just before curfew we dragged him back to the ship where the gangplank loomed. The rule was that returning sailors must navigate the gangplank without aid, and then ask for permission to board. We coached our staggering pal on how to walk, warned him it was a long fall into the harbor, and shoved him onto the narrow rope-lined plank that mounted the ship. He wobbled a salute to the quarterdeck and slurred, "Permission to come aboard sir?" Permission was granted by a grinning officer of the watch. Somehow we all navigated through the many steel doors and ladders to our mess and fell laughing and incoherent onto the deck. The Dames succeeded where their male ancestors failed in the 16th century; they repelled

an invading Anglo force. What an impression we must have left!

The Virgin Tank

From San Juan we approached a small island in the Virgin Islands. It rose like a cone from the sea and was covered with treeless green foliage except for a small, solitary, bright red object half-way up its summit. On watch on the bridge, I was privileged to use binoculars through which I could see that the red object was a lone tank, its turreted cannon facing us defiantly.

The Captain announced that there was to be a gunnery shoot to test the ship's complicated gun-direction system. We had been involved in drills employing the several anti-aircraft *Bofors* guns and the 4" guns that guarded the ship's flanks, but we had not yet tested the ship's main armament. There were three turrets, two forward and one aft, each mounting three six inch guns that could be moved port or starboard as required to engage a target.

Off-duty cadets were mustered along the ship's starboard side to witness the spectacle. Each was equipped with a flash helmet that I remember as a canvas 'burka like' hood that was intended to shield the head from unexpected flashes and whose eye opening was to be covered at the time of firing. The captain directed the ship as it made several passes by the island while the gunnery officer made calculations and shouted orders through the communication system. This minuet lasted a long time and I was grateful that the tank was not shooting back at us. Then, at last, there was an unholy blast that an ear specialist now says probably permanently impaired my hearing. Suddenly the atmosphere was thick with acrid smoke that belched from those nine enormous gun barrels. The ship buckled and recoiled while the nine huge shells were on their way to our helpless target. The crew was instructed

to uncover our eyes and spot the explosions ashore that would indicate the accuracy of the shots.

For several moments nothing happened; the island, let alone the tank, was undisturbed. Then suddenly the ship-to-ship radio came alive with angry remonstrations. Evidently our shots landed far beyond the island within view of our escorting destroyers. That ended the exercise forthwith, and the ship's company was ordered to stand down. The tank survived to defend the island another day, but I am unsure of the fate of our hapless gunnery officer.

Aboard Ship

The day was divided into watches. The morning, afternoon evening and night watches were 4 hours each but the period between 1600 and 2000 hours was divided into two "dog watches" that permitted two dinner sittings (or standings) for the ship's company. In wartime the crew would be on watch one in two, but for the most part we served one in three. Seven daily watches meant the duty schedule shifted every day, assigning everyone an equal share of the night and morning watches. At first chronically tired, we eventually fell into the routine. The cadets were stationed on deck amidships often shivering through a long night watch. We took turns looking out for officers in order to spell each other off for short naps. Coffee and broth were available, and we sang, told stories or complained about our lot. It was a navy truism that when the lower decks complained all was well; but if they were silent, mutiny was at hand.



Cadets on watch

In addition to physical exercise drills, classes, and participation in seamanship evolutions, we were expected to keep the mess and ourselves tidy and work the ship. The latter consisted largely of painting or mopping the decks. Salt spray soon destroyed paint so the ships masts, sides, funnels and other structures were constantly being painted much like the Brooklyn Bridge – finish and start over. Another sailor aphorism was,

“If it moves salute it, if it isn’t moving, move it, and if it won’t move, paint it.”



Discipline was strict and we saluted superiors which seemed like almost everyone we met, and in turn we might be saluted by a lower rank seaman (if he thought an officer was watching). Otherwise, snide comments could be heard, such as “Sunday sailor” or “apple cheeks”.



Pull!

One day, I was assigned to the helm. Grand, you say! I got to steer the ship. Ah, but on the *Quebec* the helm was below the lowest deck. It took several minutes to make my way to my

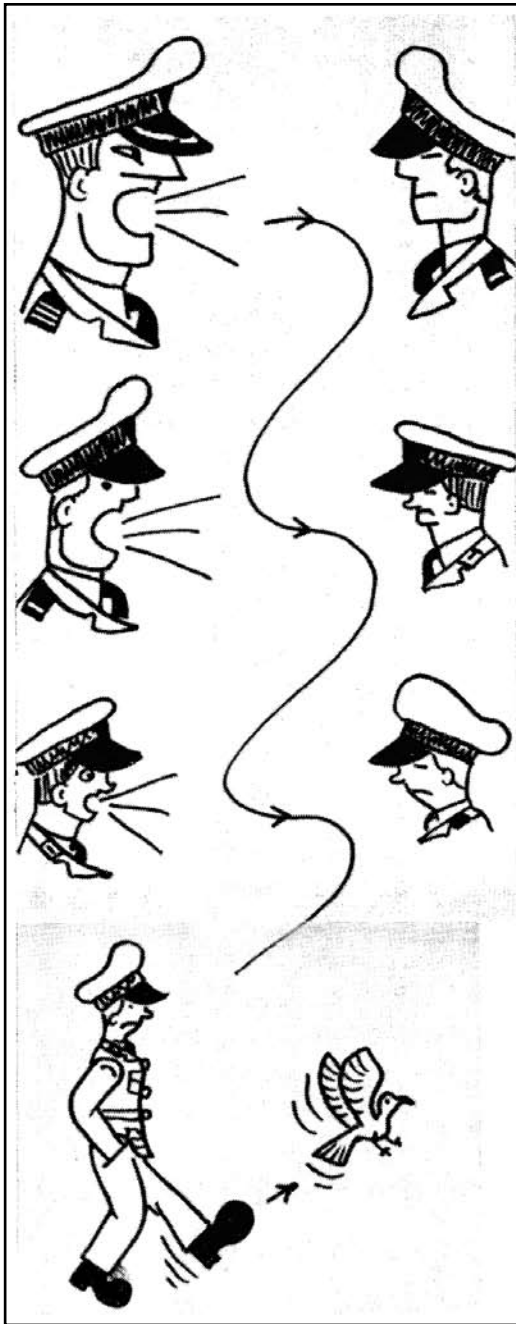
post. There I shortly found myself alone in a dimly lit and poorly ventilated room with no windows, only the closed metal hatch above. Before me was a huge wheel with spokes and handles like a good ship's wheel should have. At eye height over the wheel was a compass with a direction reading 027. Nothing else was in view. A petty officer had instructed me to steer to the compass direction that the officer of the watch ordered down the voice pipe, and left. I struggled to hold 027, first over-correcting and provoking an angry "Steady the helm!" order from above. Convinced we were now on a zigzag pattern, I struggled to micromanage the wheel, and that made things worse. Just as I was getting control, an order boomed down the pipe, "Steer 090." I gingerly nudged the wheel provoking another angry blast from the bridge. I then heaved the great wheel to starboard and felt the ship heel as the needle spun past 090 and provoking another broadside of abuse down the pipe. Sweating and trembling, I struggled to control the helm for an hour before I was mercifully relieved. I crawled out of that cave and fell exhausted on a bench. We were alone in the open sea, but from my blind hole, I could imagine responsibility for all sorts of calamities.

The officers were the aristocracy who dined in their exclusive wardroom with stewards and bar. Non-commissioned officers had their own self serve, dry quarters. The remainder lived in their messes and when at sea received the traditional "tot" of rum each morning. "Up spirits" was piped at 1100 and every man received his tot (less than an ounce of the spirit) with great flourish from a barrel. Cola was available from machines and great effort was expended to see that the tots were consumed promptly and not hoarded, lest a party break out. We received no such amenities – not too young to fight, but certainly too young to drink.

Musters, and inspections of self, hammock and mess were

sprung upon us at all hours. Penalties for tardiness or untidiness could be doubling round the ship, kitchen duty, heads clean-out or at worst cancelled leave. We free spirits often gathered to complain. "Chickenshit" was the chosen pejorative. Much worse was the navy's vernacular, especially one now very familiar, coarse word that served severally as a noun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb and occasionally just an all-purpose exclamation.

Each Sunday at sea was a special parade with an inspection on the quarterdeck. The captain himself presided with great ceremony and the padres (rotated by denomination) gave little homilies often aimed at the perceived moral impoverishment of the ship's company. It was of little avail for the sailors, among whom venereal disease was common, and to whom each port presented a booze and skirt-chasing challenge. I remember that we cadets took most of the sermons seriously; although our behavior ashore was hardly decorous. The officers too became different people ashore, but they were privileged to be invited by local dignitaries, or to wardrooms on other ships.



From *White Twist* 1956

The seamen were the ship's laborers. They enlisted for employment, for the security of a structured military life or for the generous early pensions. Many were unskilled and largely uneducated. Some seemed to have no aim in life, and lived from day to day working with a maximum of cursing and a minimum of effort. In port they exhausted their modest wages on liquor and women, and were prey for the profiteers lurking in the shadows of every port. There were exceptions, from whose ranks promotions to leading seamen and petty officer occurred. Some of these were admirable and made attempts to breach the culture barrier that separated us from them. One radar technician planned to take courses towards a career in television, building on his naval communications experience. My journal reminds me of a middle-aged petty officer in the operations room who was studying high school geometry. Once, he asked my help with a problem which I endeavored to do despite my own mathematical shortcomings. I admired this man for his effort to improve himself despite the odds against him. Some of the officers could have learned much from his determination and humility. Imagine a cadet being asked for help by a seasoned sailor!

Another inspirational story came from our term lieutenant and his buddy who was in charge of *Fraser* Division. These two joined the navy early in the war at a young age as able seamen. They rose through the non-commissioned ranks to petty officer and bonded when they served together in HMCS *Restigouche* on North Atlantic anti-submarine duty. One early morning while occupying adjacent stalls in the heads, the *Restigouche* was torpedoed and promptly sunk. They made it half dressed to the lifeboats and were subsequently rescued. They told their story with the relish and black humor of some who have survived a tragedy. Remarkable

men they were, accomplishing the rare feat of achieving a commission while on active service. They were worthy exemplars.

