

THE BOOK THAT
ALMOST
COULDN'T BE



WILL OGDEN

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ALMOST
COULDN'T BE

WILL OGDEN

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V V

Marcel S. Blanchette
Black River, Ontario



FALSE DUCK IS.

Lake Ontario - 1829

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

(also called Swetman Is.)

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ABBREVIATIONS

Capt = Captain (N)
Cdr = Commander
LCdr = Lieutenant Commander
Lt = Lieutenant
S/Lt = Sub Lieutenant

C.O. = Commanding Officer
X.O. = Executive Officer
#1 = First Lieutenant
O.O.D. = Officer-of-the-Day
O.O.W. = Officer-of-the-Watch

HMCS = Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
RCN = Royal Canadian Navy
RCN(R) = (the same) Reserve

CPO = Chief Petty Officer
PO = Petty Officer
LS = Leading Seaman
AB = Able Seaman
OS = Ordinary Seaman

M.A.A. = Master-at-Arms
Coxs'n = Coxswain
Bos'n = Boatswain
Foc'sle = Forecastle
AWOL = Absent Without Leave

HMS = Her Majesty's Ship
USS = United States Ship
A/A = Anti-Aircraft



Dedication

It is not uncommon for an author on lift-off to write: "To my dear wife, for her patience and support, making possible the gestation of ... etc." During one of her many proof-reading sessions, SHE read the above draft.

Did we have a low-pressure system? She took exception to it: "I'm going out .. so I can talk to REAL people!"

In light of this apparent ingratitude, and to minimize any future conflict in our literary lives ... I hereby re-dedicate this wee book to our two family dogs:- "Mowgli" and "Nash".

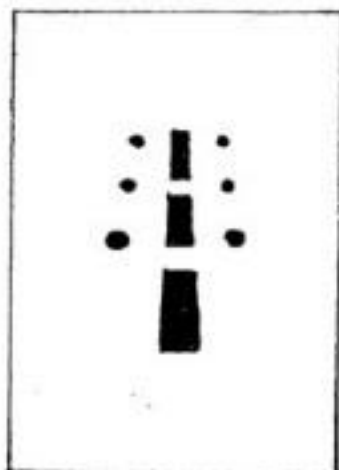
* *

Mowgli is 12 and very intelligent. He should be .. he was born in a rural area, with wolves. A cross Border Collie, Terrier, Lab, Spaniel. Though half blind, he thinks he owns our home, and enforces the house-rules. Nash is about 3, a Libertarian, rescued by Gretta from death-row. A 45-pound pure-bred Beagle, he has great difficulty persuading his 28-pound senior that he has rights to one chair and, maybe, half a couch. SNORES.

Their fights, demands for regular exercise on leashes, snacks as rewards, and loving attention, all prompted me one day in utter frustration to consider abandoning this project. Then, remembering the Farley Mowat book about HIS dog, I thought:

"The Book That Couldn't Be"
Well ... ALMOST.

Acknowledgments



The following deserve my specific thanks: Gretta O. for resisting the urge to throw out my rotten diaries; Our three grown children for yawning so little when these tales were told and re-told ad infinitum; Son Allan for help with titles; Daughter Meg for urging computer use (I didn't!); Friends who relayed to me the WW II R.N. Toast; and my cousin's husband Harry who began chronicling his RCAF experiences before death intervened.

Others have inspired me through their stories about things naval. Among them: John Harbron, Archie Hodge, Yogi Jenson, Fraser McKee, George Moore, R. Williamson. Also, my own Father and Father-in-law (both deceased), each of whom wrote about some of his experiences. And, remember: Canadian tax dollars paid for our training. Without them, none of these tales would have occurred.

Some of the naval officers who had impacts upon my own early training were: Peter Cornell, Herbie Little, A.A. MacLeod, Bob McRae and Dick Steele. Many of the later influences and associates show up in the stories which follow. If I were to try naming them all, some could be offended, either due to their being included in this madness, or the inadvertent exclusion of their names. They shall remain nameless on this page except to be thanked en masse for enriching my life. Several of them still rank among my closest friends ... types one could always turn to when in need.

HELP ME - M'AIDEZ! ... ALL OF YOU READ THIS BOOK!



Author's Notes

This little book's purpose is mainly to entertain you. Along its string of anecdotes, I hope that the reader occasionally may find a pearl. Very rarely have I presumed to impart any wisdom. If you come up dry in that department, it may mean simply that you are already wiser than the author.


Are we dealing here with auto-biography? To some extent yes. Most stories involving the X.O. did occur. HMCS "Porte St. Jean" was a real ship; there were real Training Cruises. Most times and dates came from real personal records dating back to 1948-53.

There is, however, some fiction. Ladies names are imaginary, as are the names of about ten of the ship's company. If they were competent and did no noticeable wrong, chances are their names are real. On the other hand, if they were caught by circumstances in awkward predicaments, "any resemblance between such characters and real persons, alive or dead, is pure coincidence".

A few episodes may have occurred in 1952 or in 1954. They are here because their oddity or humour demanded inclusion ... to relieve the boredom in otherwise flat spots of the narrative. Those, plus any errors in travelogue or naval lore, are solely the responsibility of the author.

Will Ogden,
South Bay, Ontario.
6th February, 1999.

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Prologue



Why should one ever aspire to be an author? Especially with no training in the craft? First, lack of sanity would help. A psychiatrist told my Father that only 15% of the general population met all HIS criteria for sanity. Methinks I fit into the 85% but, maybe that shrink had a vested interest in the majority group?

So, what drives one to this form of craziness? From individual authors, we may get a wide variety of answers depending on age, circumstance or personal experience. Ego or vanity may also play a part. At least you must THINK that you have some sort of potential as a writer. But will anybody want to read it? That is the gamble! Since this venture may not even recover printing costs, there must be some other reason. Why now? In my case it has something to do with convergence or with things happening in THREES.

- (1) MEMORY OVERLOAD - Back in school days, years before that game was invented to make trivia a national pastime, a friend suggested that I was "a veritable walking encyclopaedia of useless flippin' information". Fifty years later, he is an eminent judge. It is high time I took his advice: Cleanse my cluttered mind; empty all of those un-used facts upon unsuspecting readers; use the memorabilia and journals before cellar mildew renders them illegible!

- (2) THREE SCORE AND TEN - Within two weeks, I am due on that plateau. Time to 'pass the torch', maybe? Is there such a thing as mildew of the mind? More and more, I need spare grey cells to help me recall what day it is and which bills to pay. Two years ago, Gretta and I moved from the big city to this quiet rural setting. Now we're semi-retired, what better place in which to do a book? - provided the snow stops and the ruddy grass doesn't start growing again next month.
- (3) DOMESTIC PEACE - Last Christmas, our daughter Meg and her friend Mark announced their wedding was to be next Fall. Advice from Gret's cousin for the Father-of-the-Bride: "Stand back and let the women handle it!" On 22 January, I saw the wisdom of his words: the broth needs no more cooks. The BOOK is my great escape ... the best way to stay out of trouble, so I thought. Then the other day, SHE asked: "What have you done around here besides mow grass or write a book?" Some replies cannot be printed ... because they remain unspoken. I'm still groping for one.

If those three colliding forces were not sufficient reason for spilling out fading memories of life in our Naval Reserve, to-day's news helped to bring them into focus. At 3:00 p.m. EST the announcement came of NATO air strikes against some Yugoslav targets in Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Canadian Forces are involved, albeit in a small way so far. Regardless of whom is on the right side, military hostilities have erupted once again in the Balkans, flash-point of WW I, just north of the 'cradle of civilization,' so-called. Our Navy has had ships in the Adriatic for several years.

* * *

Of the hundreds of WW I and II veterans I have met, only one or two seem to have enjoyed the fighting or killing. Most abhorred it and were reluctant to talk.

But, they all are REALISTS, which is more than can be said for the Peaceniks I've encountered. The Cold War MAY be over; but human nature has changed very little over the past 5 millennia or more. We still kill each other in the name of race, religion or some 'ism' when, if the truth be known, the goal is often security of access to resources. Our hunger for consumption grows incessantly; advertizing thrives on this and promotes it, while our non-renewable resources decline. Until mankind learns how to share what is left of the planet, we will need armed forces to protect our interests ... especially to enforce PEACE. Failure to do that in Ethiopia, Manchuria and Sudetenland led to WW II.

A few years ago, a young man phoned me on behalf of the Canadian Peace Alliance ... trying to raise money. "Why?" I asked. Well, it was to buy advertizing to persuade the government to cancel the contract for new EH-101 helicopters. Knowing full well that they were very (maybe too) costly, again I asked "Why?"

His simplistic reasoning scared me: The Cold War is over; Russia was the only threat to Canada; Now we can scrap the Navy ... NOT to reduce the deficit; but to free up all that money for many other noble causes. From his accent I determined his folks had endured the WW II London 'blitz'; but that was all in the past ... There would be no more wars. I noted there were still several small wars on-going. Not our problem. When I asked what Russia would do with her huge fleet (over 350 submarines), he said they couldn't afford it, and would scrap all of them.

Never a thought they might sell some to Iraq, Iran, Libya, Indonesia, China. Some of this happened since. Hadn't thought of search-and-rescue chopper needs, or of our moral contract with their pilots. I pledged no money; but they DID succeed, for all the wrong reasons. Who teaches these young people such distorted logic? Our schools need to look harder at history's lessons before they plan their future paradise on earth.

* Those REALIST veterans noted above will also tell you what our current NATO planners seem to under-rate: nobody ever SETTLED a war without troops on the ground.

Although this book is partly about the 'fun' side of training in the Armed Forces, don't be misled by whatever humour you may find here. It is also about a very serious business. The humour is like a flux that fuses the human bonds formed during tough training ... the best way we know to form effective fighting units.

Whether on the land, at sea or in the air, that is the role of our Forces:- combat-readiness. I firmly believe this; but it's too easy for me to talk, never having had to fire a shot in anger. And now, I am too old, unless cornered on my own turf. So, once again, YOU will have to judge and come to your own conclusion. If you agree, then this writing will have been worth much more than the effort. If you don't agree, then you may be condemned to repeat mistakes of the past. All I will have is the satisfaction of having tried.

W. E. Ogden

Will Ogden, South Bay, Ontario.
Wednesday, 24th March, 1999.



National War Memorial in Ottawa

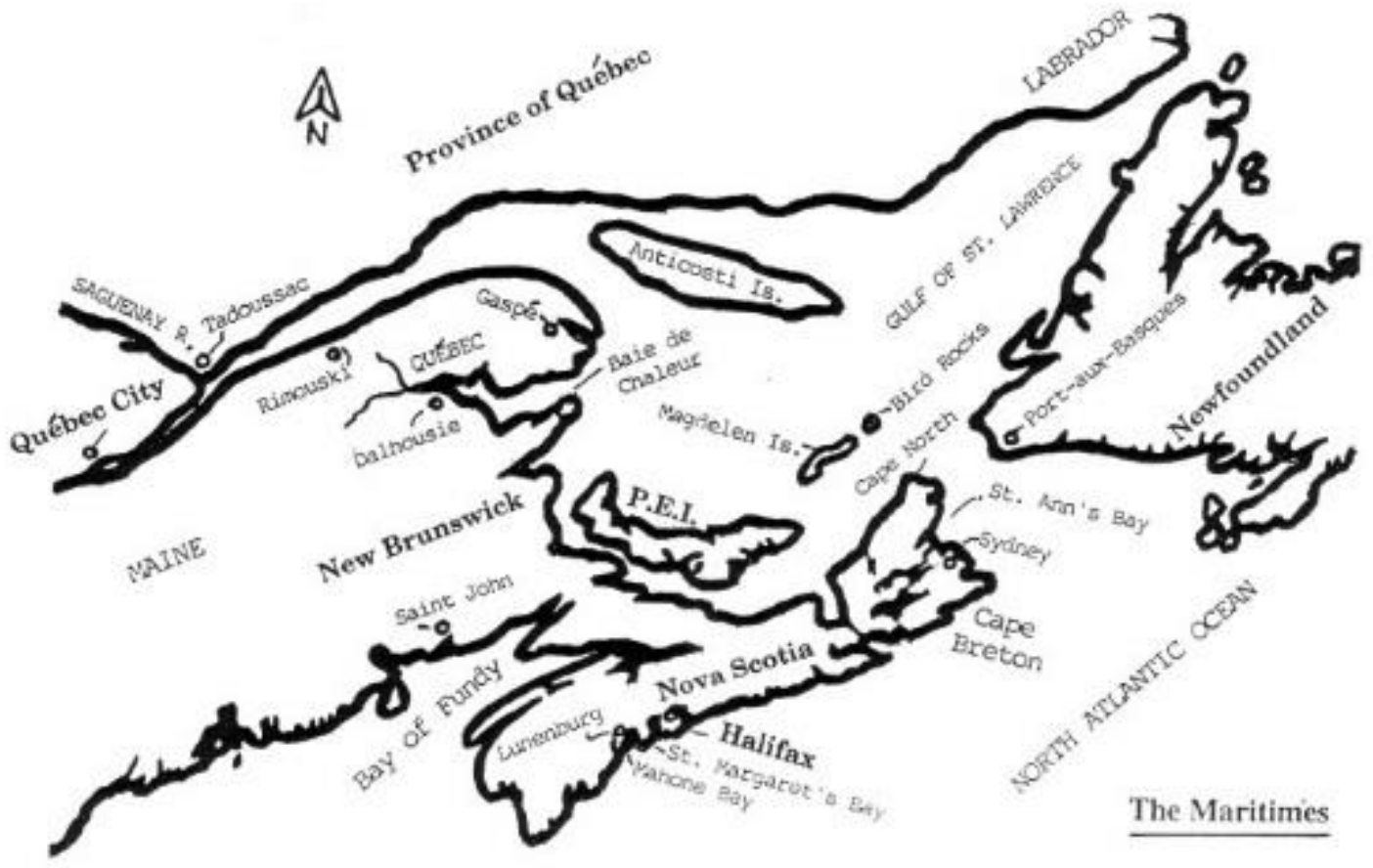
* The Russians know this = first
in Kosovo with troops, to take
control of an airport. Is the
Cold War really over? 11.6.99

Part One

Climbing



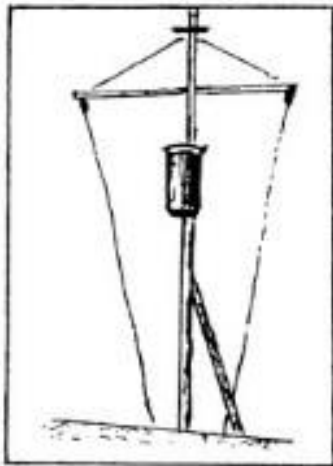
HMCS "Portage"- St. Margaret's Bay



The Maritimes

1.

Crow'snest



Late in 1944, our Monday high school 'assembly' had a guest speaker whose name, I think, was Ketchum. He was Commandant of "Royal Roads", a Naval College at Esquimalt, B.C. As WW II still raged, he was inviting young men to consider his officer training school. This did NOT excite me; but when I mentioned it casually at home my Father jumped on it: "You should write the entrance exam!"

He had been overseas in WW I, first with the Signal Corps; later with the Flying Corps and as P.O.W. the final year. He probably figured 2 years at "Roads" could buy me time away from the real action. So, before turning 16, I tried the exams with 3 other school-mates followed later by a Selection Board. The war-time medical found my eyes fit only for the Supply Branch; but all 4 of us were accepted ... a week or so after V-E Day in May, 1945. One of them later chose the Air Branch and died when his Avenger flipped over while landing in Manitoba.

One problem:- my folks found they could not afford train and tuition fees. Also the War seemed half over (A-bombs were 2 1/2 months in the future). So I would NOT enroll. Was I bitter? Not really, because I had been scared shitless .. about having to play mandatory rigger as part of indoctrination in Royal Navy customs. Back to my old high school for grade 13.

During summer of '46, a WW II Algerine minesweeper visited Toronto. Again, Father was interested; so I joined him at open-house aboard that vessel. It was a sweltering day; the deck was hot .. as was the forward Seamen's Mess. I thought: "What man in his right mind would ever want to live HERE?"

Forward to November '46; my first year of college. A friend phoned: "Four of us are going down to arrange a free trip to Bermuda next summer. Wanna come along?" Wondering how it could be 'free', I asked: "How do we get there?" Reply: "Simple; just join the UNTD .. the University Naval Training Division." Doran, deVeber, Kenny and Roberts did. So did I with parental consent (under 18). Also passed a medical, including the eye test which I had failed earlier, in 1945.

We all were issued kit-bags, bell-bottoms, jumpers, boots and caps. Once into the ill-fitting, heavy wool uniform, we were supposed to look like Ordinary Seamen. Our black cap-tally simply said 'HMCS' in gold letters. No ship's name; but that was enough to label us as raw college recruits ... wanna-be officers. Drills weekly at U of T Drill Hall, later moved to HMCS "York", the local Reserve Division. Then sometime in May 1947, we all boarded the train for Montréal, except for one who was ill. Laid-over long enough for a few beers. Then the Ocean Limited. A bumpy overnight ride to Halifax. That road-bed was laid as part of the Inter-colonial Railway promise to the Maritimes in 1867.

Met at the station by a blue stake-body truck; then north along Barrington Street to "Stadacona", the shore training base. Each was issued blankets, mattress and hammock. We learned how to rig the clews and lashing. Next morning, we carried our full kit down to Dockyard and boarded ship ... our home for the next ten days. Her name? HMCS "Portage", the one I 'toured' a year earlier. Our Mess was the same sweltering space I had decried in 1946! Some people never seem to learn to look before they leap. 'Free trip', eh?

We sailed from Halifax on a short run south-west to St. Margaret's Bay where we anchored; and the C.O., Lt Bugden, decided we should paint ship. There is a story that one UNTD was up high painting the funnel ... when a nosey officer below made him nervous. He dropped a paint brush on the man's shoulder. Before that Lt had time to look up, the quick-witted college kid dipped his HAND into the can ... and never missed a stroke!

Next day, we headed south for the 750 mile (approx) trip to Bermuda. Fog before entering the Gulf Stream; then much warmer. My first contact with regular crew was typical. Told to go find a left-handed spanner, I saluted smartly and marched off. Then, the slow burn: (a) Where do I find it? (b) What in hell is a spanner? The light soon dawned: It's a wrench, dummy; and the bloody thing is ambidexterous! Obviously, no delivery was necessary; but the point had been made.