As diversions there were athletic competitions ashore and whaler races at anchor. A whaler (lifeboat to the landlocked) was a very heavy, stable but lumbering wooden craft with oars for five and a tiller for the coxswain. It could be fitted for sailing as well, but in either mode, it was very slow and required great physical effort. For exercises we scrambled down ropes draped over the ship's sides into the already-lowered boats where we took our places. We rowed in time with the coxswain's chant and performed "up oars", "down oars" "ship oars" or "pull away" at his bidding. Our whalers were pitted with those of *Fraser* Division and others for grueling races. Officers lined the quarterdeck rails and placed bets on the various boats. These were punishing, blistering and sweaty events. The reward for all was to dunk the coxswain who otherwise had it easy. The winning boat received a ration of beer, but most sailors hated the exercise.

Landlubbers again

One early morning in late June we cruised back into Halifax Harbor. The off-watch crew was ordered on deck dressed in the rig of the day as the bos'un piped our arrival. The Tannoy boomed,

"Assume ABCDE state 3 Charley, close all screen doors, scuttles, skylights and watertight bulkheads."

Relatives thronged the shores in greeting and a band played. By noon the cadets were given a free week-end, and for once nobody complained. After six weeks at sea we were glad to return to terra firma. The unfortunate rail rider from Saskatchewan was soon riding the rails home. The rest of us were to have a party, or what is known nowadays as a *piss-up*. The wrens'

mess was requisitioned, copious beer laid on, and we gathered in full uniform one evening to demonstrate our manhood.

The psychology of male bonding remains a mystery, but not to attend was unthinkable. One of our comrades was teetotal, yet he felt compelled to pretend to drink. The mess, on the second story of an old brick building dockside, was crammed with 30 boisterous young men who competed in volume of beer and voice to be noticed and admired by their peers. However, the undisputed champion of the night was a plump, acne-pocked, round-faced lad from France who had been seconded to us for some obscure reason. Largely unnoticed among us until now, he sprang to fame when the word passed round the room that Blum had consumed (and passed) his twentieth beer. Raised in triumph on a table and rousing cheered he remained standing (latterly with assistance) finishing bottle after bottle and tossing them disdainfully aside. The crowd began to chant, "23...24...25..." Would he make 30 (a mythical barrier as for a golfer who might break 80) we speculated as Blum chug-a-lugged on? "28...29...**30**...!" and Blum disappeared from view.

I expect that under other circumstances Blum's admirers might have worried about his health, but few were very healthy themselves. Several "barfed" their beer, and the room soon became unbearable. We spilled raucously out into the cool, night air and my last recollection was a noisy nocturnal march around the base's parade square shouting orders at each other in mocking imitation of our petty officers and relieving ourselves of our brewer's burden at opportune corners. The bush telegraph broadcast Blum's fame round the base, and he became much more visible.

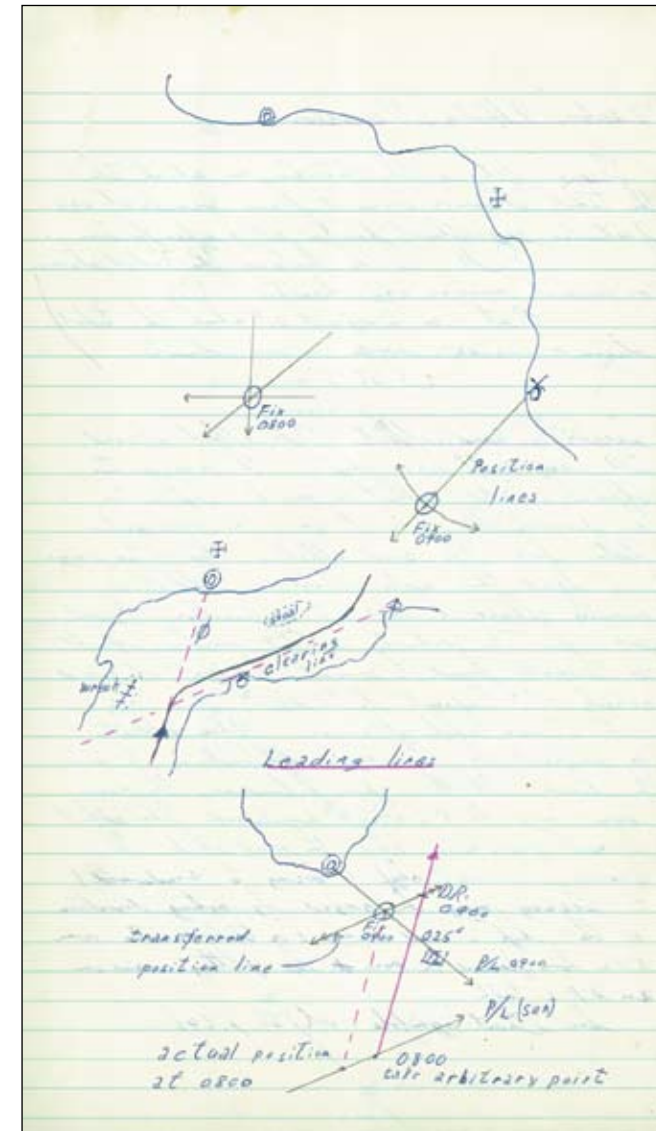


Sailor transferred to Quebec from HMCS Huron using jackstay



Safely aboard. Note cadets below pulling rope.

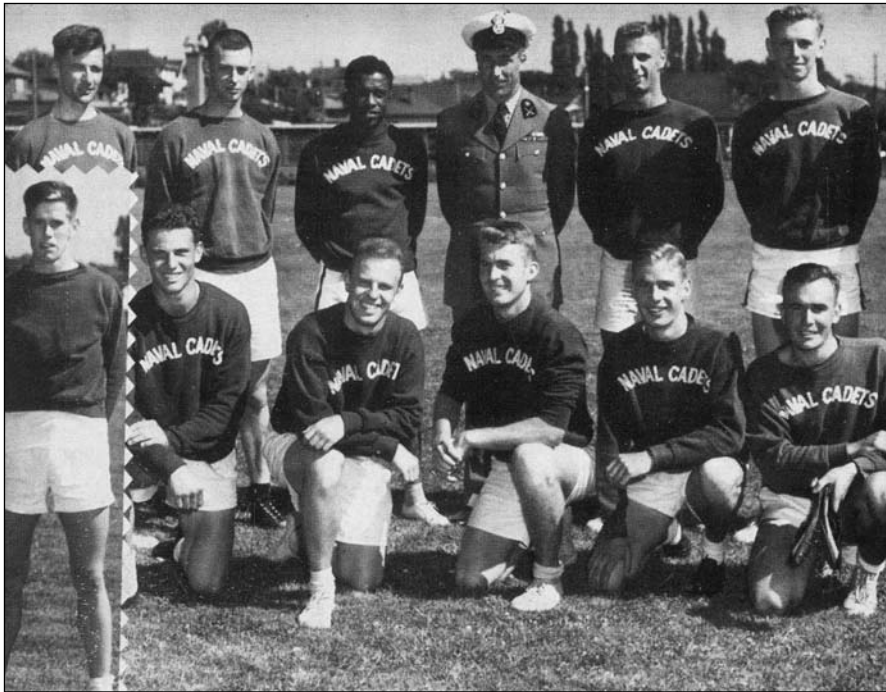
Does such an event occur nowadays? Probably, but it must be much less common. Nineteen fifty-five was in a different era; still post war and frugal. Young men were sexually repressed and few of our group had significant female relationships. If they did they were usually platonic. Our cohort pursued higher education which was costly and fraught with failure, and feared the risk of a career-destroying pregnancy (No such thing as “the pill” in those days). School was seen as the only route to a decent job. The wrens’ mess beer fest was a release from unaccustomed restraint, and a rite of passage. The participants would have been at a loss to explain its meaning, if there was any, but all would have declared it great fun.



*We remember the fun and adventure, but learning to be Naval Officers was serious business
(drawing from the author's Navigation log)*

HMCS *Stadacona*

For several days we lived on the *Quebec* and paraded to the base for classes on such things as current affairs, leadership and navigation. Marching and rifle drills were under the tutelage of yet another gruff petty officer. Being university students, we questioned and argued about everything which unsettled our teachers who lacked academic training and were accustomed to a less uppity audience. There always seemed one cadet in the class who knew, or thought he knew, more than the instructor. After one late night, I remember sleeping through a navigation lecture on the floor at the back of the class.



At a track and field meet *Restigouche* Division did not distinguish itself. Our Nigerian expat saved the day by coming second in the high jump and my team won the mile relay. Like

Blum, Okonkwo's stock went up thereafter. On another occasion we visited the Bedford rifle range and were taught to fire rifles, bren guns, sten guns, and pistols. The stens were short machine guns intended for close combat. They were scary and our instructor, eyeing a long row of clumsy twenty-year-olds, was at pains to order us not to turn left or right, as the sten gun turned with the body.



UNTD "hot shots" at Shooting Range

We toured several naval ships as they visited Halifax that summer. A British sub arrived, then HMCS *Magnificent*, the Royal Canadian Navy's sole aircraft carrier. We toured her and marveled at the sheer size of her hanger. The impression was later dwarfed by USS *Antietam*, a huge angle-decked carrier that was the second largest in the US Navy. Another time we practiced for a week to march on board the USS *Valley Forge* and present a plaque to its midshipmen. In the event, the band was so loud we couldn't hear the orders and our unit's performance was chaotic. However, we noted with satisfaction that the middies were in an even greater shambles than us.

There were gas attack drills with real tear gas, competitive .22 rifle-firing and endless marches around the parade ground.

Our navigation classes were intense, now requiring unwonted study. There was a dance for which regrettably I was on the duty watch, and baseball games with rival divisions. Life on base became humdrum, punctuated by the ever-present heavy hand of naval discipline, the need for which we contested endlessly. This mix of boredom, repressed imagination and bottled up youthful energy generated many pranks of which I particularly remember one.

The Frenched Lieutenant's Bed

It was a Saturday afternoon. We were on duty, and our commanding officer for that weekend was a very proper reserve lieutenant named Jones (not his real name). Our barracks was a long narrow block lined on each side by 30 beds. Each cadet was required to keep his bed and space neat at all times, and regular inspections by Jones included frequent dressings down, forced bed remaking before us all, or worse. No detail was too petty to escape Jones's discerning eye. One evening, after several such inspections that day, the officer discovered that *his* bed had been "frenched", an old camping trick spreading the bed sheets in such a way that a sleepy person can neither get under nor unravel.

Jones was furious. He mustered us on the double in front of our block and demanded to know who did it. Nobody moved. "I can last longer than you" he declared, "You'll stand at attention until someone tells me who did it".

By then the military had molded us into a unit – one for all and all for one. After a long, silent interval Jones ordered us to "Right turn!", and then to run around the block at the double. After two or three circuits, there was no break in the impasse.