Another day, a Leading Seaman befriended me, saying the paint-locker needed cleaning. Quiet place; chance to think, or 'scull' if you're lazy. One problem: it was right up in the bow = greater pitch. Got to like it, until I spilled paint all over my boots. Friendly LS says: "Use varsol". I did; and it ruined the shine

While most of the permanent crew were pretty decent guys, there was one exception: he had big bulging eyes this Chief. Seemed to hate these brats who never had to fight in the War. One day, a buddy and I were in our lower-deck Mess, a bit tardy in obeying the order for Trainees to muster on the foc'sle. My 6'4" friend was half-way up the ladder when the brute appeared and threw him bodily back down onto the deck, all the time cursing UNTD's. Luckily nothing but bruises. Despite this maniac, I soon learned to respect Chiefs and PO's as foundations of our Navy, usually far more skilled than the average Cadet or Midshipman.

Sleeping was fairly good, as we discovered how the hammock compensates for the ship's rolling; and they are springy enough to absorb a mild pitch of the bows.

But the next night could have been disastrous. Due to the heat, the C.O. gave permission for us to sling 'micks' on the upper deck. Did it wrong .. rolled out in my sleep. Woke with my arm against a stanchion ... at the ship's edge! What if ... no author ... no book.

Feeling queasy in day-time swells, some discovered the funnel was close to the centre of pivot .. so less prone to the pitch. The Galley was nearby; one Cook had our measure: he paraded past us dangling a greasy bacon strip in his mouth. Several Trainees rushed to the rail to barf. My only sea-sickness on that trip.

* * *

In a ship the size of "Portage", shore leaves and duties were organized in three watches (Red, White and Blue). My first was spent in the Crow'snest, a 4-foot high steel bucket bolted way up the mast, accessible only by a fixed ladder. The view was far better there than from the bridge; hence that spot for a look-out. No mast-head radar yet in this ship. Once up there, I loved the solitude ... on a calm day.

My replacement that day found it less enjoyable, as the ship began to roll .. well amplified where he was! Called for a spew-bucket, which had to be carried up, rope attached, for lowering when filled. Remember that Gerard Hoffman yarn about the pulley, bricks and a man on opposite ends of a rope? Our man made it back down OK. Next day, the man I was to relieve in that perch 'froze' to the ladder and required help to get down.

Then, my turn came to scan the horizon from on high. Heard the bridge radio crackling. HMCS "New Liskeard" (our sister-ship on the starboard beam) had seen land. What should I do? Risk a blast from the bridge for being a poor look-out? Deciding to wing it, I shouted:

"Land ahead bearing green three zero Sir". The reply: "Very good, crow'snest, that's Bermuda. Should be in St. George's by supper." Not bad for a guy who flunked the Royal Roads eye test!

Three Toronto friends and I, all in the same watch, had one or two days or evenings ashore (after applying spit and polish to my boots). The Captain had warned everybody to avoid 'the 3 B's'- bananas, bicycles and black rum. The latter was over-proof and could burn a novice's throat, if he didn't pass out first! We took this advice. The other two were often causes of theft charges by police; so we avoided them too.

In those days, as I recall it, no private cars were permitted in Bermuda; only bicycles ... must have had commercial trucks or vans; but all I can remember were cabs and converted school buses, operated free by the Americans, from the 'lend-lease' base at St. George's ... into Hamilton, the Capital. My memories are of a gorgeous string of coral isles, with lush foliage, and 'Oleander' perfume which I bought as souvenirs for the ladies in our family. The Spaniards called Bermuda the "Isle of Devils" for its treacherous coral reefs.

* * *

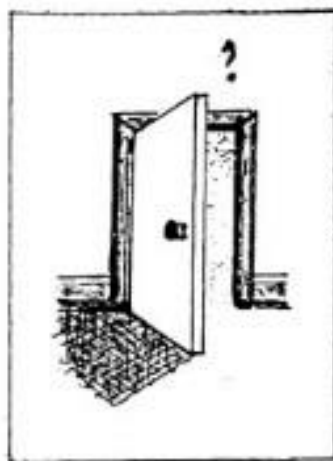
Just about two weeks after donning the bell-bottoms our gang was all back home again preparing for various summer jobs, and debating .. whether or not the 'free' trip was worth the hassle we underwent as Trainees ... the lowest of the low. Roberts arranged a party that night; but I had to leave it to visit my Grandfather. He died about 1/2 hour before I reached the hospital.

Did we stay with the UNTD? I know a few who quit; but our immediate gang of five (which had become nine or more) all decided to tough-it-out. These included Jupp, Lamb, Lyons, Sherin and Shenstone. I have never heard any of them say they regretted it. Something to do with bonding in adversity. That nasty discipline wasn't going to beat us! Strange psychology; but it seemed to work. Those of us who have survived are all still good friends ... almost like a fraternal order. And when we get together, it's the good times we talk about; seldom the bad. Even the 'sea-legs' sometimes re-appear ... especially when strolling up to the bar.



Map adapted from Dep't of Tourism map
supplied by Dr. G. Smith of Warwick,
Bermuda, and currently Picton, Ontario

2.

Door Jams

In Spring of 1948, our UNTD gang had to pass a Selection Board at "York" to qualify us as Officer Candidates, after which we put on a plain white band where the black cap-tally had been. Even more identifiable! The next year's class had a laugh when, having been dismissed by the Brass, one new 'O-C' turned and marched off smartly through the door-way .. into a coat closet! Was there a moral?

May of '48 saw most of us return to Halifax, this time for a full summer. Because U of T exams were later than those in N.S. and N.B., some of the Maritimers were already in "Stad" when we arrived. One conscientious lad was on duty when we pulled into 'G' Block late, due to some train delay. Spence, from "York" was unpacking his kit-bag around midnight after 'lights out'. The duty Maritime UNTD shone his torch in his eyes (sure to get a strong reaction): "What are YOU doing up so late?" he asked. "Pickin' my friggin' nose!" Duty man took off ... cursing Upper Canadians.

* * *

Our Reserve Training Commander was Cdr Dick Steele who, along with a few Divisional Officers (Reserves), and regular RCN staff, delivered our training program. I recall especially Lts MacLeod and Scott shepherding us through the daily rituals.

The toughest part of that summer was an intensive six-week Divisional Course. We took Seamanship (from CPO's Mann and Beaulieu who made their own wine), TAS (Torpedo-Anti-Submarine), Signals (morse via flashing lamp) and Gunnery (small arms practice). The latter included: a .303 rifle, Bren gun, Sten, revolver, 9mm Browning automatic. The Bren was easy; with revolver, I was useless. I also recall a few days of sailing .. methinks it was aboard the "Cairn".

We studied Navigation-I under Lt Torrie. It seems to me that was about the time HMCS "Micmac" collided with a freighter in a fog, killing several of her crew. An object lesson for us not to rely too much on radar. I can still recall seeing her twisted 4.7" gun barrels as the repair job, AND the Court Martial, commenced.

We also had to try our hands (or mouths) at public speaking. Pick a topic; prepare overnight; deliver a speech. One of my friends, whom I had helped in morse code, returned my favour by falling asleep in the back row during my speech! Later I thanked him for showing me the need to PROJECT one's voice to the rear wall.

Church parades were mandatory on Sunday if we were on base. Two choices: Roman Catholic, or Protestant. The latter an Anglican-style service. In our group we had two Jewish chaps who did many things together ... including skulduggery. Since there was no service for their faith .. even the day was wrong .. they did some research. First, they went Protestant. Next Sunday, they were R.C.'s. Thenceforth R.C. was their religion of choice in the Navy. The service was shorter, after which they could get downtown and hustle the girls ... before all those slow Protestants arrived!

* * *

Was it that summer or the next? We were treated to a spectacular display of aerobatics over the harbour. I think the aircraft was a 'Sea Hornet'... attached to RN's 806 Squadron. The pilot's name was deHavilland. He crashed and was killed a few days later.

I think it was also '48 when our group spent a day aboard HMCS "Haida", in dress-rehearsal for a visit by the Minister of Defence. We were one of two 'plane-guards' astern of "Magnificent", in maneuvers south of Halifax. Several 'Seafire' fighters took off .. quite a thrilling sight; but when their turns came to land, however, chilling would be a better word.

Rarely did they make it on their first pass. Often, it took two or three tries. It was then I realized I might not have the stomach for Naval Air. Anyhow, my eyesight probably would have disqualified me. Trying to land on a postage stamp, even in calm seas, was not my cup-of-tea! But, my admiration for anybody who CAN do it was much greater after that day. On the morrow, everything was fogged in; so the Minister was deprived of our learning experience.

For those of us in the Executive Branch, sea time that year consisted of two cruises; one in the frigate "Swansea" (C.O. Lt John Dawson); another in a Halifax-built Tribal destroyer HMCS "Nootka" (C.O. Capt Hugh Pullen). I found the frigate far more comfortable for crew; but the Tribal was more exciting, because of her sheer beauty of design, and her speed capability. We saw an example of the latter in a high-speed turn in the Saguenay River .. near Capes Trinity and Eternity. I never would have thought that River wide enough; but the C.O. knew his turning-circle diameter.

We anchored at Tadoussac that night, near the mouth of that river. Got ashore to see the old hotel where my folks and I had spent a few days in 1944. Bought some post-cards and sat down to write, when I spotted a familiar movie face ... Monty Woolley signed a card for me. A gracious gentleman. The next night saw us in Québec City, as I recall; then back to Halifax.

During a night watch, I met an Officer, aboard for his annual two-weeks training. A WW II Navy pilot, he was older brother to a fellow with whom I had attended grade school. The eldest brother had died in the RCAF.

In HMCS "Swansea" later, we visited North Sydney at Whitney Pier and toured the nearby steel rolling mill. Somewhat antiquated but probably still profitable back then. A very hospitable town ... invited us all to a dance in a local hall. Had to run to get back to the ship before leave expired at 0200.

* * *

One long week-end, with leave from "Stadacona", six of us rented a car and drove down to Hubbard's Cove, a get-away south-west of Halifax. Four rented a cabin from the Eureka Hotel; the other two had to settle for a modified hen-house (5 ft. head-room). Tried meeting girls at the Shore Club, with mixed success. When the 'refreshments' ran dry, two of us found a cabbie who was willing to part with a bottle of Scotch for about double the regular price. We agreed to split the cost ... Train hard; Play hard!

Returned to the cabin and uncorked 'Johnnie Walker' or so the label read. It smelled like anti-freeze! I forgot my \$4.50-5.00 investment and said: "Not for ME!" Three of those who DID drink that stuff have departed this world in the past decade. One wonders. When we checked out, there were hints that the next time there would be no vacancies for us.

While in "Stadacona's" old 'G' Block that summer, UNTD's had only one level; the upper was occupied by regular RCN seamen. One night, there was one helluva ruckus on the floor above us. Soon an ambulance came; and an Able Seaman was carried out .. never to be seen again. He, and a friend aboard the Carrier, had been drinking de-icing fluid. A cheap source of alcohol, maybe; but also deadly poison. Deaths from this were rare; but abuse of that substance, and Ditto fluid was not unheard-of. A military funeral was arranged.

There is another vivid (almost red) memory of life in 'G' Block .. on 24 June, St. Jean Baptiste Day. It seemed like all the Québeckers had leave that evening.

Somebody must have found a huge supply of cheap red wine or pink gin; I'm not sure which. All I recall is the colour of basins, W/C's, and floors in the 'heads' late that night. Many of us have been sick from over-indulgence at one time or another ... but NEVER have I seen it done 'en masse' the way that group did! Back then, it was very obvious that 'Fête Nationale' meant a great deal to them. In fairness, we had many others who behaved well. Some I considered to be friends for the summer at least. Names such as Bedard, Castonguay, Comeau, Lemieux and Taillefer come to mind. One hopes they felt the same way about the Anglos. We NEED them within Canada ... to add 'colour' to our shared nation.

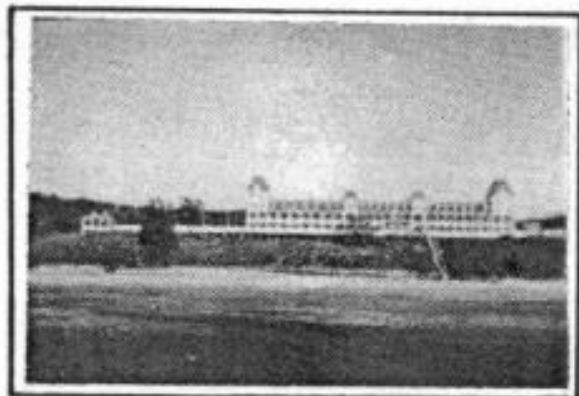
* * *

When we had short leave, I often tried to enjoy the time with one or two friends who were now enrolled in Medicine. Because of this, they were taking different training paths ... at RCN Hospital. Sometimes we took the ferry over to Dartmouth, walked to the lakes, and rented a canoe for the afternoon. Or we could bowl in the base's gym building. Or we might take Boutilier's ferry across North-west Arm to the Dingle Tower. This marks the spot where an anchor landed, after the Great Explosion of a munitions ship, in 1917 during WW I. A nearby boat-club also used to hold dances on week-ends.

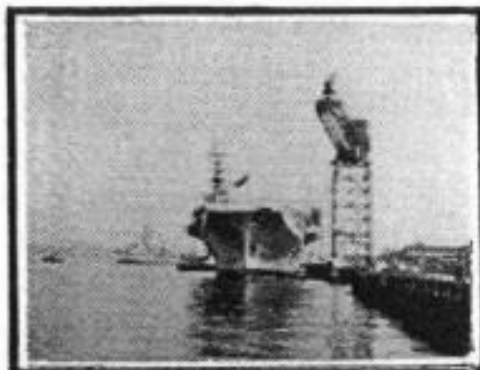
One evening we went to the Olympic Gardens, a dance-hall where a sailor MIGHT meet a girl. Trouble is, we lingered too long at the base 'wets' canteen, drinking draft beer. Not only cheap, it was strong stuff.

Feeling no pain on our arrival at the Olympic, the games began, so to speak. Our 6'4" buddy aimed himself through a door-way, hoping to drain away some of the Oland's. Next thing we heard were squeals and shrieks; then the door flew open .. and four women returned our friend, unceremoniously, onto the dance floor. He had chosen the 'Ladies' Loo'; and they were NOT amused!

Another one of those wrong-way-door-again jokes, eh?



Hotel Tadoussac in early 1940's



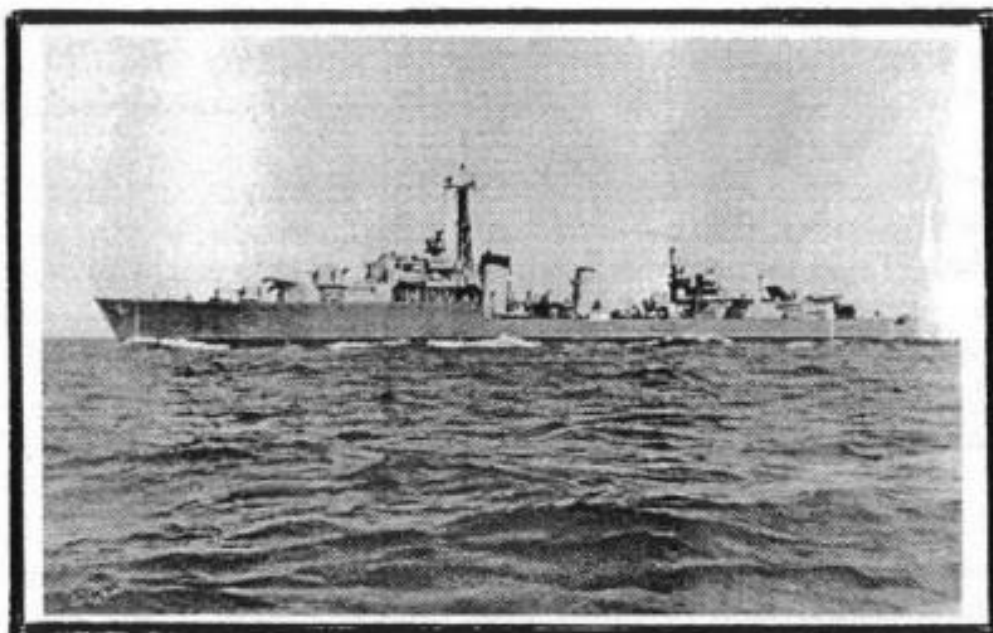
HMCS "Magnificent" in Halifax



'Firefly' Reconnaissance-Fighter
similar to the 'Firefly' Trainer



'Seafire' Carrier-borne Fighter



HMCS "Nootka"- Tribal Destroyer

3.

White Twist



The summer of 1949 saw a new image for UNTD's. Our bell-bottoms were exchanged for blue battle-dress with a 'white twist' on each lapel, white shirt, black tie plus officer's cap and badge. Put those on an officer-candidate; you now had a 'Cadet' ... plus a protocol flip-flop. Because of that cap badge: Chiefs, and all ranks below were required to salute us. Though now allowed to don civvy blazer and flannels on leave, we had to wear a fedora felt hat ... so we could salute officers by doffing it ... We felt SILLY!

Other unpopular changes: we no longer had overnight leave on week-nights; due back at 0200 and no week-end leaves for the first four weeks; even then, only from noon on Saturday. Our Toronto group arrived in "Stad" on Saturday, 22 May to this re-vamped program. On the plus side, we now had our own Mess: the Gunroom shared with Midshipmen or S/Lts who were on base. There, we ate meals, could buy an evening beer if we chose; and later had weekly 'dances' with recorded or piano music. We also had our own gate from the base plus the entire 'F' Block as our barracks with steel bunks arranged in groups of 6 or 8 in separate alcoves. My Division was known as 'A-50', led by Lt Peter Cornell. Later that summer (or next?), a group of us was at his wedding .. forming an arch with swords .. as Bride and Groom left the church on Spring Garden Road in Halifax.

One of our medical friends lucked out .. he went on the first cruise of the summer, in HMCS "Magnificent", our only aircraft carrier and largest ship. It worked out badly when, on 4 June, "Maggie" ran aground on an uncharted rock. This messed up many plans for Cadets' sea-time. She went to Saint John N.B. for repairs and was out-of-action for the summer. A Court Martial was soon convened; and some of us were allowed to listen for one day. The ship's C.O. lost his command; and he received a severe reprimand. His Navigating Officer escaped with a reprimand.

Our training ashore was far from smooth either. We started a Navigation-II course; but were taken from it regularly in the first few weeks, for marching drills. Exercise we DIDN'T need after physical-jerks OR rowing to Dartmouth and back each day, before breakfast. For learning power-of-command, drills WERE effective as we each took turns in charge of our own platoon. While most class-mates wanted to obey (they, in turn, would need OUR co-operation), orders had to be heard before they could be followed. All it takes is two or three guys wandering off in the wrong direction ... you soon learn how to bark out a command ... right up from your diaphragm ... while figuring out the next one to come. This advice is coming now from somebody who feared the sound of his own voice in high school.

| "The reason you have such a great voice is
| because you have resonance where your brains
| ought to be!" Anna Russell.

There was a more practical reason for our intensive drilling by CPO Fred Steiner, under the watchful eyes of the Base Gunnery Officer:- It was Public Relations. Only four years since the infamous V-E Day riots, 1949 was Bicentennial Year for Halifax; and the City pulled out all the stops. Not only did it pave over the old trolley tracks (converting to buses), it also mounted one huge parade on 21 June. Some American and British ships timed visits to co-incide with this. Together, we all managed to put on quite a show.

With many floats and 15 bands, it took over an hour to pass a point. Cadets from all over eastern Canada led it, with rifles, white belts and gaiters. In my opinion, the Royal Marines (from HMS "Glasgow") took top honours; but the UNTD were good runners-up, helped along by Navy Bands from "Stadacona" and "Cornwallis". To be fair though, we could not have done it - without the constant chiding of Chief Steiner to stop behaving "like miserable sausages, Sirs!" His polite(?) way of hounding officer-trainees. Did it well. Perhaps as a reward, by mid-July we could wear civvies for supper; and were allowed an open gangway (no 'liberty-boats').

Our Nav-II course was extended to make up for these interruptions; but in my case, it didn't help. I came down with Measles on 1 July and spent the next 10 days in RCNH. Friends from home came to see me that night; the M.O. had given me a knock-out pill so I was asleep! A well-run hospital. I managed to half-finish a model Lancaster bomber; but was too late for the 'Nav' exam; so had to write it later. Something similar happened with our TAS course which was interrupted for sea-time.

That summer, we had a brief familiarization course at naval air base "Shearwater". Ferried by a harbour-craft daily to Eastern Passage, we learned how to pack and use parachutes, had lectures on aerial photography and fighter aircraft. On 21 July, we tried the Link-Trainer test (a cock-pit with simulated banks, turns, rolls). When I got out of a spin, the instructor said: "Do you play the piano?" "Well, yes." "They fool us every time" he said; "No guarantee you'd make a pilot."

My first flight ever was in an Avro Anson. Rather dull; but we were invited aloft again. On 22 July, up I went in a dual-control Firefly trainer. This was a modified reconnaissance-fighter, slow when compared to a Spitfire. The pilot said he had to stay above 2,000 feet. We flew over Hubbard's Cove. To my surprise he dove on a fisherman .. fists were shaken! We then did a roll one-way, but not the other (engine-torque had defeated the pilot). No loops, thank God; no barfing.

On return to base, the control-tower said: "Set her down gently, Sir." Followed by a very bumpy landing, for which the pilot apologized profusely ... he was a McGill student, back for a refresher course. Hadn't flown since WW II. Thanks for telling me ... ON LAND!

* * *

HMCS "Iroquois" came out of moth-balls for the UNTD, commanded by LCdr Tom Pullen (young brother of Hugh). A British-built Tribal destroyer, designed as flotilla leader, about 15 feet longer than "Nootka". She also seemed faster, perhaps because the C.O. liked to crank up the knots? He and his First Lieutenant already had made her a 'happy ship' when our A-50 Division boarded on 23 July. Her sister ship "Haida" still floats as a memorial at Toronto's Ontario Place; but old 'G 89' is still my favourite, of the ships in which I've served.

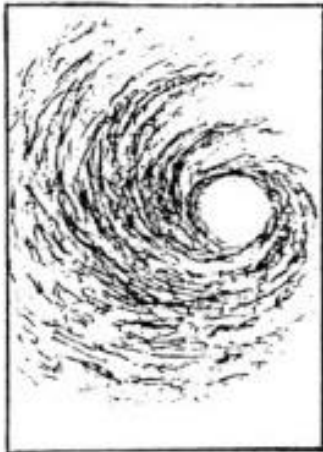
After re-fuelling at Imperoyal, we left harbour at 1900 on Thursday, 28th and sailed once again to Sydney, with Cadets gaining experience as Second Officers-of-the-Watch on the way. While there, we had our first practice in throwing a hand heaving-line; then later took a bus tour of Glace Bay. On 1 August, we were in the Bras d'Or Lakes and anchored at Baddeck, where the Alexander Graham Bell Museum has since been erected.

From there, we met "Haida" in Gulf of St. Lawrence and did towing exercises. Then, returned to Halifax, with more O.O.W. experience en route. By then, I had learned a trick most sailors know - about night vision. When scanning a dark horizon, don't look where a light SHOULD be. Look to either side of it; your peripheral vision is more likely to pick it up that way.

On 6 August, some of our group began a week aboard "DT-7" (No, not booze DT's) a small Diving Tender. We did no diving, apart from a short demonstration. The purpose was to apply our skills in navigation, which was NOT one of my strong points. Bobbing around, off the Nova Scotia coast, the best I could do to fix our position with a sextant was about three miles inland!

4.

Hurricane



One night aboard "DT-7" we anchored in Mahone Bay, near Sea Cadet "Camp Major". One of them was injured and we managed to get him to Lunenburg, where we sought medical help. That we found at Dr. Russell Zinck's ... whose wife Vivian was an old nursing friend of my Mother. Small world! Back in 1938, our family had visited them .. when they arranged a tour of the original "Bluenose"; and we met Captain Angus Walters. Later that night, or the next, my friend Ben and

I walked about four miles from the Camp to the highway seeking a decent restaurant ... at least it was better than the "DT-7's" menu.

* * *

On return to Halifax 9 August we found Navy Week in progress. In port for a courtesy visit were the USS "Midway" and "Kearsarge"; big carriers, and a cruiser: "Newport News". Had a tour of "Midway", which made our "Maggie" look pretty tiny. "Kearsarge" would be in the news years later as one of the recovery ships for space capsules. The next two days, we took turns as crew for X-gun in "Haida", while she put on a display in the harbour. On 15 August, noticed "Nootka" being towed away for de-commissioning; after which we sailed for Provincetown, Mass., anchoring there on the 16th.

* * *

During our first day in port I had duty watch. One of our less popular officers (a Reserve, but with no UNTD link) went for a swim about 100 ft. from the ship. Our nick-name for him was 'Zube' ... referring to his pursed lips .. always seemed to be sucking cough drops. Some alert sailor saw a dorsal fin near the ship; and yelled 'SHARK!' Guess who most of the on-lookers were cheering for? Not the Zube. He made it back OK; but later that day, I had to dive in to disentangle a rope from the cutter's propeller which had been fouled by a whaler in tow for 'liberty-men' (to and from the town). Moral retribution maybe? Never again cheer for sharks.

On shore leave the next afternoon another Cadet and I stopped at a jewellers for a watch-strap. The owner, whose name was Rosenthal, took time off work and drove us on a tour of much of Cape Cod. True hospitality.

Later that 17 August, Dick and I strolled along a beach, admiring sand-dunes, when we heard 'HI CANADA!' Working in town for the summer, here was a pretty girl from Nova Scotia, who soon agreed to have dinner with us. Couldn't locate her room-mate; so we were a three-some for the evening at the 'Anchorage' restaurant. A string quartet drifted among the tables playing 'Bali High', 'Cock-eyed Optimist' and 'Some Enchanted Evening' ... Enchanted we were, as 'South Pacific' was readied for Broadway that Fall ... 50 years ago.

At the next table were two Chiefs from the ship who had wine and dined a pair of hot-looking 'ladies' for some time. Then came the huge bill. The men coughing up the cash MAY have thought it was going to be a good 'investment'; but just then, their two partners stood up; said good-night; walked off, embracing EACH OTHER! Those poor guys hadn't realized this place was summer home for many of a different sexual persuasion ... Nor had I. How lucky we were to have met ONE red-blooded REAL Canadian woman. Then we thought: three-somes do not work in a straight world; so we took her home and said our good-nights ... Rodgers & Hammerstein still bring it all back though, whenever I hear their music.

* * *

Heading back toward Halifax we encountered the edge of a hurricane .. as it brushed Nova Scotia on its way north-east. According to the Beaufort's Wind Scale, a Hurricane produces Force 12 winds of 64 knots or more. Spectacular effects: whipping and tearing water from the tops of the ever-rising waves. Not simply white-caps, but cheek-stinging sprays ...'The air is filled with foam and spray; sea completely white with driving spray. Visibility is very seriously affected.'

A ship in such conditions needs good power in order to maintain steerage-way. With that and with adequate warning, you can run from such a storm .. avoiding the eye and some of the worst winds. Having lived through just the edges of two on land and two at sea, given a strong ship, I'd rather be at sea - and running from it, than sitting on land .. just waiting for it to strike - with falling trees and flying debris. Mariners with more experience than mine ... may disagree.

* * *

I still can remember a strange sensation, standing amidships, with each of my feet straddling a rivetted joint between two steel deck plates. As we pitched into and cork-screwed over successive waves, one could feel and SEE those steel plates moving over each other. That is how she was designed to withstand the stresses. Are modern (welded) hulls so forgiving of punishment?

* * *

Arriving home late on 18 August, we came to anchor south of George's Island due to the storm. At 2330 we were ordered out again to help a 'flag-of-convenience' freighter in distress off the coast. Our Captain sent a signal offering a tow. This was declined, probably due to fear of salvage claims. We had done 27 knots to get there; but now slowed to about 5 knots, sailing off her beam when, suddenly, she swung right across our bows ... defective steering, maybe?

'FULL SPEED ASTERN!'... Thought it could be another "Micmac" disaster; but we were lucky to have an alert C.O. We gave up and returned to Halifax. "Avgenia", which was registered in Panama, never even said thank-you. She survived that crisis; but broke up and sank on a distant rocky shore many years later. Probably a victim of low-budget repairs, and/or a poorly-trained crew. On our first attempt to berth alongside "Haida", we over-shot; so we had to go around and do it again. I would remember that four years later.

* * *

On my way home by train that Fall, during the usual Montréal lay-over, I happened to walk through the lobby of Hotel Mount Royal, looking for a city map. Guess who I bumped into at the gift-shop counter? The same hospitable Mr. Rosenthal who had been so kind to us at Cape Cod .. in Canada for a vacation. Pity I couldn't return the favour; had a Toronto train to catch.

... still, such a small world!

In Canada, we are sometimes prone to indulge in the verbal pastime known as 'American-bashing'. When that is the mode, I often think of that generous jeweller in Cape Cod ... a great example of the GOOD Americans. You rarely have to search for them ... as they usually find YOU first.

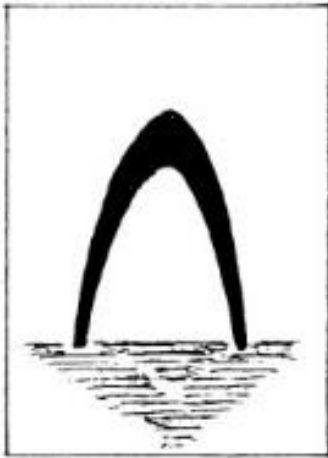


Edge of hurricane
from "Iroquois"



5.

Gate-Way



In the summer of 1950, I was to have an experience not shared by many of my friends. All because I was still available for a few months, whereas most of them had graduated or sought other work ventures. Though due to become a S/Lt on 6 February, the Navy had no need of that rank for a full summer of service. I could, however be accepted as a Cadet Captain, with little difference in pay.

This was arranged; so I now wore a crown on my forearm. Arriving at "Stadacona" in mid-May, I found four others in the same category. Foggy memory tells me they were Louis Lemieux, Al MacLeod, Gord Matthewman, Clarke Tingley. My journal for that period is revealing: "My first week was wasted .. lack of co-ordination ... no real plans for Cadet Captains-somebody bungled." (We had completed all our courses)

On Saturday, 27 May, "the five useless cadets" were sent to "Swansea". "Once again, we were not expected" One of my final entries before abandoning the journal: "Anything which is not worth remembering is not worth writing down; and if it STICKS in my memory why SHOULD I write it down?" Oh, how wrong I was then! Without such records, the previous two chapters would have been far more garbled. So, where do we go from here?

* * *

What follows is more hazy; but at least the reader won't be bored with many references to specific dates or times. I'm not even positive where "Swansea" went on her first Cadet Cruise for '50; but I'm pretty sure it was Québec City again. Which is when I clicked for a party in a private home on "Grande Allée". That may also have been the time when we saw a Cunard liner RMS "Ascania" hard aground in the lower St. Lawrence.

By the time we returned to Halifax and "Stadacona", the organization was starting to gel. Cadet Captains were billeted in one alcove on the ground floor, north-east corner of 'F' Block. Still had steel bunk-cots; but a few carpets, floor lamps and desks were added. Our leave privileges also improved. About this time, I seem to recall our numbers grew by two or three; but hesitate to name names. In any event, duties evolved so that we became, in effect, assistants to Divisional Officers. Each had charge of a platoon for Divisions and Colours on the main parade square .. behaving like drill sergeants. We also helped arrange duty watches and other daily orders, and heard Cadets' problems.

My Division was 'C-52' which denoted their graduation year. One day, I got myself into big trouble for them. The previous night, we were deluged with heavy rains; personal gear was drenched; many left lockers open to hasten drying. That was a NO-NO .. to avoid pilfering.

Those breaking the rules were listed; then told to assemble in front of the Block. As one of the guilty, I was told to march all the bad boys onto a muddy open square nearby (a former building site) and drill them for 1/2 hour. That order was interpreted too broadly by me. Once into the mud, I barked: "About Turn", and led them all to the paved main parade-square for drill ... right in front of the Commodore's residence!

An hour later, a Lt said: "You disobeyed my order!" My reply: "We did it to avoid mud, Sir." To which he said: "I'll fix it so you're never a S/Lt." My reply: "Too late Sir; I already am one." He dropped it there.

There was a very impressive visitor to Halifax that year, so says my memory. She was the 'Mighty Mo', USS "Missouri". One of their largest battleships with 16" guns her most notable armament. We were able to take a tour of that historic site - where General MacArthur accepted the Japanese surrender on V-J Day, in 1945. We also saw submarines; British and American. While the Yanks seemed more lax in their on-board discipline, their ship's interior was far cleaner and tidier than the Brits'. As one might expect ... ours were usually somewhere between those two extremes.

For one who then had few skills in organization or conveying orders, my role that year was very valuable experience. We must have worked hard, because I have few memories of social life, except for a few Gunroom sing-songs, and ordering in late-night snacks ... from "Camille's Fish & Chips". Since then, north Barrington Street has endured Urban Renewal involving bulldozers. But, when seven of our original "York" gang returned for a 1993 re-union, it was good to see Camille's had been spared. Some town planner had a sense of what is important in a city's history.

That is when we reminisced about another adventure which .. almost .. happened. Either in '48 or '49 one of our group (an American navy veteran) bought an old sail-boat. Spent much of his spare time 'collecting' better fixtures and supplies for his new-found love. Then he recruited a volunteer crew, of which I was to be part. His mad-cap ambition? Sail it back home to Toronto ... in hurricane season! Why it fell through, I've since forgotten. Had it not, would I be writing?

* * *

Despite that non-event, getting home at summer-end usually was eventful, even tragically so. In 1949 on 18 September soon after arriving home, I went downtown to look at the harbour ... and saw the charred hulk of the "Noronic". She had burned out the previous night killing 119 persons ... Toronto's worst-ever disaster.

Another year, I flew home via TCA 'North Star' (the Navy paid only the rail equivalent). That afternoon, my Dad, friend Mac and I went to the CNE to watch the annual Air Show. An F-86 RCAF Sabre-jet flew low in front of us; stood on its tail for a loop; and climbed into a very low cloud-cover. Terrible visibility for aerobatics. When he re-appeared with nose inclined up, he was still falling; 'mushed-in' ... and was killed. Moments later, the only traces were puffs of smoke and a heavy odour of jet fuel. Never have I been with so many who were suddenly so silent. All stood up. Many bowed their heads. Caps and hats were removed.

In 1948(?) upon arrival back home, I heard my folks were invited to the Royal York hotel that evening. I went along to renew acquaintance with a son of their friends in the U.K. We had last seen him on leave in WW II. An Engineer in the RN Fleet Air Arm; in town with 806 Squadron for the Air Show. He offered me a flight back to Halifax in their C-47, provided I wore uniform. Tempting; but the idea of trying to explain that to Shore Patrol in "Slackers" made me chicken-out. Another aborted adventure.

In '49 or '50, four of us got a chance to DRIVE home, delivering a car for a lady who preferred to fly. We stopped briefly at St. Andrews-by-the-Sea and later in Bar Harbor, Maine. Then to Worcester where one of the group had a relative; thence through New York State to Ontario and home. A pleasant change.

* * *

In 1951 as a S/Lt, I spent only two weeks in Naval Training. This time on the west coast for a course at HMCS "Naden", the shore base in Esquimalt, B.C. Got there in August by delivering a new Chevy, from Oshawa to a Vancouver car-lease dealer. Shared one hilarious evening with two medical friends who were at "Naden". Our noise in the Boiler-Makers' Hall was such that we had to leave early. They had an old Graham-Page car which got them into some wacky situations. After that mis-spent youth, they still grew up to be good doctors.

Summer of '52 was my first at Great Lakes Centre in Hamilton Ontario. Living part-time in a pup-tent, but often in Fairmiles on training cruises for New Entries. We learned then just how devoted the Reserves at HMCS "Star" were to anything naval. Several names come to mind; but that could fill another book. We're already overdue to move on to the 'Gate-Way' of training ...