"You'll run all night until someone owns up," he thundered.

At this juncture, the runners in our front rank noticed

that the main gate of the base was open for some reason, and the column headed out into Barrington Street. When the panicky officer realized what was happening he ran after us demanding that we stop. At last sight, Jones was standing at the gate, cap in hand, and looking dolefully after his disappearing command. If a black cloud had been available, it would have been over his head. We made our several ways unopposed back to the gate, some stopping in transit to sample a favorite watering hole. We heard nothing further about the frenched bed, and Jones was never again our commanding officer.

Halifax

HMCS *Stadacona* was located near HMC Dockyard on the western side of Halifax Harbor at the southern end of The Narrows. Called "*Stad*" by naval personnel, it is now known by the drab name of CFB *Halifax*. The base looked over the dockyard to the harbor narrows and the Angus L. Macdonald Bridge which had just opened the previous April. *Stad* was isolated from downtown Halifax by the length and grubbiness of Barrington Street. The shops along it were long-ago established to service *Stad*'s sailors. There were three types of business: dry cleaner/laundries invariably run by Chinese, fish and chip joints, and bars of doubtful repute. While it was safe as such places go, there were often fights and the street required a regular contingent of shore patrol to keep order. Walking was not an attractive option. Therefore, the only way downtown was by bus. Nevertheless we did see the citadel, the *Mont Blanc* anchor blown across town to Point Pleasant Park by the Halifax explosion, and the public gardens downtown. Dressed in our uniforms or in blazer and tie we were easily identified as navy. Haligonians were wary of sailors then, not

only because of their current reputation, but also because of the infamous Halifax rioting by returning World War II servicemen that occurred a mere decade earlier. It seemed difficult to meet locals during our brief shore leaves.

An exception was the Lord Nelson Hotel's convivial *Victory Arms* that became the unofficial shore home of the UNTD. There we could slake our thirst and mingle with Dalhousie University students. For parties local hospital nurses' residences were a fairly reliable source of girls. As I remember, few lasting relationships were forged from these sources, but during our summer-long stay they were a welcome diversion.

Returning in the 1990s, I found Halifax very changed. The Barrington brothels were gone and the waterfront was adorned with fancy hotels, trendy restaurants and upscale bars. The city was now cosmopolitan and much more inviting. Nevertheless, I cherish the memory of a scruffy frontline port city struggling to find itself so soon after a terrible conflict.

Nova Scotia

While Halifax seemed dowdy and drab in 1955, Nova Scotia itself appeared bright and bucolic. Each weekend shore leave my comrades and I took the opportunity to tour the province. In the 1950s few young people owned a car and the customary mode of touring was by thumb. Bumming a ride did not bear the opprobrium it does today. By naval decree we must wear jacket and tie when off duty, so we were obviously not the average freeloader and usually had good luck with motorists. Were it not for hitchhiking we would have missed the maritime splendors of the Annapolis Valley, the Bay of Fundy, Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. We slept in roadside motels or on one occasion in the

staff residence of a large hotel in Digby where university friends had summer jobs. The sun shone that summer and I doubt the Nova Scotia countryside has since appeared so lovely as it did to we young, but now veteran, citizen sailors.

However, hitching rides did generate some amusing situations. One such occasion occurred on our first weekend shore leave upon returning from our cruise. We had an inspection the day before by the ranking admiral in the port. It was a pompous and ponderous affair that kept us too long posed in military attitudes in uncomfortable uniforms – at least too long for us four aspiring explorers who were eager for our first taste of freedom in over six weeks. Early Saturday morning we found ourselves with a Nova Scotia roadmap by the side of the main highway heading south. We had no particular destination in mind, but had been told that Hubbard's Beach was a great place, and that there was a Saturday night dance there.

Traffic was light in those days, not the mad crush that characterizes roads radiating from most Canadian cities today. After a short lift to a point south of the city, we redeployed our thumbs and soon a station wagon pulled up to offer us a ride. The driver was an older man in walking gear who looked like a country gentleman. While we thought him old, he was probably in his late forties, which from my current viewpoint seems very young. Remember, we were then scarcely of voting age. In the passenger seat was a large dog, a hunter of some kind that was apparently to accompany him on his walk. He said he could take us near Hubbard's and we four piled in.

Our country squire asked us who we were and what we were doing. We told him. He perked up when he heard "navy" and followed up with many questions designed to divine how we felt

about the service. Carefree, incautious and absorbed in our own lives we let him have it. The food was awful. The drills were stupid. The accommodation was uncomfortable. And so on.

“What did we think of the ship’s captain?”

“He was arrogant, insensitive and made us wear ridiculous uniforms while he wore a baseball cap.”

“What about your divisional officer?”

“Well, we allowed that he was o.k., but seemed remote and played by the book.”

“...and the Admiral?”

“We only saw him at inspection but he seemed a stiff sort with no sense of humor, but rather of his own importance. He should try to get to know us better rather than run pointless inspections.”

We went on a bit until the conversation shifted to other topics such as the local sights, our homes and university courses. When the time came for us to disembark, we thanked him and, belatedly, asked his name.

“I’m the admiral.” he said simply and drove off.

Shocked, we reviewed our conversation, and realized we may have talked ourselves into a court martial. What awaited us at Monday parade? Arrest perhaps, or worse? Then the ridiculousness of our situation struck us, and we fell into the grassy ditch by the road laughing uncontrollably.

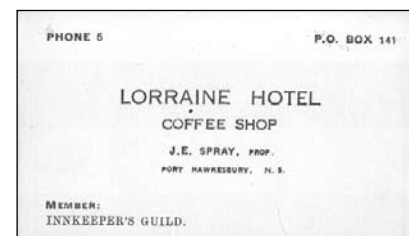


One day, my companion and I were hitchhiking from Antigonish to explore Cape Breton Island. Rides were few that day and we found ourselves in a long wait on the south end of the

newly opened *Straits of Canso* Bridge. At last a car drew up, but alas it was a police car manned by two genial Mounties.

“Do you know that hitchhiking is against the law?” they asked cordially.

We replied that we did not, whereupon they asked us to get into the back seat. Then they drove us slowly and silently across the bridge letting us out on the Cape Breton side at the Lorraine Hotel, Port Hawkesbury with a non-conformable admonition not to hitchhike again. Inexplicably, I still have the card from the Hotel’s coffee shop.



Note the one-digit phone number.

What to do? We were almost 200 miles from Halifax and there was no public transport available. We wanted to see something of Cape Breton. The weekend was only half gone. Meanwhile the Mounties were nowhere in sight. We considered the situation over coffee. Well, we were young and foolish and were soon thumbing our way up an unpaved road exploring the rugged east coast of the island. Somehow we eventually escaped safely back to Halifax.



The Navy in Toronto

HMCS York

During the winters from 1954, we were required to parade one night a week at HMCS *York*, the reserve naval establishment on the Lakeshore. The evening consisted mainly of marching around the gymnasium saluting, presenting arms, and all the inane procedures required of marching forces everywhere. There were lessons that included knot tying, splicing and other seamanship skills. In second year we heard lectures by members of the naval brass on current affairs, and formed the guard of honor at the opening of the provincial legislature. We received a princely wage of \$7.00 for each parade and access to *York's* wardroom and its duty-free beer. Seven dollars is a pittance now, but was a welcome supplement to my food allowance then. Thus, we tolerated the sometimes boring distractions from our studies.



To get to *York*, I took the Spadina street car to the Lakeshore past Tip Top Tailors and Molson's brewery, and disembarked near the exhibition grounds. I especially remember dark, frigid February nights when I must cross the wide expanse before the naval establishment through driving snow while *York's* flags whipped and snapped in the cruel Lake Ontario wind.



There were other activities through the year, but one event in 1956 particularly stands out. Each November 11, army and navy cadets stood guard at various sites around downtown Toronto. For that year's remembrance ceremony, *York's* commanding

officer requested volunteers to guard the Hart House monument (Soldiers' Tower) in the heart of the university. Mindful of the sailor's principle, "never volunteer", I declined, realizing also that a particularly boisterous fraternity party was planned for the night of November 10. But, my hitchhiking companion and closest university classmate felt it was his duty to volunteer however reckless that would be; and he did.

The party proved more than boisterous and most of us who had not volunteered were in no shape to guard anything the next day. My volunteering classmate was especially damaged. He slept on a couch in the frat house and returned, or was returned, to his home up Avenue Road early the next morning. Meanwhile I returned to the students' residence and flopped into a very sound sleep.

I awoke next morning, Remembrance Day, to the sound of the Carillon in the *Soldier's Tower* across the road. My bleary thoughts drifted to my hapless friend. There was no way he could meet his assignment. I thought that charges would ensue and that he would be ceremoniously drummed out of the navy, an institution for which he had high regard. I resolved to call and rouse him into action.

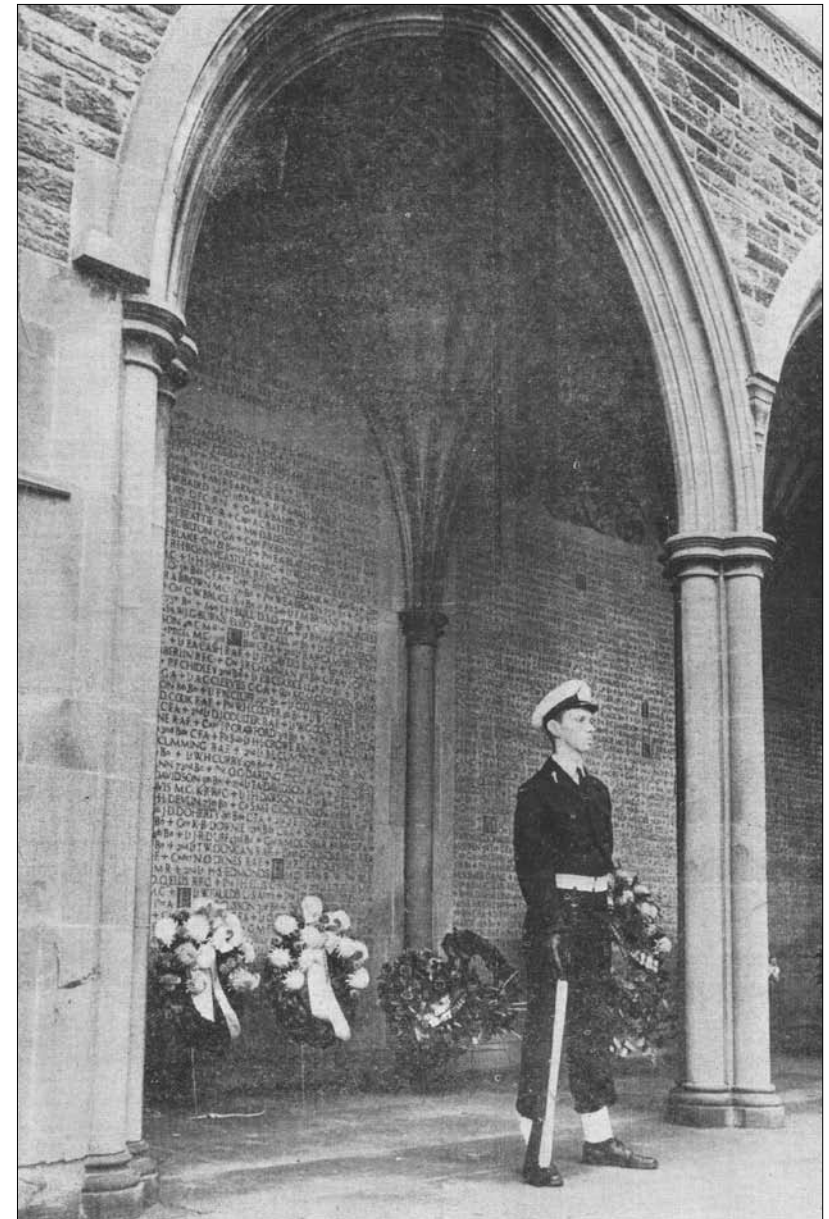
His mother answered the phone. "And how are *you*, Grant!" she asked as if speaking to the dead.

It transpired that my loyal friend had arrived home quite ill and that she had put him to bed with a cold compress; and no, he was not going to materialize at the Hart House tower. I was faced with a dilemma. If nobody appeared, the navy would be embarrassed and my friend disgraced. Only I could save the situation. I took a cold shower, fumbled for my uniform, could not find the proper shoes, and stumbled across the road just in time

to accept a rifle from my predecessor, a COTC (army) cadet. I shouldered the rifle which felt like a cannon, and stood as much at attention as my queasy, empty stomach and woozy head would permit. To add to the misery, it was drizzling rain and, as a finishing touch, a photographer from the *U of T Varsity* took photographs of me.

I imagined the headlines, “**Drunken sailor at Hart House**”, or “**University Cadet Arrested for Unmilitary Behavior.**” I considered what compensation I would exact on my fellow cadet whose bacon I was saving. Meanwhile I stood, dripping, disconsolate and disregarded at that bloody tower for four hours before I was relieved and could stagger back into bed.

Well, the next class day my friends showed me the *Varsity* with a double page picture of myself stiffly erect at the tower, my name at the bottom and words to the effect that I was guarding our country. I think I even got an extra \$7.00 for my pains. I was a minor celebrity, and I believe my overeager friend was more jealous than grateful.



*The Author at the Soldier's Tower, Hart House
November 11, 1956
(Varsity Photo)*



West Coast

Go West Young Man

Of all experiences in my young life, none remains as vivid as my first trip west. The *Ocean Limited* to Halifax opened my eyes to Canada's east coast, but it was a trip via the storied Canadian Pacific Railroad on *The Canadian* to Vancouver and Victoria that revealed to me the full scope of our marvelous country. The onerous pre-med years behind me, I was free for a spell to enjoy a great train ride. The navy provided us with roomettes, small cabins with a single seat that converted to a bed at night and occupied the available space. To use the sink, one had to partially dismantle the bed. The beds were high so we could lie and watch the vast panorama slip past by just opening our eyes. There was a luxurious diner, and an observation car with stairs that led to a glassed-in "dome" from which we could survey 360 degrees of steadily changing landscape.

The train left Toronto Union Station in the late afternoon and joined cars from Montreal at a junction near Sudbury. The

next morning I awoke to bright sunshine over Lake Superior. To my amazement, the terrain, while still Canadian Shield, was mountainous, and richly green with conifers. I was spellbound. We sped over and through a string of tunnels and trestles past towering cliffs, empty golden beaches, and rushing rivers. There were few towns along the way and in 1957 the Trans Canada Highway was not yet completed here. The scene was radiant and still, the blurred images of our rapid progress conjuring the Group of Seven paintings I had studied in school. I was transported and riveted to the wonders slipping by, so I could scarcely find the time to eat, but did.....I was 21.

Night fell again and we were still in Ontario. The Sleeping Giant loomed through the darkening haze, and this being May there was still some ice on Thunder Bay. Morning came as the train raced over the prairie. We stopped in Winnipeg, but it must have been at night as I remember little. We drank in the bar, sang songs, and chatted excitedly about what we were seeing. The fields were huge and ploughs crawled like black insects over the landscape. We passed the Alberta sloughs, black with migrating birds, and soon my comrades and I scrambled to the observation car to catch our first glimpse of the Rockies. In Calgary, the train had a bath to rid its windows of prairie dust.



Cadets enjoying the Observation Dome Car on the Canadian

As the train pulled out of Calgary that sunny afternoon, the Rockies appeared before us in regal splendor. We could not get enough of those grand mountains we had only heard of and seen in black and white prints. The scenes we passed were beyond my wildest expectations. We glided through storied Banff and Lake Louise, by mountain lakes and seemingly bottomless valleys. We marveled at the Five Mile Tunnel built nearly a century before where pioneering engineers had begun at both ends to meet exactly in the middle. As evening came we descended gently into the Yoho Canyon through the spiral tunnels that the train entered high and exited low.

Gordon Lightfoot had not yet written his *Railroad Trilogy*, but hearing it since never fails to evoke that existential experience of more than half a century ago. The Canadian Pacific's history we half appreciated as teenagers came vigorously alive. Alas, it is no more. *The Canadian* or its descendent is a seasonal luxury tour

for tourists, no longer Canada's aorta and no longer passing along Lake Superior or through the Yoho.

Morning found me dreamily in bed as we plunged through the Fraser Canyon with the river racing in flood far below us. The weather was overcast and a little hazy, but no less majestic for that. Later that morning our train pulled slowly and self-satisfyingly into Vancouver station. We packed up our kit and casually shuffled off the train. As we walked under our duffels along the platform we were greeted with an unwelcoming, "Cadets fall in!" and a tall, leathery petty officer loomed. As we spaced ourselves in line before him he demanded,

"Where are your uniforms?"

Silence...

"Change on the double and fall in here in five minutes," he ordered.

I imagine, rather than remember precisely, the pandemonium that broke out in the station washroom where a dozen flustered cadets frantically emptied their kit on to the floor. "You're in the Navy now!" murmured a comrade as we hurried humiliated and adjusting back to the platform. Forthwith we were marched briskly to the adjacent ferry dock.



The Vancouver Skyline, 1956



The four-hour trip to Victoria began as an anticlimax, but soon our spirits were revived by the splendid scenery and the mysterious disappearance of the now-dreaded petty officer (likely to the ferry's bar). In those days, the Victoria ferry left from downtown Vancouver. We watched the skyline of the city and singled out the Hotel Vancouver as the largest building – today invisible among the glass and steel towers that adorn the modern city. We cruised by Stanley Park and under the Lion's Gate Bridge. We had our first view of Howe Sound, Active Pass, and the Gulf Islands before slipping into tiny Victoria Harbor overlooked by the British Columbia Legislature and the storied Empress Hotel. A short bus ride to Esquimalt delivered us into the nurturing arms of HMCS *Naden*, the Navy's West Coast base, and what those in the east referred to disparagingly as the "yacht club."

HMCS Brockville 1956

Our division was selected for the first cruise on HMCS *Brockville*. She was a *Bangor* class minesweeper and antisubmarine vessel, but deployed as a coastal escort. Diesel-powered, the *Brockville* was only 160 feet long and could accommodate 11 UNTD cadets. Its anchor chain seemed a watch chain compared to the *Quebec*'s massive anchor cable. We hung our hammocks in the forward cabin and felt to the max every roll, tremor and pitch of the ship. Accompanied by two, sometimes three minesweepers we set out to circumnavigate Vancouver Island and then travel up the Columbia River to Portland, Oregon.



HMCS Brockville on duty in the North Atlantic during WWII

(Photo from Brockville Museum Website)

Unlike the huge and grumpy *Quebec*, the *Brockville* was a small “happy ship” whose 60 officers and crew seemed dedicated to the navy, their tasks and to educating a naïve group of university students. We had classes on everything associated with running a warship and ample opportunities to “con” the vessel, fire her guns and maintain station with, and signal to, her escorts. The latter was

conducted using flag signals, both semaphore and international signal flags hoisted on the mast. Likely obsolete now, these signals permitted communication that could not be overheard by an enemy. We were coached at navigation including pilotage, dead reckoning and the use of a sextant. Towards the end of the cruise, we summer reserve trainees had a chance to command the ship ourselves.

We anchored in Nanoose Bay near Victoria for several nights and during the day carried out exercises in the Strait of Georgia between Victoria and Vancouver. These included maneuvers with the other ships, firing the ship's only four inch gun, playing hide-and-seek with an American submarine and laying antisubmarine patterns of explosives behind the ship. The ship was equipped with mortar-like bombs called hedgehogs projected aft through the air, and depth charges dropped over the stern. We made several passes at an imaginary sub, and when it was “located”, a circle of these explosives were fired from the ship's quarterdeck. They arced through the air or off the stern into the water where they were set to explode at a certain depth to hopefully embrace and crush the sub. I brought my father's 8mm wind-up movie camera with me and caught the explosions on film. I marvel I was not arrested as a spy. The sub was located using Asdic (Sonar) that sent sound waves through the water to be reflected back by any object they encountered. Transmitting and answering “pings” alternated throughout the exercise.



Killing Fish in the Strait of Georgia

Imagine such an exercise just off a major metropolis now! Not only were these detonations within sight of the city, but also there were many duds that as far as I know remain rusting at the bottom. Environmentalists would certainly have had something to say about the fish and birds we destroyed.

During a four-hour stop in Nanaimo to take on water, we were granted leave in full uniform. Nanaimo had five thousand people then, but it must house 80,000 now. It seemed a frontier town, and the main industries were mining and forestry. We set out to conquer the town's reputed 27 pubs (that would be one for every 185 citizens), but managed only five.