* * *

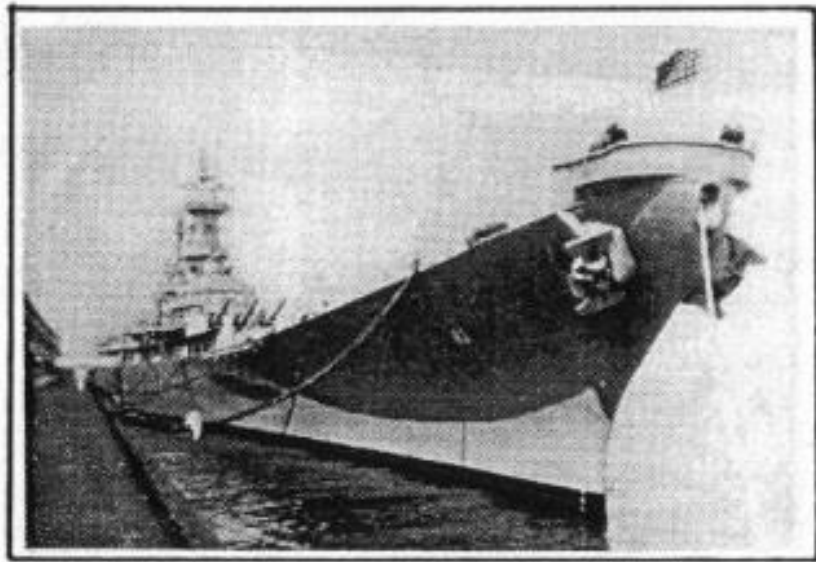
Applying for another summer at "Star", I was told to report again to Halifax. This new Lt arrived there about 12 May, 1953. A unique adventure was about to unfold. In Dockyard, I reported to a Lt A.L. Collier, C.O. of a gate vessel ... called HMCS "Porte St. Jean". Alongside also was her sister "Porte St. Louis", whose C.O. I recognized from Cadet days. One other familiar face in my new ship was S/Lt Latimer from "York". Had sailed with him in one of the Tribals. In all other respects, however, I had entered a strange new world.

Five of these ships were built post-war to replace aging vessels. Their purpose: to prevent infiltration by enemy submarines into major harbours. Except for the foc'sle's single 40 mm Boffin A/A gun and the grey paint, they bore little resemblance to any warship I'd ever seen. They looked more like commercial trawlers. Perhaps a bit shorter than a Corvette, "Porte St. Jean" sat deeper in the water. Had a single propeller and a diesel engine designed originally for rail locomotives, so I was told. Unlike most Navy ships, where the con position is well forward ... our wheelhouse and bridge were closer to the stern ... just abaft the well-deck. 'Driving' it felt like being in a railway cab or maybe an oil tanker. I was to learn more about this later.

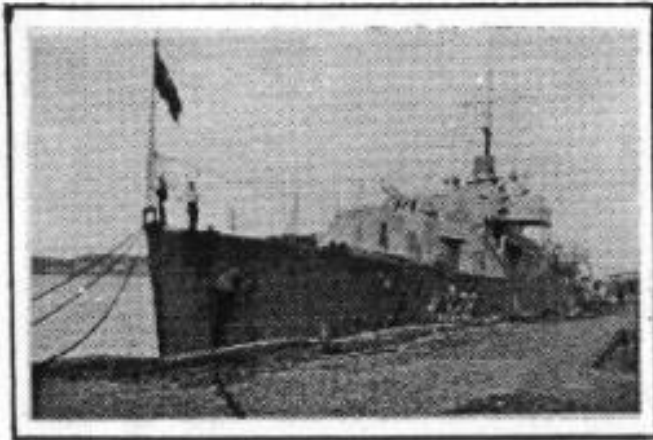
By the way, just in case younger readers may think this author is a misogynist ... NOT SO! No women are mentioned in our training tales simply because we had none afloat in those days. The thought of them being in the ships we had ... well, it just boggles my mind. Ahhh, what MIGHT have been, eh?



Cunard Liner "Ascania"



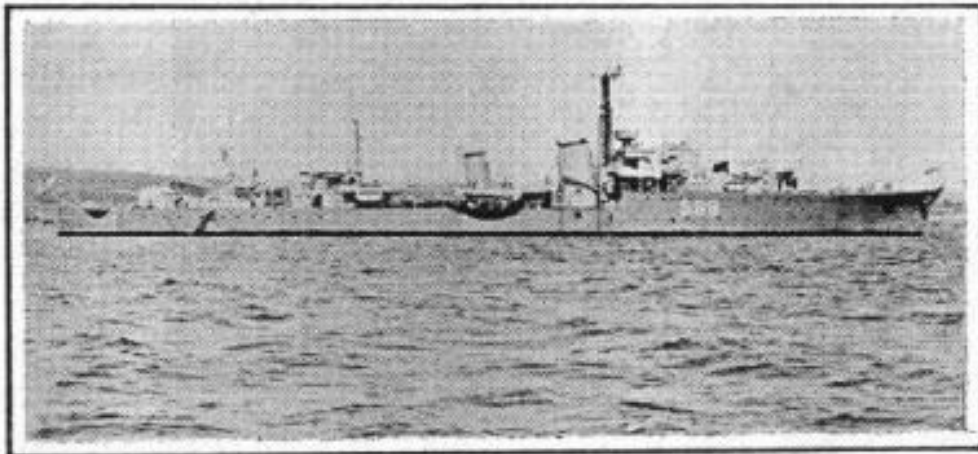
USS "Missouri" at Halifax



HMCS "Swansea"- WW II Frigate



RCAF 'Sabre' F-86 Fighter



HMCS "Iroquois" at Provincetown

6.

Hornblower

Even though I was soon to become an integral part of "Porte St. Jean's" complement, at this point I still felt, and probably behaved more like a tourist. Our voyage from Halifax to Hamilton is re-told here entirely from fading memory, with no diary to support it. My recollection is that we departed "Slackers" in early or mid-morning, probably well before 24 May, Victoria Day in 1953. Heading north-east in fairly good weather.

Well into the second day, we had altered course to a north-westerly track through the Cabot Strait, with Cape North passing to port. Was that Port-aux-Basques, Newfoundland on the horizon to starboard ... or just a mirage of clouds feeding my imagination? I WANTED to see it because I had never been there. Sorry to say, that is still the case.

The 'Rock' had joined Canada on 31 March, 1949, and I had met some of its youth during our Cadet training. Found them to be high-spirited, warm-hearted, usually with a great sense of humour punctuated with colourful cuss-words, which were refreshing to my Upper Canadian ears. Cape Bretoners had a similar talent. Reading a book by John Crosbie recently .. revived those memories. So also did the following Royal Navy Toast, relayed to me from 'Newfie-John' by two B.C. friends ... repeated here for the benefit of any who may not have heard it.

| May the keys to heaven never rust;
 | May wood in the beer-barrel never bust;
 | May Hitler's balls be tied-up with string
 | Till his arse-hole whistles God Save The King!

Apologies to the originators for any inaccuracies;
 but none to der Fuhrer IF, in fact, he really had two.
 One wonders how de Gaulle may have said this in French
 when he 'liberated' St. Pierre and Miquelon from Vichy
 in WW II, using a ship loaned to him by the Royal Navy.

Another day or so through the Gulf of St. Lawrence
 took us into the little port of Gaspé. A small Québec
 fishing village. Found a friendly water-hole ashore;
 and enjoyed a quiet evening quaffing local brews .. in
 QUART bottles. Four years earlier, on a UNTD Training
 Cruise, we had put into Dalhousie, N.B. at the head of
 Baie de Chaleur, well known for its Restigouche salmon.
 In September 1943, at Maisonette Light on that Bay, an
 escaped POW, Wolfgang Heyda was nabbed while trying to
 hitch a ride home in a U-boat. The sub eluded capture.

Next morning, we headed out around Cape Gaspé and
 south-westerly up into the St. Lawrence River. Passed
 Rimouski on the south and later Tadoussac on the north
 shore, at the mouth of the Saguenay River. Near the
 turbulence where the current of its deep trench meets
 the broader Mother River, we saw whales (Belugas?) and
 later porpoises swimming playfully all around "Porte
 St. Jean". Trying to show us what a poor substitute
 we had for their perfectly-adapted propulsion systems.
 Magnificent creatures now threatened by our mis-use of
 habitat which we should be SHARING with them.

Father Point is east of Rimouski not far from where
 the "Empress of Ireland" sank years ago, rivalling the
 "Titanic" for loss of life. It is where ships embark
 a Pilot for the trip to Montréal or beyond. I'm sure
 we had one returning in the Fall; but cannot recollect
 it in May. If H.M. ships were allowed to go-it-alone,
 it's possible we chose that option. You may wonder if
 this was foolhardy? Not at all; considering our C.O..

Despite this Chapter's Title, like most who have been decorated for military deeds, Lt Collier never talked to us about his D.S.C. Others told me, however, that he received the award for service in Korea. Here is what I heard (with no attempt to verify its accuracy): Andy had guided a UN destroyer flotilla, in a Canadian Tribal, into Inchon at night .. using his radar skills.

They accomplished their objectives, shelling enemy-held installations in that port of Seoul and returning to base with minimal damage. This tallies with other records indicating that Canadian destroyers were adept at bombarding North Korean railways from their mobile gun-platforms. Our Navy had and still has capability beyond anti-submarine warfare.

With talent such as that aboard, a River Pilot in peace-time could well have been redundant. Despite that prowess, however, he stressed with all of us that we never should rely totally upon radar. Sights and sounds should always take precedence. I believe Andy eventually rose to Rear Admiral before retirement. We were privileged to serve with a rapidly rising titan.

One night I had to stand watch on the bridge or, if the way was clear, from time to time in the wheelhouse. Directly aft of it was the radio-shack where AB Martin was doing his Communicator's watch. Radio has always fascinated me, as it did my Father. He had built his own crystal sets .. a few years after Marconi invented the medium. In my youth, I had emulated him in that.

Martin loved his trade. If there were no incoming messages to monitor, he liked to 'talk' by morse with his buddies in other ships. This night, he raised one of our ships in the Carribean! Then, as he dabbled on other frequencies, he suddenly looked a bit horrified and shut down all his equipment. He wouldn't tell me why; but a few days later, we received a directive ... reminding all H.M. ships they were NOT to transmit on airline frequencies. I wonder what Martin was up to that night? Was some agency getting a fix on him?

We proceeded up-river toward Québec City. I found myself imagining what immigrants, inbound from Europe, must have felt, when they first saw Château Frontenac looming up ahead on that hill. Such a grand sight ... A wonderful first impression of Canada, their new home. Veterans returning from WW II may have felt the same.

* * *

Making our way inland to Montréal, we secured overnight in the Lachine Canal. I took advantage of leave to visit my Cousin Beth, who had just become a Mother for the first time. We reminisced about school-days back in Toronto. Her walk-up apartment or duplex was in south-west Montréal, a very LONG way from our ship.

Beth told me where to catch a trolley; and we said good-night. Once aboard that rattling, clanging old vehicle (not unlike the Yonge Street cars back home in pre-subway days), I relaxed for the long ride ahead. It didn't work out that way. Round about midnight, we wheeled right into a loop and halted. Driver started waving his arms, shouting at me ... the sole remaining passenger. Whatever he said in French I sensed it was the opposite of 'En Voiture'. When he then pointed to his watch, I knew the service was discontinued at 12:00 p.m.; and he was not about to work over-time. Nothing to do with French-English friction.

Disembarking, I felt very stupid and slightly lost; but luckily, my fair sense of direction kicked in; so I 'followed my nose' on foot. No bloody point trying to find a cab. With my rusty French, I could easily have ended up at one of those old Gates in Québec City! It must have been at least a four-or-five-mile walk .. to the end of that major street, down-hill through an industrial area to the left; across railway tracks ... till I finally found the Lachine Canal. Followed that until the "Jean" appeared up ahead 1 1/4 hours later. Never thanked Beth for her trolley directions.

* * *

The next morning, we were underway again, making sound signals as we entered locks. Then, the Captain suggested we could relieve boredom by touching-up the paint-work ... officers NOT exempted. Donning my fine clean dungarees from Cadet days, I went forward to the paint-locker and grabbed a fairly broad brush, plus a small can of red. Thinking: Hell, I probably have more experience than HE has in this work.

My idea had been to do the maple leaf on each side of the funnel; but I confess I'm a bit compulsive with a paint brush. Once done with that, I looked for something else that required, or would look better in RED. Mounted on the forward surface of that same funnel was a horn ... powered by compressed air and sounding just like a diesel locomotive. I thought the inner part of that horn could stand improvement.

Standing with my back to the bridge and wheelhouse, probably no more than 15 feet aft, I failed to notice another lock coming up ahead of us. Had just finished my handiwork. Stood there admiring it ... when the C.O. reached above his head (was he smiling?); grabbed a brass knob ... and pulled it down:

HONNNK ! ... Was MY face RED !

After another two or three days ... a part of the trip I remember mainly for the smell of varsol, while cleaning my dungarees ... we arrived safe-and-sound at our summer base of Hamilton, Ontario near the end of May. The reception committee at HMCS "Star" must have wondered why our ship's horn was somewhat speckled and a few red polka-dots still could be seen near the back of the bridge. Live and learn. This was the first of many rude lessons to come for the green UNTD graduate.

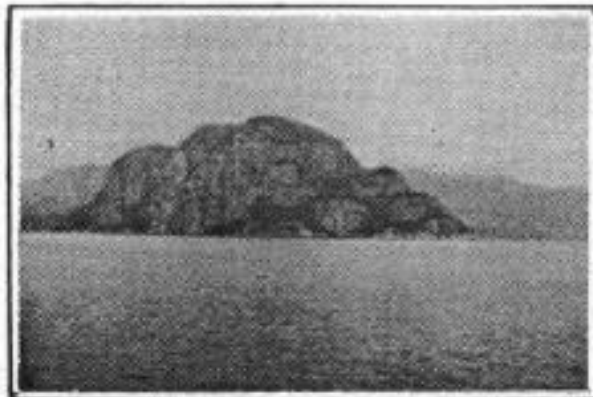




< WW II Frigate like "Swansea"



HMCS "Nootka" near Tadoussac >



< Cape in Saguenay River

Chateau Frontenac at Québec >



Part Two ✨

Fun with Jean and Louis

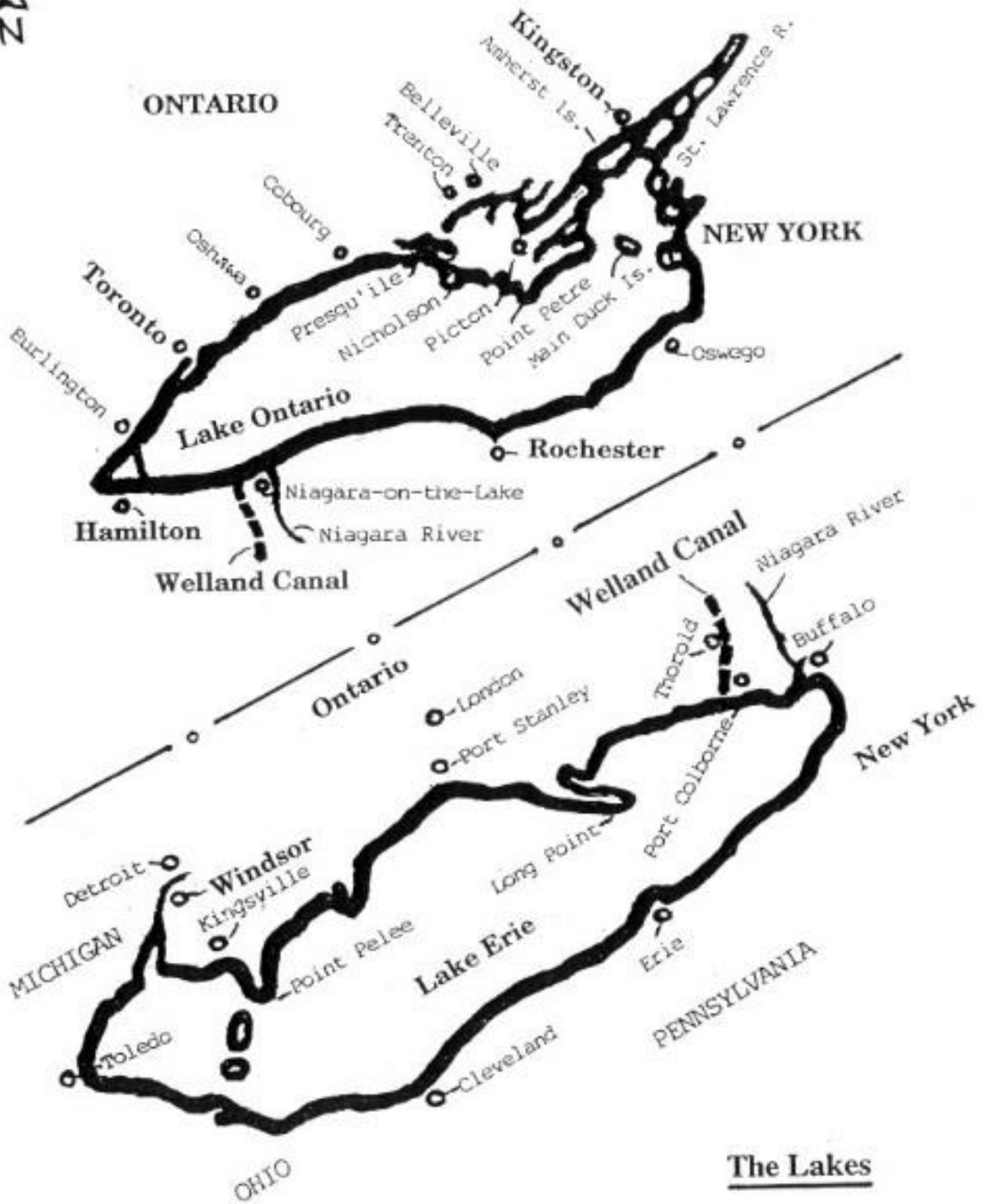
"A training ship for
young hooligans who
might otherwise have
gone to the devil."

from 'Murder Ahoy'
by Agatha Christie



"Porte St. Jean"- Coronation Day

The Lakes



7.

Coronation

On Wednesday, 6 February 1952, the Toronto Daily Star was in its 60th year. That issue had 48 pages @ 3¢ per copy - 18¢ per week! The banner headline: THE KING DIES IN HIS SLEEP PROCLAIM ELIZABETH QUEEN ... FLYING HOME FROM KENYA. And lower on the front page: Britons Weep in Streets; To-night's NHL Game Between Maple Leafs, NY Rangers Cancelled; Cabinet to Name Day of Mourning in Honor of King. That was 47 years ago!

Nowadays, we can hear publishers howl about losing our distinctive Canadian culture to split-run editions of U.S. magazines. Some of them seem to have abandoned part of it half a century ago. Even then, the Star spelled "honour" American-style! To-day, computers do similar things ... without our consent.

By coincidence, our present Head-of-State acceded to the throne on the day I was promoted to Lieutenant RCN(R); so remembering each event has been doubly easy ever since. On that sad day, I had winter employment (between college courses) in a time-and-motion study. Our team included an Army veteran and a former RCAF Spitfire pilot with Malta service. Jack and Charlie each had tasted real war-time combat; each was visibly shaken by the loss of his beloved King. Would such feelings be widespread in Canada, 1999? I doubt it. Are we not poorer as a nation because of that change?

The British had decreed a fairly long mourning for King George VI. Factor in their climate and summer of '53 was chosen for formal crowning of Queen Elizabeth. On Tuesday, 2 June 1953, the actual day for Coronation, "Porte St. Jean" was berthed alongside HMCS "Star" in Hamilton; and Lt Levey was O.O.D. (Officer-of-the-Day).

Our C.O. ordered "Dress Ship" at 0800. A colourful sight, this involves displays of signal flags from the Yard-arm, between masts, and along stays strung to the bow and stern. This is sometimes augmented by lights, especially at Christmas-time. A surviving rough copy of our Log recorded, at 1030: "Splice the Main Brace" = extra tot of grog all 'round. At 1130 a parade party went ashore to join in civic celebrations with other ships, plus personnel from "Star", the local Reserve Division and home to GLTC, Great Lakes Training Centre.

* * *

GLTC had begun there the previous summer. Several UNTD grads and I served then as Divisional Officers, shepherding Reserve New Entry Ordinary Seamen through a two-week training syllabus, 'at sea' in Fairmiles. These lovely little craft were left-overs from WW II anti-sub coastal patrols. With wooden hulls, 112 feet long, they may have been less than comfortable on the high seas. At war's end, many Fairmiles were sold off at bargain prices to private bidders. Often they were converted to luxury yachts, one of which I visited a year later in Vancouver. Luckily, enough were retained to supply most Reserve Divisions with one as 'tender'.

In 1952, we knew them first by their hull numbers, such as 706 or 762. Soon they acquired proper ships' names such as "Beaver" and "Wolf". At that summer's peak, we had six in service. Needless to say, their home Divisions at Kingston, Toronto, London, Windsor and Thunder Bay, resented losing them from customary week-end excursions which, some alleged, were more for pleasure than training! For 1953 ... the Gate Vessels would be the main carriers of New Entry Trainees.

Future years would see many minesweepers in that role; but the 'Gates' did return from time to time. 1953 saw another major change at the site of HMCS "Star". Naval Reserve Headquarters were moved from Ottawa to Hamilton under the command of Commodore Kenneth Adams. Known as COND (= Commanding Officer Naval Divisions); it later became FOND when its senior officer attained 'Flag' rank. A new headquarters building was finished late in '54; but during our present narrative "Star's" south block was the origin of most of our training and sailing orders. A few years ago, during the Mulroney regime I believe, these headquarters were moved once again ... this time to Québec City. A decision which is hard to explain, except by regional politics?

* * *

The author was O.O.D. on Wednesday 3 June, when we reverted to regular training classes followed by 'Make and Mend' at 1200 Noon ... a traditional half-day off from normal work ... intended originally so each crew member could repair his personal kit. By then however, it was regarded more as time for 'R & R' if in harbour and also as compensation for working Saturday mornings, which we often did.

It was during this period that our ship's Executive Officer was posted elsewhere, probably Halifax; and I was named X.O. to replace him. Though it was good for the old ego, I had mixed feelings. It would be a real challenge: learning on-the-job. In one respect, still having Lt Collier as C.O. made it easier, as I trusted his judgement implicitly. But, it was also tougher, as a man of his calibre would have high expectations.

Which he did! Our summer plans had begun to focus. In a sense, this was kick-off week. We were becoming familiar with GLTC and what was expected of us. A few Trainees had embarked about 31 May. Our daily routine was beginning to shake down. The O.O.D. Thursday was S/Lt Middleton; and Friday was S/Lt Diakiw's turn; but only until 1410 that afternoon.

Then we slipped and proceeded from harbour, astern of "Porte St. Louis" through a channel or cut to Lake Ontario when, near the Burlington bell-buoy, we paused for a brief swim party; but a young lad was injured in a fall from the ship's ladder. We returned at 1605 to berth ahead of HMCS "Beaver", the Fairmile attached to "Star". The "Louis" followed at 1710 and at 2025 HMCS "Digby" berthed at Catherine Street jetty (departing again at 1745 Sunday, 7 June). Unlike ours, that pier ran at right angles to the shore, from the northern dead-end of that street.

"Digby" was a diesel-power WW II Bangor minesweeper. Working with sister ship "Granby", she had been based at Toronto for several months on a research assignment. With an electronics company, they had been trying to improve radar reception and definition .. something to do with unscrambling echo-blips after they merged on the screen ... or so we heard via the "buzz".

My files contain records of eight Training Cruises, numbered 2 to 9. Nothing for #1 (which should have occurred in this period). By now however, we did have a full complement of men and officers, or so we hoped. A really productive training period was soon to evolve.

Much of the foregoing makes for pretty dull reading; but it reflects the way some of our trainees must have felt. Had they read the future, they should have felt cheated as compared to what came in later weeks. Even "Porte St. Louis" would get a short cruise next week, whereas we had barely travelled anywhere.

For now, we could only take consolation in the fact that our new Queen finally had a crown on her head. It seemed a fitting way in which to launch our program!

8.

Jones' Colours



Before re-playing more action tapes from our '53 memory bank, it could prove useful to provide thumb-nail sketches for three characters in the ensuing anecdotes.

The qualities described below can be recalled quite easily because one of my duties included Form 239A ... a Conduct Sheet .. to be completed for every man below officer rank for his time with the ship. Other Officers did this for Trainees; but permanent crew were my task. They had to be rated for Character, Efficiency, Suitability for Advancement; which became part of a written record that followed them throughout their careers. One needed to balance a man's personal future with his potential value or harm to the service. The C.O. provided similar reports for all officers.

OS Jean Guy Robillard- Home Division was "Montcalm" in Québec City. Joined ship in late May for his Naval Training, the mandatory two-week annual service for a Reserve to stay on the Active List. A New Entry with energy and good intentions (most of the time); but one major handicap - his mother tongue was French; it soon became apparent that he sometimes misunderstood orders. He had applied for SD (Special Duty), opting to remain with us for the remainder of the summer. He was only 17 years old.

"Robi" was 5'9", had black hair, brown eyes, and a chunky, muscular build. Add to that his Québec charm; and one suspected he would have no difficulty finding female company when ashore in strange new ports!

LS James A. Rankin- Part of our permanent crew, his home base was Halifax, where his wife was. Qualified electrician in his non-substantive rank, he was quite competent in his trade. 6'2" tall, slim and wiry, he was nick-named "Lofty", common for men of his height. With dark brown hair and cold blue eyes he had a cocky air suggesting the whole summer would be an imposition on him ... he had better ways to spend his time. Had little respect for Reserves, especially the new X.O. To him I seemed wet behind the ears; and he set out to test me at every turn. Trouble is, it took me a while to realize that. His late 20's gave him an advantage.

PO Liam Clive Jones- Married man in his 30's, about 5'10", balding with grey eyes that were rather lacking in expression. Not fat, but a physique suggesting that exercise wasn't high in his priorities. Never saw him move fast. His rank was Pl(NQ), a Petty Officer 1st Class not qualified in any specialty (such as Gunnery). A Reserve, he had signed for an extended period of CND (Continuous Naval Duty) for a course later in the Fall.

Like Robi, Jones had joined us in late May. As our crew shook down into a form for the summer, for better or worse, he became our Coxswain for the Great Lakes period. All because he had the highest rank among the seamen. There were also three Chiefs aboard; but they were engine-room, responsible directly to the Captain. Although not in my direct domain, it was good to see they were competent. Without them we could go nowhere!

Jones had an "attitude" which sometimes was counter-productive. Behind his back, the men had been heard calling him Elsie. More than just his first initials, this probably referred to his whining when things went wrong, almost mentally wringing his hands. Tended to blame subordinates (Am I doing the same?).

One of Jones' biases was worrisome. This was first manifested during a painting work-party one day, while at anchor. A wooden platform was slung over the side so two seamen, with paint-cans and brushes, could give the hull a fresh coat. Two ropes at each end required frequent adjustment - to lower or raise those 'exterior decorators'. Control of that lay with two or three men per rope, huffing and puffing on the upper deck.

Ready for a move, PO Jones barked the order: "Down slack; lower away gently!" OS Robillard was backing up one rope, probably strong enough to hold it alone. He misunderstood "slack" and let go entirely! "Sacré bleu!" Down went one end of the platform ... one big splash; one very soaked rating (a swimmer thank God!); and another swung like a monkey from the forward rope. My first concern was the man in the water, who was not harmed. Jones' reaction: "GODDAM FRENCH!"

We were to see more of this in future, as reflected in Form CNS 2244 (Charge Reports) which he prepared in ensuing months. In addition to Cox's'n, PO Jones was Master-at-Arms or senior enforcer of discipline among lower-deck personnel. Whenever necessary, it was his job to organize "Defaulters" to appear before the X.O. or C.O. for trial and sentencing. The route, and the punishment, varied with severity of the offence. This was a duty I never enjoyed, acting as judge and jury; but we had QRCN (Queen's Regulations) to guide us.

It was a crude justice system; but still effective if the 'policeman' was fair in applying the rules and laying charges. I fear Jones was not. Of 21 Charge Sheets still in my files, 17 were against Francophones. While probably an incomplete record, it still suggests a distorted emphasis. Our ship's complement averaged about 30, including 3 or 4 officers but excluding New Entries. At the time, only 8 were Francophone ... in rough proportion to Canada's population distribution.

Was I naïve? Despite the language problem, I felt Québeckers added a unique dimension to the 'family'.

Our bonus for being Canadian ... setting us apart from the great American melting-pot. On the other hand, if the ship was Canada-in-microcosm and if there are many other Jones out there, then it's no bloody wonder that to-day we have growing pressure for Québec sovereignty. There may well be some foundation for their complaints of ill-treatment over the years, above and beyond what may have happened on the Plains of Abraham in 1759.

* * *

PO Jones and the X.O. also had a personal source of friction, which I regarded as trivial. It appeared to drive him to distraction. It all revolved around the daily "Colours" ceremony whenever we were in harbour. While at sea, the white ensign flew from the stern 24 hours per day whereas in port it was lowered at sunset and raised again next morning at 0800 (along with the blue ensign on the Jack-staff at the bow). "Colours" were attended by all in the ship who had no more vital duties (e.g. engine room). It was the Coxswain's role to have everybody "fall in" on the quarterdeck by 0755, then bring them to attention just before 8:00 a.m.

As senior officer below the C.O., I had to be there to receive the report: "Ship's Company present, Sir"; order them to "Face Aft"; and salute as the ensign was raised. I never have liked mornings .. moreso on week ends, when we usually were in harbour. As I had often been a last-minute arrival for this ceremony, Cox's'n had taken to knocking on my door to warn me about 0755. This was getting on my nerves. He didn't trust me!

My cabin was directly below the site of that daily ritual. Above my bunk was a water-tight hatch, meant for escape to the upper deck in case of emergency. It dawned upon me that this really should be tested with a practice exercise. One Saturday in June at 0755, I waited for the sound of PO Jones' boots, coming down the ladder from the Wardroom flats. Up through that hatch I went. When Jones knocked and entered ...

No bloody X.O.!

By the time he re-emerged up top by a conventional route, the ensign had been piped and was raised. After the salute I turned to face him with: "PO Jones, where have YOU been? You missed Colours!" Poor psychology.

Saturday, 6 June was the ninth anniversary of D-Day in WW II. There was no special recognition. "Porte St. Louis" and "Digby" left for the day, returning in the evening. We had a Church Parade Sunday; and seven New Entry Trainees joined the ship. The Log indicated we were at "12 hours notice for steam"; but on Monday, we had to double up our lines due to a tornado warning. The danger had passed by Tuesday, 9 June; and we had another 'Makers' the next day. Training classes that week included flaking out the anchor cable.

That week at the jetty in Hamilton gave me a chance to look up a girl I had known earlier in Toronto. She had landed a job with the City of Hamilton. Her name was Lori Jamieson .. often Jamie for short. About 5'8", slim, blue eyes, light brown hair. We spent the evening at a movie, followed by beer and french-fries at a local pub. Lori liked pickled eggs (yuch!).

Another night in "Star's" Wardroom she revealed real musical talent on the piano. Had a bubbly sense of humour ... very appealing. I think that was the time she told me about her brother Jack. He had joined the RCAF Reserves and was learning to fly at Trenton. She worried about "J.J.". Don't know what possessed me: instead of reassuring her, I stupidly agreed flying is a risky business. Should have said nothing.

On Friday, hands mustered for pay; and on Saturday 13 June, three new crew members were drafted aboard to augment the ship's complement. The Log recorded that "Porte St. Louis" was back alongside from a short trip somewhere. Shore leave was granted from 1200 to 0755. Once again, we had 12 hours notice for steam ... THIS time, it would prove to be for REAL.



The old steamer "Iroquois"
Used to serve Lake-of-Bays



"Porte St. Jean"- anchor 'catted'

Old Victoria Hall in Cobourg
Illustration by Wm Kettlewell
Ontario Department of Tourism



WW II Fairmile - PC 706

9.

Rankin's Spanner

PG-13



"Porte St. Jean" left Hamilton about 0925 Sunday 14 June, coming to anchor shortly after noon off HMCS "York", which faces the Western Gap entrance to Toronto harbour. To the south of that lies Island Airport, a man-made extension of Hanlan's Point. From 1415 to 1600 our gangway was open to visitors as part of an open house at "York". About 200 were shown around the ship, having made their way out in small craft manned by Reserves.

As we had no leave yet, seeing that none of our lady visitors was without escort (Could one blame them), LS Rankin chose this time to do some repairs. As senior electrician aboard, among other items, he ensured that all lights were functional, including those needed for navigation. He had just climbed the foremast, pliers and wrench in his belt, when I heard a loud clatter on the well-deck beneath him. Rankin's reaction:

"Sunnova Hoar! I dropped me bloody Spanner! Just my friggin' luck; Why do I risk my life up this phallic f--ing mast like a monkey fixing faulty fraying wiring? Probably installed by some dumb numb-bum .. in Halifax flippin' Dockyard! Who didn't know his ass from ..."
 Interrupted by "Great thundering arse-holes! My Goddam tool nearly hit that popsy on her bleedin' head! What stupid sunnova-bitch said we should have open flaming house when I have work to do in the friggin' riggin'? I wish they'd all bugger-off back home!"

As that decision was made in COND, I took this as no personal slight. He descended the ladder singing, to the tune of O-Tannenbaum, "The working class can kiss my ass; I'm in the RCN at last."

* * *

To reduce the risk of X-rating, the above monologue has been somewhat sanitized. Readers with experience in that sub-culture should feel free to re-insert the censored profanity in order to restore the episode to its original full living colour; but only when reading alone, NOT from a podium please - a layman could never get it right! Like many of his naval brethren, Rankin had distilled rough language into a virtual art form. His flare could put most Dockyard 'mateys' to shame.

You could almost hear echoes (and cheers?) from the jetty at HMCS "York" or was it from the full length of the Western friggin' Gap? (Oh, the author regresses.) I was more concerned, however, with all the gasps from assembled Toronto tax-payers, many of whom soon headed for cleaner air-pockets ashore. BAD P-R! Somehow the loud-mouth must be muzzled. He and I had a short talk about the merits of closed mouths during open houses.

* * *

At 1815, we weighed anchor, entered Toronto harbour and berthed beside HMCS "Digby" the Bangor minesweeper, at CSL Pier 9 (Canada Steamship Lines). At about 1200 Monday 15 June, we headed east for Cobourg, using the transit time for Trainee steering instruction. O.O.W. (Officer-of-the-Watch) ship-handling also transpired. Arriving inside Cobourg's sea-wall about 1800, leave was granted from 1830 to 0715 for those eligible.

Cobourg is a fascinating old town, known especially for magnificent Victoria Hall on King Street, opened in 1860 by the Prince of Wales. Site of the present Town offices, in 1983 it was restored to its former glory, including the upper concert hall. The sunken court-room is a copy of Old Bailey in London, England.

Actress Marie Dressler (Tug-boat Annie) was born in the Town in 1869. Cobourg is also the original home of Victoria College, which later moved west to become part of University of Toronto. While working there as a consultant in the 1980's, I was told that the Town once had aspired to be Ontario's capital. Some of the local boosters even tried to build a railway from its harbour to Peterborough ... across the middle of Rice Lake which lies between the two.

* * *

Departing at 0800 on Tuesday 16 June, Trainees had drills in steering break-down, action and emergency stations and streaming the log. Officers did O.O.W. maneuvers and signal flag-hoists. We anchored at 1800 in North Cove, off Main Duck Island, when the sea-boat was lowered. Our Trainees pulled ashore for an hour before raising it again.

Main Duck lies within Canada but well out in Lake Ontario near the international boundary-line with N.Y. State, almost due south of Amherst Island which is just west of Kingston. We learned that its owner was John Foster Dulles, one-time Secretary of State in the U.S. No leave was granted that evening. Had we been able to go ashore, we may have heard more local folk-lore: Hairy tales about the island's role as a haven for rum runners in the days of prohibition.

Wednesday could have been a short sail to Kingston; but we spent eight hours getting there from a start at 0800. The reason was: Training ... our raison d'être! Anchoring twice for officer training in navigation and Trainees on the cables; also streaming the anchor buoy. The port anchor was 'catted'; the cable broken, then rejoined. We 'pointed ship'. There was also practice in hand lead-line for sounding, and in heaving-lines.