Her tanks replenished, the *Brockville* moved out of Departure Bay and up the inside passage of Vancouver Island in line ahead with the fleet. We waited for the tide before passing through the much-feared Seymour Narrows. This narrow passage was guarded by treacherous Ripple Rock lurking three meters below the surface that had sunk 119 vessels and claimed 114 lives. In 1958, this navigation hazard was tunneled under from shore and packed with dynamite. A controlled explosion removed it, but in 1956, our captain treated it with much respect. We awaited slack tide before proceeding through the three mile channel to our

mainland anchorage in Bella Bella. Along the shore Indian villages and Thunderbird-topped totem poles marked ancient burial sites.

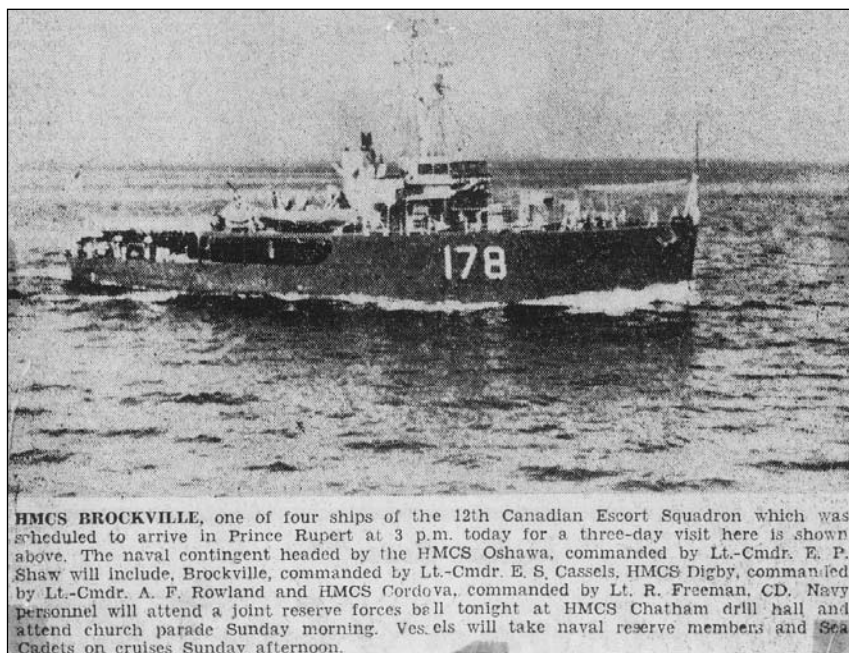


The Inside Passage between the Mainland and Vancouver

Prince Rupert, B.C.

The scenery was spectacular; the shores were lined with snow-capped and otherwise verdant hills. However, we had little time to look up from our mops and paint brushes before, under clouds and rain, we pulled alongside in Prince Rupert. Located not far below the Alaskan panhandle, this remote town was connected inland only by rail. An Indian tribe lived there served by an Anglican mission. The streets were unpaved, and signs of prosperity were few. Fishing, trapping, and forestry were the industries. Tall totem poles lined the mission where children played. We had tea at the local Bishop's house and were forbidden to visit the local bar. Good thing, too; it looked pretty tough! The "highlights" of our visit were a tour of the fish packing plant and

a church parade from HMCS *Chatham* to St Andrews Anglican church. The crew was unimpressed, but it was a great adventure for us.



Item in the Prince Rupert Daily News May 26, 1956

A ball is mentioned, but I don't remember it

Portland, Oregon

From Prince Rupert we headed into open sea and around The Queen Charlotte Islands. We travelled down the outside of Vancouver Island and the State of Washington, bound for the Columbia River and Portland, Oregon. One morning we were roused from our hammocks by a great swell as we rounded the dreaded Cape Flattery at the Northwest tip of Washington State. Most of the ship's company was ill and even I felt unwell until the news came "over the wire" that I had passed premedicine with second class honors and was now truly a medical student. I felt

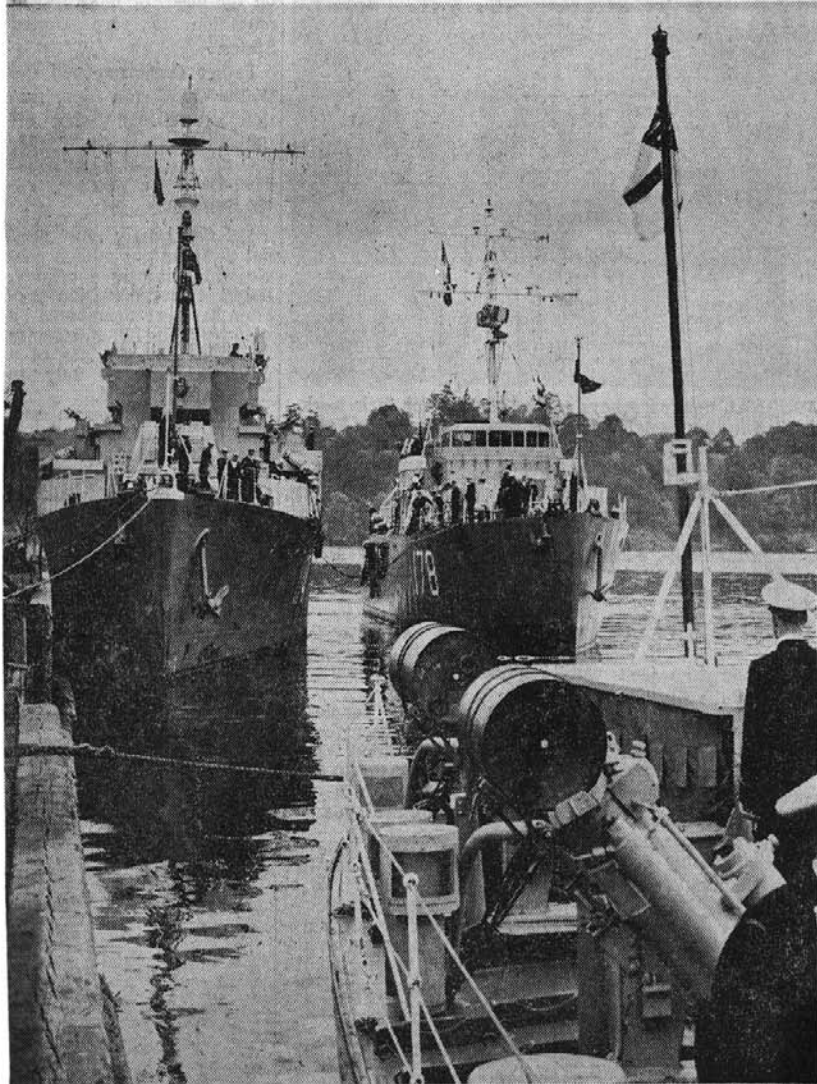
better at once - mind over matter.

We were to meet our accompanying vessels at the mouth of the Columbia River, and circled the lightship there for hours. There was serious flooding in the lower Columbia River, so that where the currents of the river met the tides and waves of the sea the ship pitched, rolled and seemed at times to do somersaults. Most of the ship's company was ill, and our mess was unlivable, both because of the pitching, but also because of the violent retching of most of its inhabitants. Under such circumstances, it was a liability to not be seasick. Fighting nausea and barely hanging on, I and a few others were detailed to clean up. Yuck!

We passed the lights of Astoria during a dim dawn and picked up the pilot who guided us through navigation buoys up the swollen river rushing twenty-six feet above its normal level. At its mouth the Columbia was a vast lake with farmhouses and silos poking above the water. Without the buoys that marked the river, we could not have made the passage. After the tossing sea we slipped through calm, silent, but swift-flowing waters along drowned farmland until higher ground was reached. Eventually we tied up in downtown Portland to the strains of John Philip Sousa. We suited up for the inevitable inspection and parade and, when finally liberated, rented a car to explore the Columbia canyon. We were treated to a dance by the USO that night and the sailors agreed that, unlike Prince Rupert, this was a good port.



Canadian Visitors Arrive



SQUADRON of Canadian mine sweepers came to city Friday. Ships will remain until Monday. In foreground, with pair of depth charges poised, is HMCS Digby. Others are HMCS Oskawa (left), flagship of squadron, and HMCS Brockville. Other member of squadron is HMCS Cordova, not shown here.

En route to Vancouver, we anchored again in Nanoose Bay where we attended a mess dinner on the quarterdeck with the captain and first lieutenant, and the stewards attended us. Unlike our experience on the *Quebec* the crew went beyond duty to make it a success. It was very formal requiring much spit and polish, toasts, speech-making and libation. The toast of the day was,

“To our wives and sweethearts; may they never meet.”

Imagine the scene. A dozen 21-year olds gathered around a table under a specially-rigged awning, among rigging and armaments, attended by older men, surrounded by a silent sea and forest and under a starlit sky. Surreal! Unfortunately we were being examined the next day and that lavish dinner was not good preparation.



HMCS Brockville tied alongside in Vancouver

After a brief stop in Vancouver, the cruise was over and *Brockville* headed for Esquimalt and dry-dock, and we headed for HMCS *Naden* and shore training.

HMCS Naden 1956-7



I was stationed at *Naden* for two summers during which I sailed on the *Brockville* and *Sussexvale* respectively. Barracks life was much like I have described on the East Coast, but more relaxed. There were sports facilities and a golf course adjacent to the base. We took full advantage of these and of the beautiful surroundings, camping in Cowichan, touring Vancouver Island, visiting Seattle and so on. There were classes, sports days, whaler races and the like, and there were adventures.



Nelles Block, Naden

One week-end we were ordered to ready whalers to sail west down the south coast of the island for an overnight in Sooke, then a remote inlet west of Victoria. Early on a sunny Saturday morning, we loaded supplies, manned those clumsy, but unsinkable vessels and set out from the jetty at Esquimalt. There were seven cadets in each boat and we were to be shepherded by a motor vessel containing the officer in charge. A light breeze carried us slowly out of the harbor past the small Pacific fleet and into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. We were well out into the shipping lane and reaching west in light airs, when the wind dropped. We were becalmed. The several whalers were scattered and the motor launch was nowhere to be seen. We sat still. Then someone noted that relative to the shore, we were going backward towards Vancouver at a rapid rate. Despite our navigation studies, nobody had reckoned on the incoming tide which rushes through the strait at several knots – not even the officer in charge.



Sailing the Whaler to Sooke before the Wind Died

Ever resourceful, we had reckoned on a thirst and surreptitiously included a case of beer among our provisions. The mission was saved! It was a beautiful summer's day, warm by local

standards. We cracked open the beer, relaxed in the warming sun and told stories while the tiny flotilla of clumsy whalers, sails drooping, drifted 180 degrees from the rendezvous. The distant city of Victoria drew lazily past. And so we spent the day until our panicky commanding officer found us, and prepared the motor launch to tow us to Sooke. Under tow, reclining in our “rescued” whaler without a care, sipping beer, singing with my comrades and enjoying a magnificent sunset dead ahead is a happy memory. Regrettably, I fear our embarrassed commanding officer would not share my sentiment.



Down the Ladder into a whaler

There were regattas in the harbor mainly for the amusement of the officers. They gathered on their quarterdecks, drink in hand, and placed bets while we toiled in whalers whose top speed would embarrass a snail. Our only joy was to toss the

unfortunate coxswain into the frigid harbor at the end of the race. After all, his only role was to count the stroke and nudge the tiller.



The Author Rowing Stroke on a Whaler

One Saturday morning in May, our division was undergoing intensive practice on the parade grounds for our part in *Battle of the Atlantic Sunday* the next day. The barracks seemed deserted and all was still except for the clop, clop of our boots on the parade square. We were being put through our paces by one tough petty officer known for his colorful, but fearsome dressings down of miscreant marchers. We marched in file and in line, sloped arms and presented arms, about turned and halted as we were required on such occasions. Each miscue by a cadet elicited a stream of invective richly leavened with language “that would make a sailor blush”. It was hot and sunny, and none of us wanted to be there. I dreamed of the golf course to break the boredom. After an hour or so of drill, the PO brought us to a halt.

“Right turn, preee...sent arms!” he bellowed.

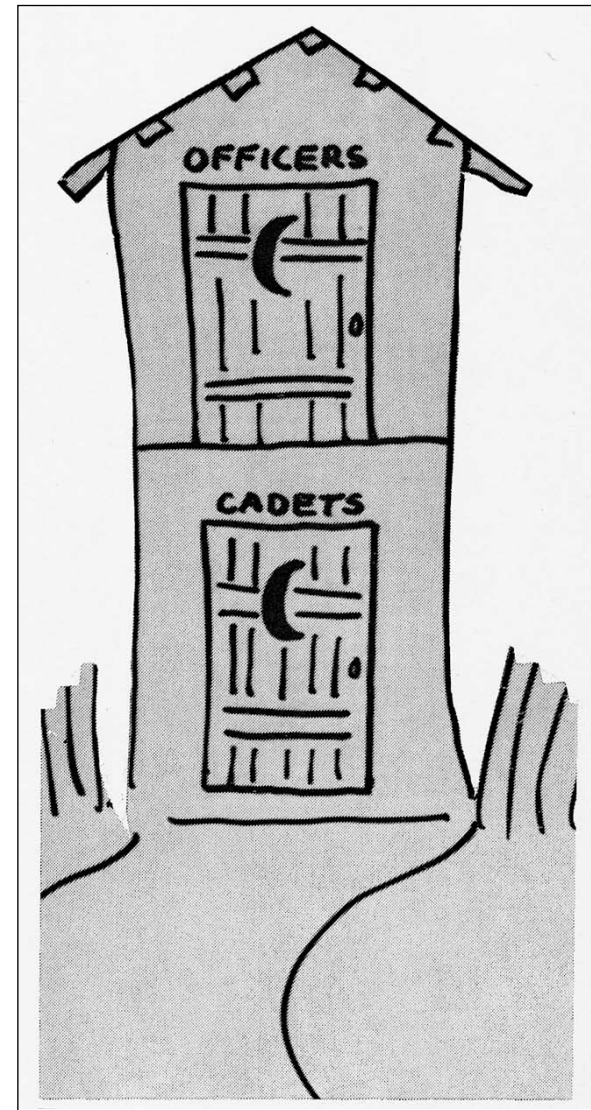
Slap, slap, slap, our hands struck our rifles as we executed the maneuver in unison. Then one poor soul in the front rank dropped his rifle on the pavement where its clattering fall echoed

around the square and shattered the morning stillness. We drew breath in anticipation of the PO's wrath. This was a most egregious error, and our comrade was in trouble. After a long and fearful pause, the PO for the first time that morning broke the silence in a civil voice.

“Don't worry cadet,” he said softly but witheringly.

“Nobody's useless. You can always be a bad example.”

Back at the Barracks we reveled in that comment, and subsequently my children often heard it aimed at them.



From the White Twist, 1956

HMCS *Sussexvale* 1957

My log for my final summer in the Navy is lost, so I must rely on photographs to jog my memory. The *Sussexvale* was a frigate with over a hundred men and a dozen cadets. It was more modern than the *Quebec* or *Brockville* and I recall being initially pleased that we had bunks rather than hammocks. The joy was short-lived, however. Once at sea we realized that hammocks maintain their position through gravity when the ship rolls. In a bunk, you risk being ejected onto the deck. Our cruise was to take us down the west coast of North America to Mexico stopping at several US ports along the way.

By this time many of my original comrades were on other duties and some had quit the navy altogether. Nevertheless, I soon had new shipmates and we enjoyed this trip immensely. I remember little of the crew, but the officers were a remote lot. The tone was set by the captain, and he was a stiff, humorless Royal Navy veteran who held himself in high regard, but not us. This persona did him little good.

I was on bridge watch as our captain supervised the ship's progress into Long Beach Harbor. On both sides, were anchored huge US navy heavy cruisers and carriers that loomed far above us. For the most part, these ships signaled a salute as befitting a visiting ally. However one large cruiser was under way opposite us and sent a long message. The captain demanded the signalman decode the flashed communication. The signalman hesitated.

“Out with it man” roared our captain.

The signalman replied that the cruiser's captain wondered if we would like to go into port on his davits (lifeboat hoists).

Our captain was furious. He stamped his feet and threw his hat in a tantrum. Unfortunately for him, the story was around the

ship in no time, much embellished in the telling. A sense of humor is always useful, even for officers.



There was no jetty in Santa Barbara, so we anchored in the outer harbor. Our commanding officer entered the mess and asked for volunteers to accompany some of the officers ashore. Eschewing the sailor's mantra, “never volunteer” I and others stepped forward and were transferred ashore by the ship's motor launch. It seemed we were invited to visit some local people in their home. Well, the home turned out to be a villa complete with a pool high behind the city and overlooking the harbor. To us it seemed a Hollywood dream house. The city had only about 50,000 people then. The villa and pool commanded the whole city and beyond it, the port's small fishing and pleasure boat fleet could be seen bobbing in the open sea sparkling in the afternoon sun.

The owners of the villa were a retired British naval captain and his wife who recognized our ships, and welcomed us as Commonwealth brethren. There was an ample supply of gin and tonic available and we spent an unexpectedly wonderful afternoon swimming in the pool, admiring the view, and chatting with our hosts and their neighbours. It appeared that this was how every afternoon was spent there, the only difference being our attendance. We required the duration of that afternoon to become inebriated, but the owners of the villa were already there. It was a paradise they no doubt found beyond their dreams. Evidently, though they wouldn't have admitted it, there was also great boredom that could only be dissolved by alcohol. I don't know how we got back to the ship, but the next morning we were sober and

back to work. I suspect our hosts were not.



I was on the morning watch beginning at 0400 on the port side of the bridge as we sailed south not far off the California coast. It was cool and dawn faintly glimmered to the east. I settled in my chilly perch at the landward side of the bridge with a warming cup of coffee, listening to the routine helm orders of the officer of the watch and the murmuring banter of adjacent crew members. The bridge was dimly lit to aid night vision, and the slow amber circuit of the radar scan confirmed that all was well. The sea was calm and no other ships were in view.

Suddenly I saw a large flash that obliterated the east's dim dawn. The cloudless sky was flooded with light from horizon to directly overhead. There was no sound and in a few seconds it was over. I had seen it most clearly; the others were looking away but were still aware of the brief, enveloping light.

“What could it be?” I asked my more-experienced companions. It couldn't be lightning as there was neither thunder nor cloud.

“An explosion?” we wondered. “But what kind of explosion would cause so vast a light from so far away?”

A radio tuned in squeakily and we awaited the news. Sure enough the newscaster reported that at exactly the right time, a nuclear bomb had been detonated on the Nevada test site. We marveled that we could witness the blast from hundreds of miles away, but no other explanation offered itself. It's as close to a nuclear explosion as I ever want to be, yet millions of Californians slept between us and it.



Sunday Service

It was customary for the ship's padre to give us a little sermon before we went ashore on leave, especially if vice was at hand, and if it was Sunday. It was just such an occasion when we let down the gangplank in San Diego Harbor. Once the ship was secured alongside, we stood in line while the officer of the watch inspected us, sending some cadets and sailors back to their mess if their uniform was not perfectly turned out. When the inspection was over, those of us remaining braced ourselves resignedly for the padre's homily. He had a stern message. It came to pass that Tijuana, Mexico was 28 miles from San Diego, the exact same distance as between Sodom and Gomorrah. He went on to describe the evils of those ancient towns, and admonished us to eschew their modern Mexican counterpart.

When at last released from these formalities, sailors and cadets rushed ashore heading where? You guessed it; to Tijuana of course.

This city just over the border specialized in those activities and goods that were illegal in California. We were greeted by hawkers with watches up their arms available at cut-rate prices. A steal! We saw a bullfight, and risqué acts on the street and in the bars and night clubs. It was great fun, and we managed our way back to the ship without joining the damned.

Promotion

My last story also occurred on the *Sussexvale*. At the end of the cruise we spent time cruising the Strait of Georgia among the mountains and deep green bays that beautify the British Columbia Lower Mainland. As a cadet I continued to work the ship and one morning found myself alone with mop and pail scrubbing the ship's deck. It was boring work, and my mind was on other things, probably girls, when the Tannoy boomed,

“Cadet Thompson, report to the bridge.”

“Oh boy, what have I done now?” I wondered, fearing the evaporation of my coming leave.

Upon arrival at the bridge, an indifferent officer of the watch handed me a telegram, exciting great apprehension of what it might contain.

“I’ve been made sub lieutenant,” I exclaimed with astonishment and joy.

“Back to your station, cadet.” ordered the grumpy officer with neither congratulation nor compassion, and I soon found myself again, mop in hand, bemoaning my fate. It seems that no change in status was forthcoming until we made port. I was only a reserve officer anyway.