For those readers with access to nautical charts, my note-book for that week reveals some fixes jotted down during those maneuvers (all True from the Gyro).

1128- Main Duck Lt. 239	1135- Main Duck Lt. 220
Swetman Is. 273	Yorkshire Is. 152
1142- Timber Is. 225	1200- Pigeon Is. 059
Main Duck Lt. 205	Nine Mile Pt. 020
Main Duck Is. 121	Main Duck Lt. 191

How would these look beside to-day's GPS hardware?

We put into Kingston at about 1600 when we were met by the Staff Officer of HMCS "Cataraqui", local Reserve Division. He made the facilities of his stone frigate (a ship on land) available to our Ship's Company. A gracious host. Leave was granted to non-duty watches from 1615 that day to 0655 Thursday.

Departing at 0800 on the 18th, we engaged in O.O.W. ship-handling while Trainees had exams. We needed an overnight sail, with practice in coastal pilotage, in order to make our Hamilton ETA at 0800 on Friday, 19 June. So ended what was officially Training Cruise #2.

* * *

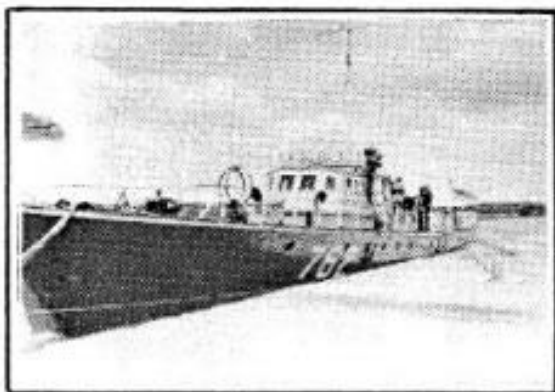
Overnight leave was granted only to 0755 Saturday; but it was my turn for O.O.D. duty in harbour. This would not be boring! We were berthed starboard-side-to at Catherine Street jetty. Apparently a government-owned pier with a large shed on it. Though frequently used by vessels at "Star", it was located beyond the main part of the base, just west. The fence enclosing it from the abutting street was less than perfect from the standpoint of security.

While visiting with friends in the "Star" Wardroom during a late-evening quiet spell, I heard some of our young lads yelling near "Porte St. Jean". Walking the 200 plus yards to investigate, I discovered our head-rope was in the water. Some Town rowdies had squeezed around the end of the fence and lifted the eye of the steel-wire rope from the jetty cleat. "Jean's" bow already had drifted 15 to 20 feet from shore.

Luckily, the other three lines were still fast; but the gangway was useless, having dragged off the jetty. I was concerned about possible rudder damage .. if she swung out too far. We rounded up some help; and two men clambered aboard via the stern-rope. Then, they fished out the head-rope, attached a heaving-line to it, and threw it to us on shore from amidships. Then we looped it over the cleat on the jetty; and the men aboard took up the slack. BUT, how could we possibly swing the ship's bow back into proper position without finding a Chief to start the main engine? That could mean paper-work later ... if not more trouble.

Then somebody had a bright idea. Wish I could take credit for it; but I seem to recall it was one of the young lads ... maybe even Robillard? I was thankful that Jones was not there to organize things. Can you believe it? Four men, two on each end, got her back - by jumping up and down with feet or hands firmly on the head-rope, like monkeys on a trapeze. Something like leaning against a railway car on a level track; their weight was enough to pull her in.

Slowly, but surely, the bow swung back to starboard; eventually she was back parallel to the jetty; the two men aboard downed slack and secured the lines. For insurance, we doubled up. Nothing more was ever heard or said about the episode; but all of us who witnessed it sure would have liked to meet those "Townies" ... preferably near the harbour's stinking swimming-hole!



PC 762 - HMCS "Wolf"



Harvard Trainer at "Shearwater"



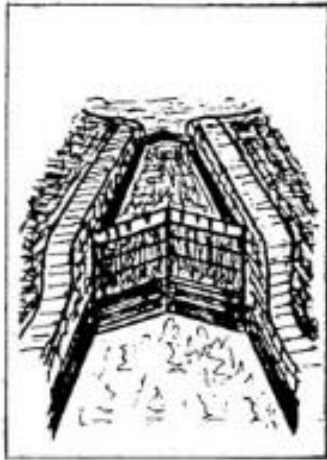
'Mule' at Gatun Lock - Panama

Old Welland Canal Scene
Sketch by Wm Kettlewell
Ont. Dep't of Tourism



10.

Ladders and Snakes



At 0900 Sunday 21 June, we began a cruise which would be unique for the summer. Heading for Port Dalhousie, we probably sailed close to the spot where, 20 years later, Archie Hodge located wrecks of the "Hamilton" and "Scourge" ... victims of the War of 1812. It took 8.5 hours to transit the Welland Canal, arriving at Port Colborne, Lake Erie at 2030. Leave was granted to 0600 Monday.

* * *

On a world scale, the Welland Canal may seem rather insignificant, especially when compared to the one in Panama. Constructed from 1907 to 1914 during the U.S. Presidency of Teddy Roosevelt, the latter's overall length exceeds 50 miles. Since Theodore was a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he undoubtedly had a strategic reason for building it. This foresight paid off in WW II when many U.S. battleships and carriers saved valuable time in avoiding the long trip 'around the Horn'. Time to complete the Atlantic to Pacific trip was cut to an average of six to eight hours.

Our Canal is older, opening in 1833 when Canada was still a colony. It is shorter, about 27 miles between Lakes Erie and Ontario; and also slower to traverse, judging by our experience. Changes in level help to explain the difference. Panama lifts ships 85 feet; then back down to sea level. Total change: 170 feet.

Niagara Falls alone drops about 160 feet. Add the rapids and the total change in elevation (as the River flows from Erie to Ontario) is about 325 feet- nearly double the change in Panama. So says my encyclopaedia! To some extent, the Welland may also have had military impetus, following closely after the War of 1812 - when British ships for use in Lakes Erie or Huron had to be BUILT there. Another factor was the 1825 opening of the U.S. Erie Canal. To-day, however, it has greater significance for commercial purposes such as the steel industry in Hamilton, grain shipment from the Lakehead and general overseas trade.

The St. Lawrence Seaway's modernization (open 1959) enhanced the entire system, enabling more ships to use Welland's 27 foot depth with locks 800x80 feet (since 1932). After that, traffic almost doubled in a decade. In comparison, Panama Canal's locks are 1,000x110 feet. Its ownership will revert to Panama on 31 December '99.

* * *

Heading westerly 22 June, we had an hour of O.O.W. ship-handling maneuvers when I learned more about our ship's unusual left-hand screw. Most single-shafted naval vessels are right-hand which means: while moving ahead under power, the propeller rotates clock-wise as one faces forward. Ours was opposite ... one of only two I've ever heard of. Surprised we were not called 'south paw'? The net effect was a reversal in torque action ... our stern was kicked to port rather than to starboard. Going astern, the phenomenon has opposite results in either case. To a novice, "Porte St. Jean" could prove embarrassing as she required one to adapt and change well-ingrained old reflexes.

We put into Port Stanley at 1800 for a short night in the home port for the London Reserve Division: HMCS "Prevost". Memory took me back to my only previous visit there. It was during undergrad college days ... an October football week-end for a U of T and UWO game. One of our crowd had a family cottage at Port Stanley.

They arranged some lively entertainment ... out-of-season, so to speak. She was an aging but attractive brunette, imported from Detroit. Gypsy Rose Lee would have been impressed. Who ever said that blondes have the most fun? Or sailors either, for that matter.

Maybe this was influenced by the village's history? At one time, it had laid claim to being the world's greatest fresh-water fishing port. More recently, the Lake Erie fishery went into steep decline, decimating its fleet. Algae growth, caused by excess phosphorus from sewage and fertilizers, almost killed the lake. Then, the clean-up campaign went too far, exaggerated by introduction of Zebra mussels from ballast tanks of a European freighter. These man-made imbalances have yet to reach a desirable new equilibrium.

At 0500 Tuesday we were underway and, passing Point Pelee (southern-most mainland in Canada), we bucked the swift currents of the Detroit river. Berthed in Windsor at 1800 on 23 June ... after O.O.W. maneuvers and an Encounter Exercise with "Porte St. Louis". We were together for the remainder of this Third Training Cruise. Overnight leave was granted to the crew; but our 15 Trainees were due back at midnight. Perhaps to lower the temptation to cross the Ambassador bridge to Detroit. This is the only city in Canada where one can go NORTH into the U.S.A.

The Reserve Division HMCS "Hunter" was nearby; but we had little time to explore one of Canada's major auto-making centres. Up and away at 0800 24 June, we had two hours of maneuvers; later streaming the anchor buoy as we anchored in Pigeon Bay, close to Kingsville. Followed by a boat-race with "Porte St. Louis".

With a long homeward run ahead, we weighed anchor at 0535 Thursday, passing Point Pelee again. Lake Erie is shallowest of the Great Lakes ... which makes it more susceptible to high waves in sudden storms. Just what Trainees needed to imagine the REAL high seas. There also are some natural gas deposits beneath the lake.

Was this why the 'Futurist' Ogden advocated DRAINING that Lake some years ago? Your present word-smith can claim no family ties with HIS imagination; and I'm not about to volunteer for DNA analysis!

Passing Long Point en route back to Welland Canal, I had no way of knowing that, over four decades later, our eldest son would be a volunteer for banding birds at the Observatory there. Great spot for watchers of migratory birds. My wife and I now live 10 miles from Long Point on Lake Ontario. Also great for birding. Plug for Prince Edward Co. Feathered Friends (PECoFF).

In 11 hours we re-negotiated the Canal, like snakes slithering back down the Niagara Escarpment. Passed through Thorold where I would work as a consultant for a spell in the mid-70's. Arriving in Hamilton Friday 26 June at 0030, we all needed a good sleep before the Trainees disembarked and we prepared for next week.

That Friday evening I managed to line up "Jamie" for a quiet date, Said good-night around 1:00 a.m. The Saturday morning radio news delivered a shock. A young university student had 'spun-out' in his Harvard trainer at Trenton; crashed and died instantly. Pilot name: Jack Jamieson. Jamie's Dad had arrived about 3:00 a.m. to tell her. I drove to her home town on Sunday to pay my respects. Coffin was draped in an RCAF flag.

The C.O.'s Report for Training Cruise #3 strongly urged that any future trips to Lake Erie be allotted two weeks .. due to the two days consumed by the Canal. Because of logistics and ground transport required for exchanging Trainees, this never happened in 1953; but in later years, I believe it was successfully arranged.

Despite the frustration of having so little time to explore new ports-of-call, Trainees DID absorb all the requisite lectures and demonstrations; plus the added learning experience (or drudgery) of the Welland Canal.

11.

Birthday



Training Cruise #4 was Lt Collier's last one with us; but he proved once again his strategic skills as a C.O. We departed Hamilton at 0800 Monday 29 June - for an 'Evasion Exercise'. The object was for "Porte St. Jean" to attempt to reach a 'firing area' off Point Petre, in central Prince Edward County, around 2100 without being detected by HMCS "Granby" and "Digby". Probably part of their on-going radar research project.

Our C.O. stayed within a mile of shore all the way to Prèsqu'île; then sailed between Scotch Bonnet Light and Nicholson Island. Contacted an air spotter from Trenton ... dubbed 'Snooper-1' whose role, I believe, was to verify the various ships' positions. Just east of Scotch Bonnet, we picked up "Digby" on radar; then had visual contact. She managed to intercept us about ONE MILE from the firing area! It was now easier to imagine how Andy had completed his mission at Inchon.

* * *

From there we proceeded to Main Duck Island for an anchorage rendezvous with sister "Porte St. Louis" at 2230 Monday. Trainees took steering instructions en route. At 0500 Tuesday, all ships sailed for Kingston, arriving three hours later. Then at 1430 "Granby" and "Porte St. Jean" anchored in Navy Bay to receive a 7-gun salute from Fort Henry.

Leave was granted from 1545; and Kingston's Reserve Division "Cataragui" organized a dance for the ships. Wednesday 1 July was Dominion Day, Canada's birthday - a fitting time for Public Relations. At 1930 we four anchored again in Navy Bay ... in full view of holiday visitors to Fort Henry. All Trainees had been landed earlier to take part in a naval contingent ashore. Weighing anchor at 2045, we carried out maneuvers in the River, firing rockets and flares to coincide with the celebrations at the Fort. Later our officers were guests at the Army Area Headquarters Mess.

Even though we were too busy with P-R for me to act on it, I couldn't help but think of Janet, who had become "J.J.'s" fiancée just before his fatal crash near Trenton. She was employed at Fort Henry but would be in no mood for all the noise and lights at the Fort that night. Since I didn't attend the funeral, we had not yet met.

Kingston is known as the site of Queen's University and Royal Military College. It's also where Sir John A. Macdonald, at age 5, arrived when his parents came from Glasgow. At age 21, Macdonald was called-to-the-bar and practiced law there before entering politics. Kingston is also where my ancestor bought the Scottish works for a clock with proceeds from his salmon catch. Our circa 1820 REAL great-great-grandfather clock.

Founded 1673 as French Fort Frontenac or Cataragui; a military base and ship-building centre in the War of 1812; Kingston became a city in 1838. From 1841-44 it was capital of the Province of Canada with evidence of that to be seen in its beautiful City Hall and Court House, built in 1843-44.

At 0800 Thursday, with "Louis", we left Kingston and the two Bangors. Trainees learned about anchoring and 'pointing ship' with help from the windlass; then we had a boat-race with the "Louis". Officers spent 2.5 hours in O.O.W. maneuvers and ship-handling en route to Hamilton, which we reached at 0830 Friday, 3 July.

The C.O.'s Report for this Cruise was dated 8 July, 1953. I have no record of any action 'at sea' for the usual Monday-to-Friday period that week. The obvious reason is: we had a Change-of-Command. Andy Collier's skills were required by the Navy at the coast; so we would be deprived of this very talented officer.

* * *

His replacement was a Reserve L Cdr: L.J.D. Garrett from Edmonton. With WW II service, he was fairly tall, slim in a wiry way, and had piercing blue eyes. He would prove to be just what our crew needed at that time. A few of the men had become a bit lethargic and sloppy. Part of it may have been due to the X.O. who was still trying to grasp his new role, and being too lenient with minor lapses in discipline. You don't earn respect by being 'Mr. Nice Guy' to everybody. I was learning that the hard way ... by trial and error.

A case in point was LS Rankin: I had sensed earlier that he had little love for Reserves, especially the 'green' X.O. But, this worm was about to turn. For reasons I can't recall, the Cox's'n asked me one day to go with him into the Seamen's Mess ... perhaps it was to check on some defective equipment. Jones preceded me down the ladder and as this was not formal 'rounds' (inspection) I removed my cap before descending. This meant that nobody had to stand up when we arrived.

Rankin was seated with his back to us, telling some of his juniors what a sucker the X.O. was; a real push-over. Rankin would be able to get away with anything so long as the green-horn was running things. Some of his buddies, who could see us, became visibly nervous.

All I had to say was: "Is that so, LS Rankin? Do you really expect them to believe all that?" Needless to say, he was a bit shaken-up. Probably recalled our chat on the day he dropped his spanner .. mouthing off too much AGAIN! From then on, some grudging respect began to show; but it would be an up-hill battle.

Len Garrett was quick to grasp the situation before I told him anything. He was observant, sharp, a good disciplinarian; but still human enough to see humour where lesser men might not. He would soon employ that talent to coerce and cajole us ALL into performing far better than I had thought possible. A real asset.

At the outset, I didn't guess that Len was a school teacher in civilian life; I should have known better. That is probably what made him such a great judge of character and why he was able, so quickly, to find and build on the strengths in people he barely knew. More than a match for a con-artist such as Rankin.

* * *

Methinks it was the week-end of 10-12 July when Lori invited me to a cottage up north .. which her folks had borrowed from friends for a week of recovery. Got to know them better; also her youngest brother Joe who had been devastated by their loss ... he was still in denial. "Jamie" and I did a little fishing and caught one small perch. She was beginning to heal, but something told me that those good old times might never return ... for us, that is.

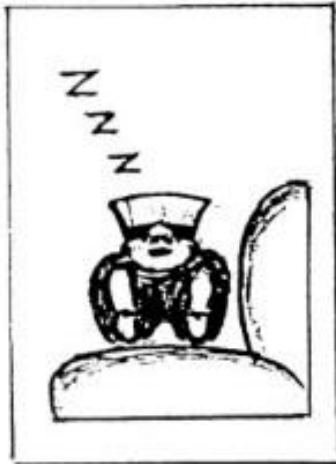
She remembered what I had said back on June 12 ... that flying was risky; so in a spooky way I shared responsibility for their fate. Was that sheer coincidence ... or weird premonition ... or maybe pre-cognition? I've often wondered.

* * *

Soon, I would learn that the C.O. was also a good seaman. One more example of what I had often heard .. some of our best sailors come from the Prairies, which are a long way from deep water. Something to do with those big skies and distant horizons. Those who live there usually have an eye on the weather. Livelihoods and sometimes even lives may depend upon reading the changes, preparing for and adapting to them. Life at sea is much the same ... ruled by climatic imperative.

12.

Robi's Repose



For our fifth Training Cruise of the summer, we sailed at 0700 on Monday, 13 July to Rochester N.Y., our first U.S. port-of-call. En route our New Entries were instructed in steering the ship, engine room & tiller flats, streaming the Walker's Log. Reserve officers did ship-handling maneuvers and signals with "Porte St. Louis".

At about 1545, we neared Charlotte, N.Y., a lakeside community with a sizeable amusement park. It's also the port of Rochester and a lake outlet-link with the old Erie Barge Canal. In the sailing orders from COND, our C.O.'s had been told to berth port-side-to at the U.S. Navy Pier, just in from the mouth of the sea-wall which was more-or-less perpendicular to Lake Ontario. As our C.O. was senior, "Porte St. Jean" led the way.

Standing on the pier to our left was a U.S. L Cdr, waving happily and shouting through a hand megaphone: "Welcome to America, Captain; bring her right in here; that's it; you're OK, Cap'n; plenty of water here for ships as small as yours!" Our C.O. stopped the engine and coasted gently forward. Heaving-lines were ready, as was our friendly diplomatic host.