I remained in the navy for two weeks after my unheralded promotion, such as it was. Although I had no officer's uniform or single stripe, I was admitted to the wardroom at *Naden*, forbidden fruit till now. It was anti climax. Among the patrons there were bored officers who drank too much and played endless pool. They seemed to have little to say to me. My friends were elsewhere or were on their way home. I was about to do clinical work and saw no future in the navy. I spun out the time, then packed up my duffle, took the ferry to Seattle, and boarded the *Great Northern* to Detroit across the river from my home in Windsor.



With no further involvement or communication with the navy, I was surprised one day in 1962 to receive in the mail a certificate indicating that I was now Surgeon Lieutenant in Her Majesty's Canadian Fleet with seniority to 1st June, 1959...“Given by Command of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada...” I was glad His Excellency was keeping track of me then, but I have not been promoted since.



My Commission



Epilogue



Manning the Ship's Cutter

Since then, immersed in training and career, I thought little of my navy days. I moved from Toronto to Tavistock, to Montreal, to Vancouver and to England, before my wife and I settled in Ottawa in 1968. Meanwhile, my parents stored my navy mementos in their Windsor home. After mom and dad died, the keepsakes

were transferred to my basement. It wasn't until the early 2000's that I began to explore the assembled relics of my past. Among my souvenirs were 8 mm movies taken on my father's circa 1950 windup Brownie movie camera. I remembered then that my father gave me this camera for my western trips so I could record my forthcoming adventures in Kodachrome. Sure enough, the navy movies were amongst his things, disregarded for half a century. So too, was my father's ancient, but still functioning, projector. I doubt if he or I had ever viewed the last of these movies.

Projected against the basement wall, the pictures astonished me. There was my 21-year-old self with my then closest friends recording the secrets of the Royal Canadian Navy. The shots of us on leave were entrancing enough, and I experienced again my first glimpse of the Canadian Rockies. I had also photographed much of navy and UNTD life. There were clips of jackstay transfers, whaler races, slacking UNTDs and antisubmarine explosions that should have got me arrested for subversive activity (McCarthy was then in his full rage in America.) There were photos of my friends painting a bollard, a cadet snoozing on duty watch, our sister ships at sea and too many other activities to relate here. Memories of that long-ago experience flooded back. I soon found a way to capture the movies on my computer. This permitted me to edit them, set the action to martial music, and create a half-hour DVD.



I was aware that many contemporary friends and acquaintances had also served in the UNTD. When my daughter introduced me to her fiancé's family, I learned his father had been in Halifax and Esquimalt with me, but on different ships - so we had never met. I discovered another ex-UNTD in the Canadian Senate. I invited them to see the movie, and they too were transported back. From then, we recruited three other ex-“Untidies” comprising the “Old Oars”. The Oars organized annual events for UNTD veterans on Parliament Hill: a mess dinner, a dine-the-ladies night and seminars on the Arctic, Pacific and university officers training.



The Old Oars and their Coxwain, 2005

The UNTD and its army equivalent the COTC were discontinued in 1968 after the much-lamented armed services unification. There is no institutional memory of the program, and no complete UNTD list extant. Creating our own list, we attracted visitors from across Canada. These colleagues' stories demonstrate how much Canada has lost, and the opportunities today's youth are denied.



Dine the Ladies Reception in the Senate Rotunda, 2006

Several years ago, my wife and I received an invitation to attend the wedding of our next-door neighbour's son. We noted from the invitation that the bride's father was a Dr. John Butt. Could it be my term lieutenant at *Naden* a half century ago? Indeed, when I showed the Vancouver Division photograph to the bride she was amazed – there was her dad as a young man in naval regalia. He has visited us many times since. I showed him my log from 1956 where, neatly penciled in the margins were his critical comments. We shared a laugh at our mutual naiveté.



Producer Rob Roy called - could he see my films? Clips from these were subsequently incorporated into the documentary, *No Country for Young Men* that extolls the virtues of the university officers training programs and advocates their restoration. In 2009 *Breakout* attracted 180 people to a 9-hour exchange of ideas in the West Block of Parliament. The discussion focused on the need for and practicality of university participation in officer training. We

heard from eminent historians, active and retired generals and naval officers, parliamentarians, university administrators, students and a committed audience of old UNTDs. As the Old Oars bow out, we hope others will move the project forward.



University officers' training is of great importance to Canada. Many leaders of government, business, armed forces and academe declare that their university officer's training was a most valued component of their education and an asset to their subsequent careers. Moreover, the army and navy acquired a ready reserve of highly-educated officers, the country inherited many of its civilian leaders, and Canadian society gained a cadre of citizens who understood and appreciate the armed services. These assets are at risk today.



For me, the most important benefit of university reserve officer training is citizenship. Newfoundlanders and Vancouverites say that their experience made them Canadian. No Canadian institution but the military has the infrastructure to train leaders and provide a national experience. Our population clings along the US border where youth looks south for vacation and experience. National programs such as the COTC and UNTD brought young Canadians together from coast to coast. They promoted pride and esprit. Peter C. Newman, interviewed for *No Country for Young Men*, was an immigrant Jew. He recalls with pride what the CANADA shoulder patch on his uniform meant to him. Military considerations aside, these programs helped build our nation, and

are as needed now as then. My story, part history, part memoir, recalls fun and adventure 55 years ago. I hope also, it conveys a sense of country. I wish my children had such an opportunity.



Appendix

Fellow Cadets

Gordon Sellery	London	Anesthesiologist
Bob Lee	Calgary	Neuroscientist
Gerry Helleiner	Toronto	Economist
John Hambley	Peterborough	Urologist
Ted Avruskin	New York	Pediatrician
Stan Avruskin	Toronto	Lawyer (Deceased)
John Butt	Vancouver	Forensic Pathologist
(Term Lieutenant Vancouver division 1956)		

The Old Oars

Bob Duncombe	Bobby'oar
Peter Milsom	Pet'oar
Jim Maxwell	Geograph'oar
Hon. Bill Rompkey	Senat'oar
Grant Thompson	Doct'oar
Bob Wooton	Poet'oar
Janice Marshall	Coxswain

Events

Rendezvous 2005	Railway Committee Room	Mess Dinner
Rendezvous 2006	Railway Committee Room	Dine the Ladies
Rendezvous 2007	Senate Speaker's Quarters	Arctic Seminar
Rendezvous 2008	East Block	Pacific Seminar
Rendezvous 2009	Room 200, West Block	University Officers' Training
Rendezvous 2010	Railway Committee Room	Dine the Ladies



Parliament of Canada - Site of the Old Oars' Rendezvous

A Brief History of University Officer Training in Canada

By Breakout Educational Network

As a newly independent country and a former British colony, Canada adopted an officer training system based on the British model. The Royal Military College (RMC) opened in Kingston in 1876. Informal university rifle corps were encouraged at Canadian universities. But eventually something more formal was sought. Based, once again, on a British model, a Canadian Officer Training Corps (COTC) was established at McGill University in Montreal in November 1912. With the beginning of the First World War, the system gained acceptance by the military, universities and the public. By 1916, seventeen universities had an officer training corps on campus. Envious of the success this produced, the New York Times in 1917 published an article praising the advantages of the COTC and recommended a similar model be taken up by the US Army then preparing to enter the war. Like most things military, the training corps' popularity waxed and waned during war or peace. However the COTC continued to exist and was able to provide a substantial core of the Canadian Army's officers mobilized for the Second World War.

Experiencing difficulties meeting their quotas of well-educated officers, the Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force adopted similar programs. The University Air Training Plan was initiated in 1941 and was later renamed the University Reserve Training Program (URTP). In 1942 the Navy opened a two-year program at HMCS Royal Roads and initiated a University Naval Training Division (UNTD) program at universities in 1943. These programs were continued after WW2 with the express intention of providing basic training for officers in case the country was again mobilized for war and to provide a pool of advocates for defence and the military amongst the future leaders of the nation. This support accompanied changes to the Regular Forces officer development system consistent with the need for more highly-educated

professionals. RMC was closed in WWII and reopened in 1948 as a tri-service college eventually becoming a degree granting institution in 1959. A Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) was established in 1952 as a sponsorship program for officers enrolled at universities which included a subsequent commitment to serve in the Regular Forces. ROTP candidates were added to the strength of each university Reserve Officer contingent and trained with them during the scholastic year and summer service.

Participating Universities

Eastern Command

- St. Francis Xavier University
- St. Mary's University
- St. Thomas University
- Memorial University
- Acadia University
- College Ste. Anne
- Dalhousie University
- Mount Allison University
- University of New Brunswick
- St. Dunstan's College

Québec Command

- Sir George Williams College
- Loyola College
- Bishop's University
- University of Montreal
- McGill University
- Laval University

Central Command

- Carleton College
- McMaster University
- Queen's University
- University of Western Ontario
- University of Toronto
- University of Ottawa
- Ontario Agricultural and Veterinary College

Prairie Command

- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Manitoba

Western Command

- University of Alberta
- University of British Columbia

Military support for the officer-cadet concept was based on the benefit of having a large number of potential officers, schooled in military basics, who could be drawn upon, in times of military mobilization or crisis. This had been proven necessary in both WWI and WWII and was expected to prove necessary for a potential conflict with the Soviets. However as the Cold War dragged on, strategic thinking changed. The perspective of “forces in being” came to dominate military thinking and as the costs of maintaining the technological edge of the Army and Air Force in Europe grew, the need to press all resources to the front grew in importance. Investments in the future, unless of proven value, were perceived as superfluous and a drag on getting resources for the present. Unless the officer cadet programs turned out sufficient reserve officers or provided a substantial recruiting base for Regular Force officers the 1964 Suttie Commission, which was studying military efficiency, recommended the programs be shut-down. As if to prove the point, recruitment of officer cadets at the first-year entry level was greatly reduced. Intake at the University of Toronto COTC went

from over 100 to just 10 in the autumn of 1966. When the program was formally ended in May 1968 there was little left to draw any Reserve or Regular Forces recruits from, or to make loud objections. It was a case of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What were the *features* of the former programs?

The COTC, its sister programs in the Navy and Air Force, and Canada's military colleges - RMC, Royal Roads and CMRSJ (*College militaire royal de Saint-Jean*) - were all managed centrally by a body known as the Joint Services University and Canadian Services College Committee. Contingents at each university were managed by a Joint Services University Training Committee, usually chaired by the university president or an appointed dean.

Each contingent consisted of the trainees and contingent officers. The commanding officer and the resident staff officer were usually Regular Force; however, a suitable qualified academic (with military background) could be appointed commanding officer – and many were. ROTP candidates at the university could be attached to their corresponding service contingent.