Not hearing any further engine change, I wondered why our forward motion had ceased, still many feet off the pier. Was that a thump or bump we had felt?

Did our one-man welcome committee know this "small' ship drew 10'4" of water at the bow ... and 13'3" aft? Next thing I knew, we were "Slow Astern"; and the man ashore asked if we would prefer the CSL Terminal jetty (Canada Steamship Lines)? Some welcome-'mat'!

After a few minutes of rather tricky backing and shunting, both ships opted for the second choice. Once our lines were fast and doubled up, I thought I saw a figure in BVD's duck-diving around our bows ... all of it unofficial, of course. Episodes such as this have been known to generate great volumes of paper-work ... and/or formal inquiries. And here, we were on foreign 'turf', if one could dare to use that phrase. Little else was said officially; but I seem to recall hearing one voice on shore muttering that the channel should be dredged one of these days.

The C.O.'s Report for the day noted too little water and also very limited maneuvering room; respectfully submitting that a different port be used by these ships on future cruises. Obviously, there had been no structural damage. Who knows whether or not we even grounded?

* * *

Taking advantage of shore leave, I managed to catch a bus downtown in time to buy film. Also picked up a little "Motorola" portable radio which I'd never been able to find back home ... pre-transistor type, with tiny vacuum-tubes. When I came back to the ship soon after midnight, there was nobody manning the jetty-gate ... which warranted investigation.

A check of the duty roster for that day revealed that OS Robillard should have been there as sentry for that time period. Searched the upper deck, but found nary a soul. Wandered into the Wardroom, pondering a possible night-cap. Saw this bundle of blue and white, flaked out on a long leather cushion beside the built-in wooden dining table ... SNORING!

"Robillard!" I shouted, "What in hell are you doing HERE of all places? You're supposed to be sentry at the gate." Snorting, yawning, opening one eye, what does he say in response? "AW SHEE-IT -- THE HOFFICIER HOG-DEN!" Captain's Defaulters to-morrow morning!

OS Robillard- "Did neglect to perform his duties to the prejudice of good order & naval discipline in that at 0015 on Tuesday 14/7/53 he was found asleep away from his duty, namely the gate of the CSL Jetty at Charlotte, N.Y." Section 118 of NDA - sentenced to 2 days of #5 punishment.

He was beginning to behave like a slow-learner; but he was NOT stupid. Something made me feel that Jones' earlier bias was also a contributing factor.

* * *

This was my personal fourth overnight at Rochester, home of Eastman Kodak. In the summer of '52, we had been there with the Fairmiles. With shallower draft, we had minimal trouble then in maneuvering. Maybe ... there was also less silt on the bottom?

In 1940 or 1941, our United Church Scout Troop in Toronto had exchanged visits with our American counterparts at the Brick Presbyterian Church in Rochester. I remember having a tour of the WHAM radio studio then. We came by train and bus and I was billeted with a family in a beautiful home on Culver Road. My folks reciprocated by hosting Larry, their son, later that year in our home.

The following summer, I had been invited back, this time via CSL ship (Was it SS "Queenston" or "Kingston"?) That time, Larry took me sailing in his parents' Star-boat. They also drove a '39 Lincoln Zephyr. Were all Americans this wealthy? - my early impression. He later contracted polio but thankfully, he survived.

* * *

At 0800 Tuesday 14 July, we departed for a day-sail to Kingston, arriving at 1800, having done anchors and cables, chart work and O.O.W. maneuvers. This was my first chance to contact Janet, the bereaved fiancée of Lori Jamieson's kid brother, whose plane had crashed just a few weeks ago. "Jamie" had given me her phone number; so I called for a brief chat. I expressed my sympathy, not really knowing what to say. She agreed to see me in person the next time we were in port.

Wednesday 15 July, we sailed to our now-familiar anchorage off Main Duck Is. Earlier, we had also come to anchor at Nine Mile Point, followed by a zig-zag sweep and ship-handling during O.O.W. maneuvers. At Main Duck, the sea-boat was lowered; then a boat-race victory over those bad-guys in "Porte St. Louis".

After that, some impromptu fun evolved. The "Louis" crew had decided to avenge their loss in the race by surprising us with a boarding party. For a change, however, one of our regulars was alert .. spotted them making ready for this. We too were soon ready .. with a portable gasoline pump, mounted on skids. With its intake-hose already deployed out of sight over the far side of our ship, this handy-helper could deliver 40 p.s.i. pressure through its outlet fire-hose.

Our gang waited in the well-deck shadows till they heard noises alongside. Did I hear somebody humming "Meet me in St. Louis-Louis"? The marauders were soon repelled and beat a hasty retreat ... looking like so many drowned rats. I wonder if the rum-runners years ago ever had time for such nonsense at Main Duck Is.? Their games probably were much more serious ... and rewarding ... for those who survived!

At 0600 Thursday, we weighed anchor and headed for Toronto, arriving 12 hours later. Up and away again at 0500 Friday, we completed this fifth cruise back in Hamilton at 0800 17 July. For me, it was memorable more for unofficial events; but how boring would life (and this book) be without such irregularities?

13.

Action Stations



For Training Cruise #6, our sailing orders took us from Hamilton east to Oshawa, arriving at 1800 on Monday, 20 July with "Porte St. Louis" also alongside. During that day, Trainees had instruction in compass & helm, knots & splices. At 0800 Tuesday we doubled back to Toronto, training in chart-work, anchors & cables before berthing around 1600. That evening, our officers were guests of NOAC's local branch, at HMCS "York". Four decades later I would be a Member of

that Naval Officers' Association ... a very dedicated group ... especially the WREN members, God-bless-'em!

Wednesday 22 July, "Porte St. Jean" sailed east to Prince Edward Bay, where we spent the night at anchor after 2030. This offered more training in anchors & cables, and later boat-work. Weighing anchor at 1000 Thursday morning, the New Entry Trainees endured exams while Officers practiced maneuvers and ship-handling, plus visual signalling with the "Louis". An overnight sail took us to Hamilton by 0800 Friday. My note-book for the previous day recorded some signals:

NM 11; SP 8; CALL SIGN CYJW; FORM STATION PORT 9;
 9 TURN; 9 CORPEN; STATION STBD 9; CORPEN S 350°;
 . . . TURN 18; FORM 2 ... JP 3 ...

Corpen, I forget. JP 3 told the other ship to "take proper distance" (1 1/2 cables or .15 nautical miles).

* * *

Look ahead 44 years. In 1997, my wife Gretta and I retired to a new home 140 miles east of Toronto. The location: a rural lot on the east shore of South Bay, the south arm of Prince Edward Bay. About five miles from that '53 anchorage; maybe closer! Last summer we watched sail-training craft anchor only 1/2 mile from our shore. As I have no co-ordinates recorded for the "Jean" that night, we are only guessing.

L Cdr Garrett reported it as a good anchorage; but lamented our late arrival ... hence no opportunity to "evaluate possibilities ashore". I'll bet there were more apple orchards than now. And maybe more eagles.

* * *

The week-end in Hamilton gave me an opportunity to spend an evening with Lori Jamieson July 26th, which was her birthday: all I could think of was that tune ... "a pretty girl is like a MALADY". Things had changed. She now treated me more "as a brother" ... which I suppose was a compliment, but not exactly what I had in mind! Regardless of any earlier potentials, her real brother's death had been our turning point.

* * *

At 0800 Monday 27 July, we sailed again to Prince Edward Bay with "Porte St. Louis", anchoring at 2030 that evening. As we had a fresh group of New Entries aboard, training for this Cruise #7 was more-or-less a repeat of that for the previous class. Perhaps to relieve the boredom, or because he considered them an "essential part of overall training", the Captain added to the syllabus some "general drills, and evolutions" during the various watches. More about that later.

Our second stop in the Bay featured a boat-race ... between Trainees of each ship; our crew won it handily.

Later in the evening, we held more boat exercises; and the C.O. reported: "S/Lt O.R. Wiggs showed excellent seamanship in his handling of the boat." On Tuesday, we sailed to Kingston with O.O.W. maneuvers and signal exercises en route. Sad to report: "Porte St.Louis" officers proved to be quicker at interpreting these.

* * *

After a phone-call to Janet, the Queen's student, I made my way to Fort Henry where she had summer work as a tour guide. In a smart red blazer with her dark hair and flawless complexion, she would have made an indelible impression on any eligible bachelor ... or even an ineligible one, for that matter. It was easy to see why Jamie's brother had fallen for her. Janet's Dad had provided her with 'wheels' for the summer ... she allowed me to drive us back, and deliver myself to the ship. The message was clear enough but we still agreed to meet again. Was I just sympathetic, or some kind of emotional masochist? In any event, I was certainly not ashamed to be seen in HER company!

* * *

We slipped at 0800 Wednesday the 29th, and steered due south to Oswego, N.Y., which is another lake-link to Erie Canal. Arriving at 1600, we were met by Lt W. Rose, USN, who arranged a pleasant evening ashore at the Militia base for the officers of both ships. One of the finest Bar-B-Q steaks I've ever eaten, either before or since. All outdoors under a perfectly clear starlit sky; this was a pleasant sequel to our earlier rather confusing reception at Rochester.

Departing first thing Thursday for Toronto again, we engaged in the usual training program plus more of those drills and exercises noted above. They produced a truly bizarre spectacle due largely to the fact that our ship lacked most of a true warship's weaponry ... we had no 'hedgehog', torpedoes or depth charges.

Despite those shortcomings, our Navy's major role then was ASW (anti-submarine warfare); so we had to improvise. On the foc'sle was a real 40 mm Boffin A/A gun, and imaginary hedgehog. The well-deck had make-believe torpedoes in their launchers; and the quarter-deck's winch and towing-bollards became depth-charge rails, loaded and ready to roll. For Action Stations, the latter was the assigned position for AB LaFleur, OS Robillard and three of our current Trainees.

The reader is already familiar with young "Robi" from Québec. LaFleur was permanent-force crew; but still Robi's 'brother-in-arms' in that he also called French his Mother tongue. We had noticed some sort of bonding between the two; so logic had suggested that symbiosis might be manifest if they were allowed to team-up in some of their duties.

LaFleur was about Robi's height, but lighter build. Similar brown eyes; but rather introverted with a face that rarely showed emotion, except possibly a trace of sullen. Most seamen usually carried a 'pusser dirk' (heavy jack-knife) in their pocket, tied to a lanyard through their belt-loops. LaFleur was different. He liked to whittle wood in his idle moments; so he had a very sharp hunting knife avec leather handle & sheath.

The Captain sounded the alarm for ACTION STATIONS! AB LaFleur and OS Robillard ran to the 'Depth Charges' at the stern and waited for PO Carter to check their performance for this drill. Probably bored out of his skull, LaFleur produced his knife to whittle-a-little. Add two more short men to this action party, and they could have sung "Whittle while you work". Robi echoed this boredom; but he had a unique way of showing it. Under stoppage of leave for returning aboard late in Kingston, he may have been a bit "Grumpy"? Since this was an exercise in wartime conditions, he assumed a war-like stance. Grabbing the circular lid from a nearby gash-bucket (filled with galley garbage); he held it up as a warrior's shield and lunged toward his 'friend' ... bobbing, weaving and thrusting. CALICE!

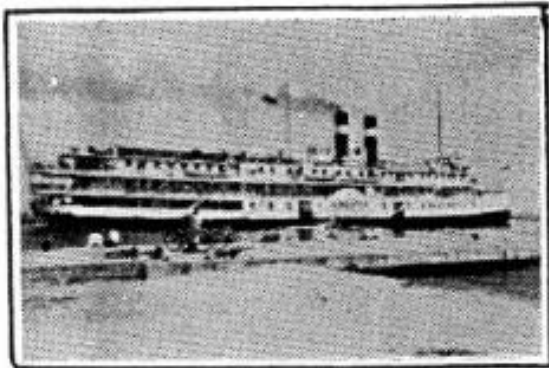
LaFleur reacted by reflex; maybe it was street-smarts. One quick stab of the dagger ended that little war. Not only did he run it through the galvanized 'shield', he also made one helluva mess of Robi's Hand! Blood all over both of them and the deck. TABERNAC! Those three Trainees looked mystified. Was THIS Naval drill?

We put into Toronto slightly ahead of our scheduled 1900 ETA; and Robillard made an unscheduled visit to hospital for repairs. Fortunately, the wound was not serious; and it soon healed with no loss of mobility. Friday 31 July, we were away from our berth at 0500 in order to arrive back in Hamilton by 0800, after which the Coxs'n was quick to organize Captain's Defaulters. Our Francophone jouster this time was dealt a double wallop of swift 'justice'.

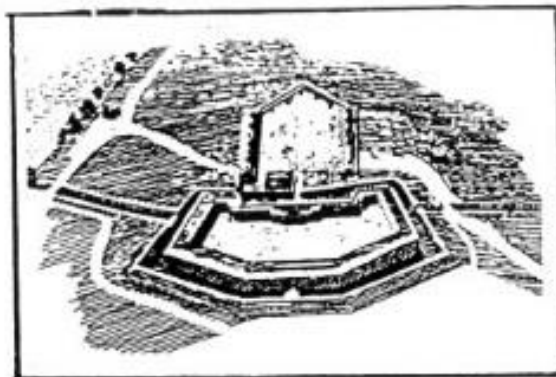
OS J.G. Robillard - "While exercising Action Stations at approx. 1620 on Thursday July 30/53 did provoke a quarrel with AB(NQ) J.B. LaFleur by wielding the lid of a garbage bucket." NDA Section 77- "provoking gesture ... tending to cause a quarrel." Sentenced to 5 days of #5.

(And again)- "Did remain absent an unreasonable length of time after being treated at Toronto Military Hospital on Thursday July 30/53 knowing he was under stoppage of leave, remaining absent ... 2 hours and 30 mins approx." Section 81, NDA - "AWOL"- Sentenced 7 days of #5 punishment.

Reading this over to-day, one wonders how ANYBODY could travel through downtown Toronto, get repairs in an Emergency Ward and return home again in only 2 1/2 hours! PO Jones' sense of justice? Training Cruise #7 had NOT been lucky for young "Robi". The good news: it had not been a scrap between French and English.



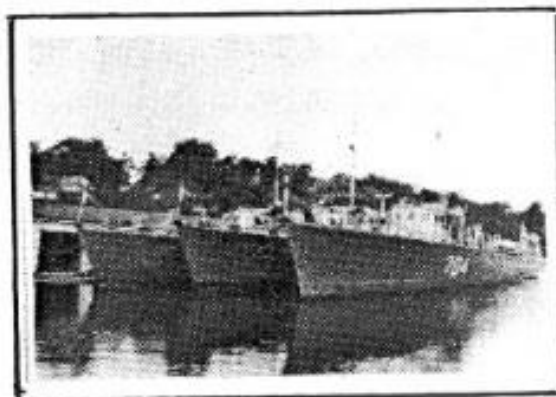
CSL "Kingston" at Toronto



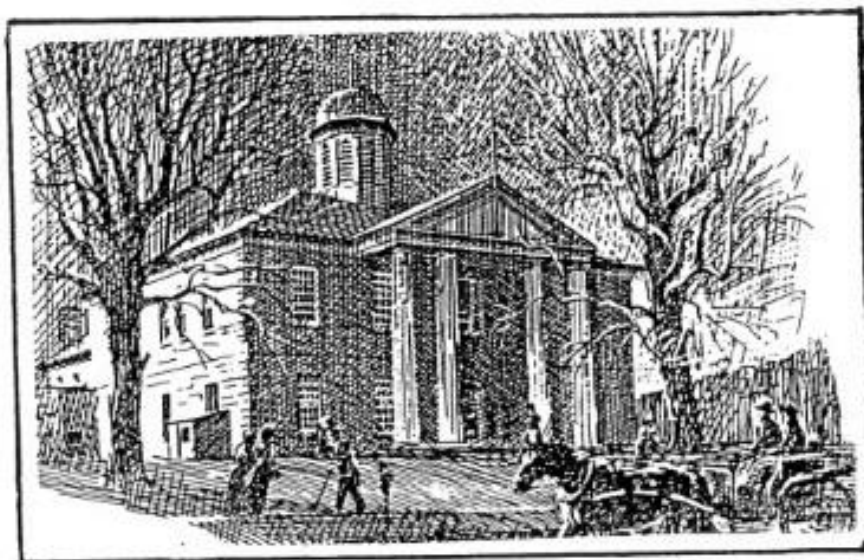
Ground Plan of Fort Henry
Sketch by Wm Kettlewell
Ont. Dep't of Tourism



Picton Naval Parade - 1952



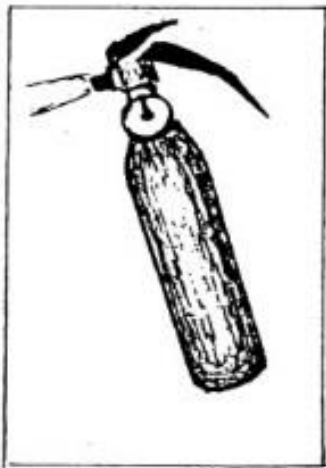
Three Fairmiles in Picton



County Court House at Picton
Illustrated by Wm Kettlewell
Ont. Dep't of Tourism + Info.

14.

Fire Stations



Training Cruise #8 began on Sunday, 3 August, when we left the jetty at 0800, spending the night at Cobourg. Thence to Kingston, arriving Monday at 1730. This time, after a quick phone-call and supper, I was glad to see the Hillman convertible turning around on the pier. Quartermaster said a young lady was asking for me. An engine-room Chief quipped: "X.O. seems to have a girl in every port".

* * *

Janet and I went to the movies, followed by a sundae, coffee and chat. It was good to see her beginning to recover from her tragic loss a few weeks earlier near Trenton. She was made of solid stuff, and pretty to boot. Under different circumstances, who knows what might have developed? But, the timing was all wrong.

* * *

On the return trip from Kingston, "Porte St. Jean" put into Picton at 1600 on Tuesday. I remembered it from '52 when we did the same with three Fairmiles and another group of Trainees. Must have been a holiday because we mounted a parade ashore, aided by a local Sea Cadet Band, from Belleville, maybe? Picton is a picturesque spot tucked around a Bay of the same name. We accessed this from the north-east, at a point where Adolphus Reach turns into Long Reach. It's also close to where a car-ferry runs from the mainland to Glenora.