Trainees were provided with clothing, accoutrements and any equipment required. They were paid for participation in training sessions and received allowances for travel and other expenses. Universities provided accommodation in terms of offices and training space which was paid for by the Forces. UNTD officers usually paraded at the local Naval Reserve Unit during the school year.

As Grant Thompson's experience shows in *My Naval Career*, cadets were given an opportunity to travel across Canada, visit both coasts and meet their peers from other provinces which contributed to sense of nation-building that few young people have today.

In its heyday in the late 1950's the officer-cadet training programs in the Army alone enrolled over 3,000 university students at 27 campuses across Canada. There were approximately 105 full time military staff attached to the program from full colonels to warrant officers and clerical staff. The UNTD and the URTP had less enrollment but were well represented nationally, bringing the total number of students involved to almost 5,000.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

Breakout Educational Network has a plan.....in fact, a 7-Year Plan! Take a look at our website at www.sevenyearproject.com.

The primary focus of Breakout's effort to renew an officer training program at universities, has been to develop public attention and support for the initiative. A key element of that effort has been to produce a trilogy of documentary films that will not only intellectually engage and familiarize an audience with the concept of the former program in Canada, and it's strengths elsewhere, but capture their emotional attention and commitment. To date, two films have been completed.

The first film, *"No Country for Young Men"* revisits the memories of Canada's lost tradition of university military training when citizenship, leadership and service were part of a university education. A quote from the film says it clearly:

"It is important for men and women that go into strictly civilian life to know something about the details of the role of a military in a democratic country like ours. And I think that having their presence in the provincial legislatures and the Parliament of Canada is an unequivocal plus."

Ed Broadbent, Former leader of NDP,
URTP University of Toronto.

The second film, *"For Queen & Country"* explores how graduates of the corps in the United Kingdom become success stories in civilian life through

leadership lessons that will benefit them and their communities for the rest of their lives. At Cambridge University, they produce great minds, not only through the lecture halls, but through military training in Britain's Officer Training Corps. A quote from the film:

"University is interesting in that it teaches you how to think. It's stepping you into another dimension. Officer Training Corps not only builds on that but it also builds on your own confidence to lead. It's actually creating leaders. University doesn't focus on that at all."

Tobias Ellwood, Member of Parliament and OTC graduate,
London, UK

Why can't Canadian students participate in such a wonderful program?

The third film is about officer training in the United States. It also takes an in-depth view of the crisis in civil-military relations in our society today. This film is in pre-production, and dependant on funding, will be available in 2011.

On Oct 21, 2009, Breakout Educational Network co-sponsored with the UNTD "Old Oars" a sold-out symposium at Room 200, Centre Block, Parliament Hill to bring together senior administrators from universities, the military and government, along with business and student representatives to design what a renewed officer training program would look like. The title chosen was ***"Leadership, Citizenship and Nation-Building for our Times – Is There a Role for Officer Training at Canadian Universities?"*** The hosts were Senators Bill Rompkey and Pamela Wallin. Speakers were: Jack Granatstein, Professor Emeritus at York University, John Cowan former principle of Royal Military College, Donald Wallace Executive Director of the Ontario Centre for Engineering and Public Policy, Dr. Douglas Bland, Chair of Defence Management Studies, Queen's University, and George Roter, Co CEO Engineers Without Borders. Mercedes Stephenson of Breakout was the moderator.

From that symposium, the University of Alberta issued a publication outlining the history of the COTC, UNTD and URTP at the University of Alberta and staked its claim to run the first pilot program of a revised officer cadet program in Canada.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Contact: Robert Roy
Head of the 7-Year Project
Tel: (416) 923 1105
rroy@stornoway.com
Website: www.sevenyearproject.com

“This is a nation building organization, or was and should be again. It gives you a knowledge of Canada. It gives you an experience of Canada. And I think now is the time to bring back the UNTD and the COTC and the URTP, to give Canadian students that option. They will learn to be Canadians. They will meet other Canadians. They will get an identity that they never had before.”

Senator William Rompkey
UNTD Memorial University

“We must find a way to re-convince society that the military is an important national asset. And the way to do that is to perhaps re-introduce programs like the COTC and, which will expose most of our people, at least a fairly larger proportion of Canadian citizens to it.”

Lt. General (ret) Charles Belzile
COTC Universit  de Montreal

“I look at OTC as one of the ways, one amongst several where our student can realize their own potential adventure training, learning leadership, learning something about command and something about being in a disciplined organization.”

Lord Wilson
Master of Peterhouse College, Cambridge

“I think, particularly with diminishing military forces around the country, it’s important that people see the military as being part of normal life and part of normal activity, be it academic activity or working activity.”

Jennifer Rigby Bursar of Churchill College,
Cambridge and OTC Graduate



No Country for Young Men

In a by-gone era, the bells at Canadian universities once rang out in tribute for students in uniform, when young people received army, navy and air force training on campus. Through the decisive decades of the 20th Century, the programs of the Canadian Officers Training Corps produced leaders of business, politics and the military. Then, in 1968, the COTC was suddenly abolished.

No Country For Young Men revisits the memories of Canada's lost tradition of university military training when citizenship, leadership and service were part of a university education. 1 HR **DVD**

To Order *No Country for Young Men*:

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Dr. Neville Poy, a retired doctor and the former Honorary Colonel of Toronto's Queen's York Rangers, traveled to Cambridge University with a documentary team to witness what makes the OTC one of the most popular clubs on campuses across the UK. 1 HR **DVD**

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The Author Provides a Bio-Sketch In His Own Words

I am Professor Emeritus (Medicine), University of Ottawa. From 1980 to 1997 I was Chief of the Division of Gastroenterology, University of Ottawa. I graduated from the University of Toronto in 1960. After a year of general practice in Tavistock, Ontario (Population 1000), I did postgraduate training in medicine and Gastroenterology at the Montreal General Hospital and the Vancouver General Hospital. A McLaughlin Foundation Fellowship supported a year of research at the Hammersmith Hospital, London, England before joining the University of Ottawa and Ottawa Civic Hospital in 1968. During 1977-78, a Nuffield Foundation Fellowship supported sabbatical leave at the University of Bristol. There, I wrote *The Irritable Gut*, published by University Park Press in 1979. This book won an award from the American Medical Writers Association. A 2nd book *Gut Reactions* was published by Plenum, (now De Capo Press) and had four printings. A third book *The Angry Gut: Coping with Colitis and Crohn's Disease* was released in April, 1993 and is in its fifth printing. A 4th book *The Ulcer Story* was published in 1996. Collaborative books include *The Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders* with Dr. DA Drossman and others in 1993 and 2000 (Rome I, II & III), and *The Irritable Bowel* with Dr. KW Heaton, published by Health Press in 1999. *The Irritable Bowel* was "highly commended" by the British Medical Journal and a second edition was published in 2003. I am author of 290 scientific and lay articles dealing mainly with functional bowel disease and serve on several international committees concerned with the Classification and

Diagnostic Criteria of Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders ("The Rome Criteria"). I have presented over 230 scientific or educational reports to professional audiences in 5 continents. From 1972 to 1984 I was responsible for the introduction of a new curriculum. I was Assistant Dean for Clinical and Community Affairs in the Faculty of Medicine (1984 to 1991) and served on the Ottawa-Carleton District Health Council. In 1994-5, I was Visiting Professor in Medicine at the University of Bristol. In 1998, I received awards for excellence from the University of Ottawa, and the Ontario Association of Gastroenterology. In 2000, I became a Life Member of the Ontario and Canadian Medical Associations and received a Janssen award for Gastroenterology at the American Gastroenterology Association meeting in San Diego. In 2006, while retired from clinical practice (30/06/99), I remain active in Clinical Trial Consulting, medical education, research medico legal work and writing about functional gastrointestinal disorders. I was president of the international Functional Brain-Gut Research Group from 2000-2002 and received their Senior Investigator award in 2006. My latest book, *The Placebo Effect in Health: Combining Science and Compassionate Care* was published in 2005. The 3rd edition of the Rome Criteria was published by Degnon Press (2006). My 8th book, *Understanding the Irritable Gut, The Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders* was published in 2008. I received a lifetime achievement award from The Rome Foundation in 2008 and continue writing on scientific and non-scientific subjects.

W. Grant Thompson

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Books by W. Grant THOMPSON

The Irritable Gut: Functional Disorders of the Alimentary Canal (275pp)
1979 University Park Press, Baltimore 0-8391-1309-9

Gut Reactions: Understanding Symptoms of the Digestive Tract (377pp)
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The Angry Gut: Coping with Colitis and Crohn's Disease (350pp)
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Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (370pp)
1994 Reprinted 1997 Degnon Press 0-316-19342-9
(with Drossman DA, Richter JE, Talley, NJ, Thompson WG,
Corazziari E, Whitehead WE.. Little, Brown. Boston, 1994)

The Ulcer Story:
The Authoritative Guide to Ulcers, Dyspepsia and Heartburn (413pp)
1996 0-306-45275-8
[Note: Plenum Bought by Perseus in 1999.]

Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (764pp)
2000 Second Edition. Degnon Press 0-9656837-2-9
(With Drossman DA, Corazziari E, Talley, NJ, Whitehead WE.)

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (60pp) with Ken Heaton
1999 Health Press Oxford, U.K. 1-899541-97-7

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (94pp) with Ken Heaton (Second Edition)
2003 Health Press Oxford, U.K. 1-903734-33-9

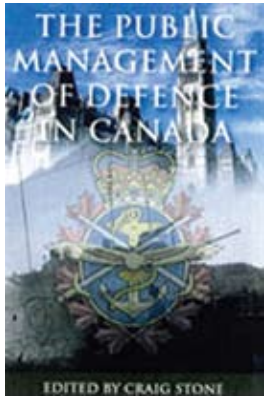
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2005 Prometheus Amherst NY 1-59102-275-4

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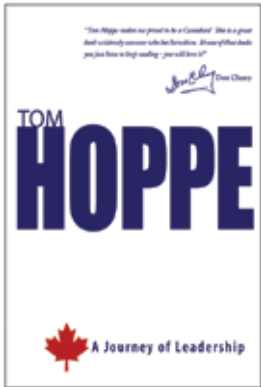


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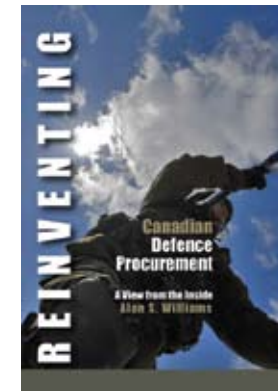
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