Picton was the County Seat of Prince Edward County, a huge peninsula which, in effect, has been an island since construction of the Murray Canal many years ago, south-west of Trenton ... which was, and still is, the site of a large RCAF base.

Little did I know that, 44 years later, my wife and I would live in this County and drive to Picton every week - for shopping or banking in what was to become our nearest market-town.

At 0700 Wednesday, we slipped and headed to Toronto for refuelling. On to Hamilton to disembark Trainees and rest up for a new group the following week. The C.O.'s Report for Cruise #8 lists the various lectures and practical demonstrations absorbed by our Trainees:

"Parts of ship; bends and hitches; anchors and cables; streamed the log; radar; echo-sounder; Chemox breathing apparatus; splicing; parts of boat; damage control; rank structure; charts & buoyage; rules-of-the-road; signals; breaking cable; lowering sea-boat; hand lead-line; let-go anchor; firefighting; steering break-down; general quizz; written examinations."

All of that in only five days! A tall order for a small ship with limited crew and little resemblance to an armed warship. L Cdr Garrett was determined that the Trainees' time (and ours) not be wasted. This was no mere pleasure cruise.

* * *

That 'firefighting' noted above occurred from 1030 to 1100, Thursday 7 August. It was not supposed to involve the X.O. For over a week, I had pleaded with the C.O. for a few hours off .. to study for a college supplemental exam which was looming up next week. To quote the divine Greta Garbo: I wanted to be ALONE. Finally, he relented and, in a rather magnanimous tone, said that I was free to retire to my cabin for study. I should have known better ... his eyes were twinkling.

Thanking him, I saluted and left. Settling down at my tiny drop-leaf desk, I scanned the text, counting how many chapters needed review. Jotting down a rough time-table for slogging through the chore, I heard the Bosn's pipe; then heels above on the steel deck, as he yelled: "Hands to Fire Stations - in the X.O.'s cabin!"

Six young men burst through my door-way, wielding fire axes, buckets, extinguishers and a tangled fire-hose. They seemed to be hoping for praise from ME on their quick response-time. All I could think of was Garrett standing on the bridge with a diabolical grin on his face. Stirring the pot, as usual.

* * *

The Geometry exam was written and passed; but doing it meant that I missed Training Cruise #9. Perhaps it was just as well, as several things went wrong during the week. Again, we are aided by the C.O.'s Report:

On Monday, 10 August, gremlins seemed to be at work. "Porte St. Louis" had a generator break-down and could not depart at 1400 as planned. "Porte St. Jean" went alone; but an hour later, a fuel leak forced her return to Hamilton. On Tuesday at 1100 she proceeded again; but two hours later, the defect recurred. "Porte St. Louis" finally made it to Toronto by 2100 that day, followed by our ship around 2315. From there, they visited Oshawa on the 12th; then towing exercises on the 13th, and on to Niagara-on-the-Lake. On berthing there, "Porte St. Louis" was slightly damaged coming alongside "Jean" .. due to an unforeseen effect of the river current. In any future visit, berthing port-side-to is "not advisable".

* * *

Did the higher authorities want me to pay in some way for my recent time-off? On returning to the ship the following Friday, in the 'aftermath', my name was posted as Officer-of-the-Day for the two Gate Vessels ... part of our regular rotation whenever in harbour.

There was no pleasure for me in Len's troubles last week; but at least the ship's jinx had not followed me ashore. Blame it on some other para-normal force ... or could human negligence have played a part? Read on.

Although as Ordinary Seamen in the UNTD, we had our daily tot of rum, since becoming an officer, I had not imbibed while at sea. Perhaps that rule would have been wise for days of duty ashore too. Nipping into the "Star" Wardroom for a beer between 'Rounds', I soon re-learned that every time you drop your guard, fate will punish you for stealing a little pleasure.

Duty Petty Officer hailed me with: "the 'Porte St. Louis' looks like she might SINK!" Moments later, I saw the scene at the Catherine Street jetty. She was listing about 20 degrees to port. Thought I heard a pump running somewhere; so I asked the PO to find one of "Louis" engine-room Chiefs. None aboard. We found him, enjoying HIS beer in the Chief's and PO's Mess at "Star". He returned to the ship with us and quickly located the cause of the trouble.

Either he or the man he relieved had been pumping diesel fuel from the starboard to port tanks in order to restore the ship's trim after the previous day's consumption. SOMEBODY had forgotten to shut down the pump before party-time! Whether or not she might have capsized, I never learned; but it still was a scary lesson about attention to duty, even when in harbour.

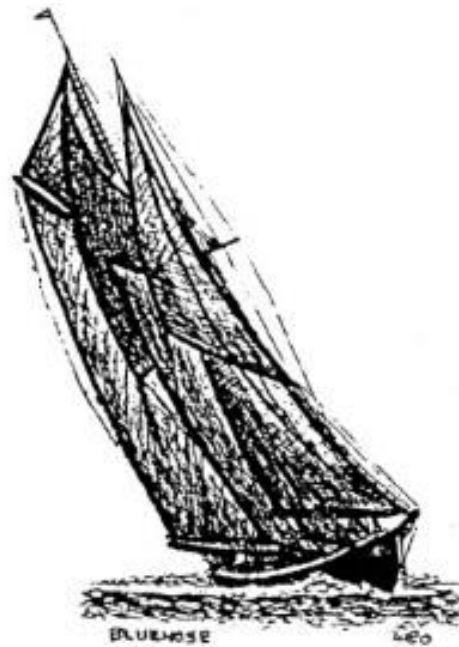
And, it also gave me proof of something that I had often wondered about: Our rival "Porte St. Louis" was NOT perfect.



Old St. Mary's Church - Picton
Illustrated by Wm Kettlewell
Ont. Dep't of Tourism + Info.

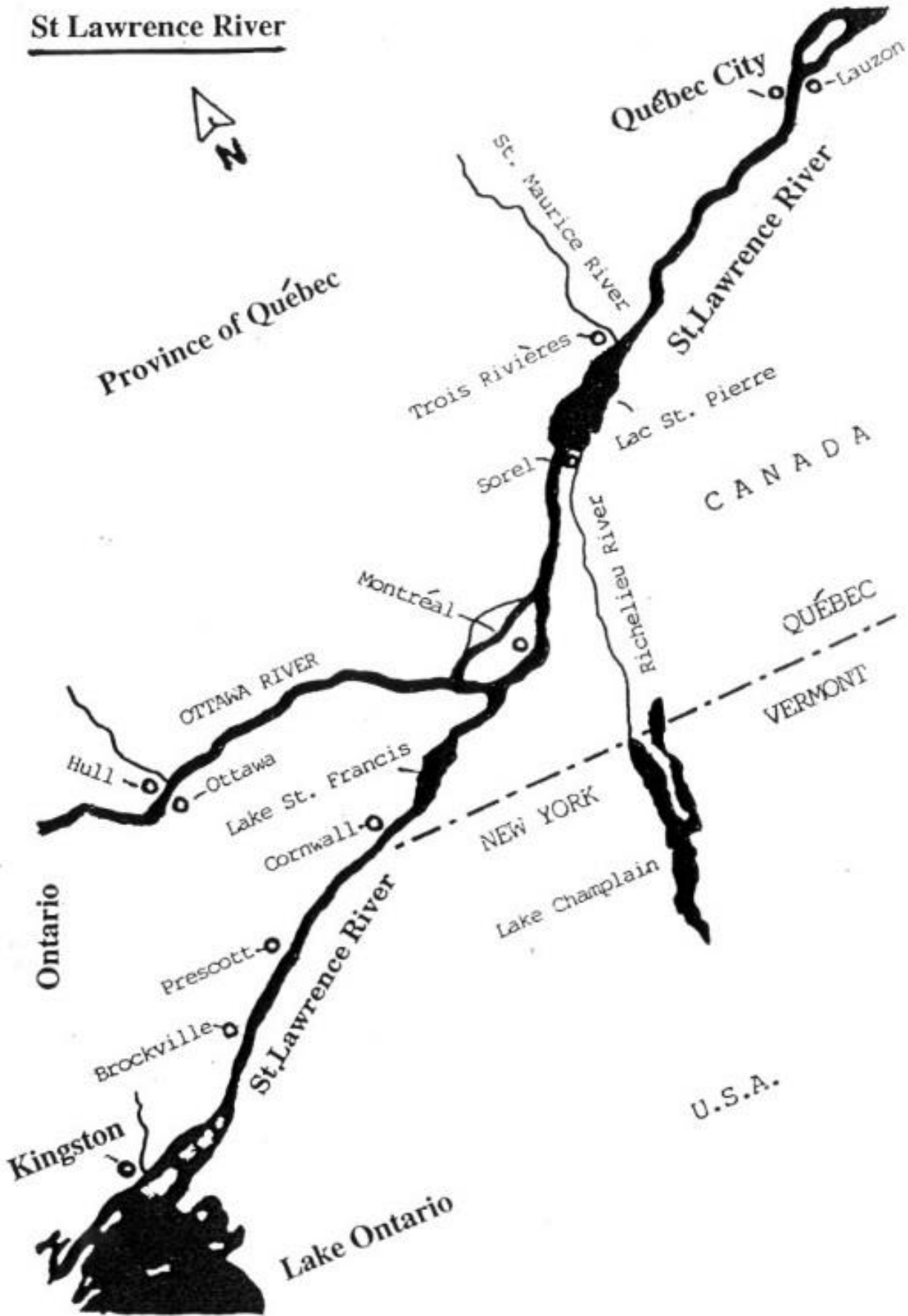
Part Three ✻

Going Home



Original Schooner "Bluenose I"
International Racing Champion

St Lawrence River



15.

Morale



At this stage in our chronicle, the reference material has another two-week gap, with no record of any more training cruises. Possibly they did occur, with the Reports filed later by the C.O.... after he relinquished Command. Despite this, my memory or files yielded a few notable X.O.'s Defaulters for that period, two of whom had familiar names:

OS Guy Robillard: Tues. 18 August - "without authority, left his place where duty required him to be at approx 0600 namely the wheelhouse being found having breakfast at 0700". Section 81 of NDA - sentenced to 1 day's #8 punishment (extra work not exceeding 2 hours). Feeling a bit 'sorry, I asked him if he enjoyed breakfast? His reply: "Oui Sir; two heggs side-by-heach."

LS James Rankin: about a week later - "did not return on board ship at 0630 at expiration of his authorized leave, not returning until 0745. Section 81 of NDA - sentenced to 4 days of #6 punishment (stoppage of leave). This was his second offence in recent weeks. Afterwards he re-offended and was brought before the Captain. Somehow the C.O. discovered his excuse (attending grandmother's funeral) was phoney .. since this was the THIRD time he had heard it! This time Rankin received a greater leave-stoppage.

* * *

Also during this late August period, we had a boat-race with our rivals in "Porte St. Louis" .. involving 27-foot whalers, which we must have borrowed from HMCS "Star" or its Sea Cadets, since our ships' boats were rather small dinghies. The whaler is larger, clinker-built, heavier and unwieldy. Among the less desirable modes of transport. Ask anybody who ever had to swing those huge long oars, without injuring the man ahead!

Inexperienced as I was in directing such a craft, as X.O., I became Coxs'n of our boat for the race. To my total surprise, we won handily ... which taught me something new: otherwise sloppy-looking sailors, when thrown together as a team, can shed that disguise to defend the honour of their ship ... against all comers. They had developed some pride, thanks in no small part to our C.O.'s recent efforts at morale-building.

The sequel to that victory caught me even more by surprise because I had forgotten a well-worn tradition: The Coxs'n of the winning boat is tossed overboard by his own crew in celebration. Such a strange 'reward'.

Did any of you ever take a dip in Hamilton harbour? It may have improved since then .. it could hardly get worse. Virtually land-locked by the Burlington spit, it seemed then to be a huge open retention pond for untreated 'sanitary' sewage from 'Steel-Town'. Reddish in colour due to slag heaps a mile or so to the east. Just picture the victorious Coxs'n in that murky soup. Surrounded by bobbing condoms and turds: water, water everywhere and nary a drop to drink. Never would I hope to win another whaler race!

Nowadays, whenever I un-cap my current lager-of-choice (chosen for its lower price), which is brewed and bottled in Hamilton, I fervently hope that their source of water is many miles (x 1.6 Km) distant from that infernal Bay.

* * *

As you may have gathered from the earlier anecdotes, L Cdr Garrett was a very sharp, intelligent man with a keen sense of humour. He was also a firm believer in the old adage: 'A taut ship is a happy ship'. From the day he took Command, he strove for that elusive goal. In addition to improving our response-times, through drills and exercises, he had begun to bolster our pride in competitions with the "Louis"; the recent boat-race was ample proof. Also the earlier fire-hose battle at anchor off Main Duck Island.

Two other builders of self-esteem, so he felt, were tidiness and cleanliness. There, we really needed to pull up our socks, as shown by the following excerpts from the X.O.'s note-book after 'Captain's Rounds' one day in late August 1953:

Wardroom- dust in Flats & on deadlights; Cabin Flats- full gash buckets; #3 Stores- dirty deck under boards; fenders need whipping & splicing; Crew's Heads- wash mops more often; 'G' Mess- still grease and dust in corners; Rec. Space- mess trays & egg cups dirty, bits & pieces of rope, rags lying around; Quarterdeck- potato-locker wet & dirty, poor scrubbing; stow tackle & canvas; water behind winch; cook's T-shirt, mouldy lettuce leaves; Galley Stores- test the fire extinguisher? Galley- rusty blades and cheese-grater.

Next morning, the C.O. asked that the entire Ship's Company be mustered on the upper deck at 0750. Right after 'Colours' he unloaded on us a very stirring speech about how to achieve better MORALE. He certainly had ME convinced that a cleaner, tidier ship would make us all feel better about ourselves. If there were any dissenting voters present, none were to be heard. I sensed he also had intended this would be his farewell sermon to "Porte St. Jean's" crew. The C.O. was right. Some aspects of our life-style were far from inspiring. Asking myself WHY we were often such a motley crew, I found only some of the answers.

As a fairly green Lt, this X.O. had been lax back in June .. playing catch-up ever since. Our permanent-force crew were mostly competent men, except for the usual quota of trouble-makers; so blaming them would be unjustified. But, on the other hand, the Reserve Coxs'n's attitude towards Québeckers had done no good for esprit-de-corps. It was hard to pin-point all our weak spots; but I felt my share of the guilt.

Another disturbing fact was there for all to see: "Porte St. Louis" was cleaner and tidier; and her crew seemed more smartly turned-out. What was the key to differences between these very similar ships? Their X.O. was my age, with near-identical training; BUT he was a better disciplinarian. And, there was another factor which may have unsettled us more than we knew:

The "Louis" had the same C.O. (and X.O.) from the start of our joint mission (and would through to its completion). We in the "Jean" already had seen two C.O.'s and within a week or so would soon be welcoming the third. This was nobody's fault, but was bound to generate some instability because: each Captain was a strong individual with his own unique priorities. In retrospect, it is conceivable that the personnel-types at COND felt that I had the requisite flexibility to adapt to frequent changes; so they stuck me with ALL of them! One could only hope they were right, because the next change was imminent ... or so we thought.

* * *

A high school teacher in civilian life, Len Garrett needed to be back home, in Edmonton Alberta, by Labour Day which would have been Monday, 7 September in 1953. He had planned to leave about two weeks early, allowing for a leisurely drive west and a few days' rest before school re-opened. This was not to be. The staff at COND had told him he must linger longer ... until they found a replacement. Apparently their original choice had suddenly become unavailable. The current X.O. was not qualified since he lacked a watch-keeping ticket (i.e. license to drive the ship).

We already knew Len to be a very determined person. Feeling that he still could persuade the authorities to set him free, he arranged a meeting ashore with Cdr Davis, the man who had the final say in this matter. He marched off the ship in his best uniform, seemingly confident the problem would be resolved to his entire satisfaction. Some of our crew saw him go as he was piped over the gangway.

There was then (and probably still is) a phenomenon known as the BUZZ. It is simply an unofficial method of transmitting news, usually rooted in truth; always faster than official channels .. often approaching the speed of light! Our cheerful Cook, AB McConnell, had divined the results of the C.O.'s meeting before any of us knew. A buddy of his had warned him of a storm heading back our way. The news: Cdr Davis had flatly refused to release L Cdr Garrett from his Command till another C.O. could be found ... Date unknown.

Our Captain was not only well-disciplined, he was also loyal; so unlike some of us, he had resisted the urge to quit the Navy right there and then. BUT, the 300 yard walk back to his ship afforded him ample time to mull over his woes and, probably, grow more angry. Len soon stomped up the gangway and the Quartermaster piped him aboard. Out of the Galley stepped "Cookie"-AB McConnell, facing the brow.

With a near-perfect poker-face, McConnell saluted smartly and greeted Len with: "Good afternoon, Captain; How's YOUR morale to-day?" GOTCHA! The C.O.: "Don't you have supper to prepare?" But then, good sport that he was, he quickly saw the poetic justice and gave us all a sad smile. Those blue eyes had not quite lost their trade-mark twinkle.



Kingston City Hall + Court House
Illustrated by Wm Kettlewell
Ont. Dep't of Tourism + Info.

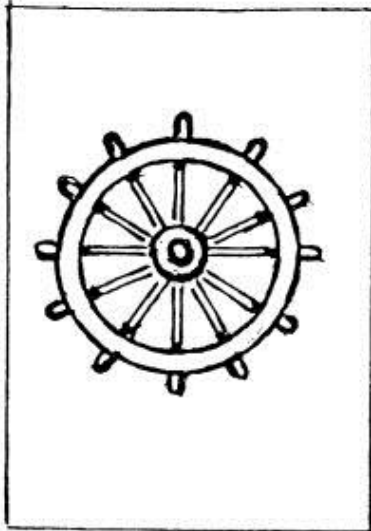
Thousand Islands Bridge



Jacques Cartier Bridge

16.

Co-pilot



It must have taken about a week; but Cdr Davis at COND finally recruited a new C.O. for "Porte St. Jean", thus freeing L Cdr Garrett to rush back to Edmonton by car, barely in time for High School opening after Labour Day. This was his plan; but on the trip west, a near-tragedy overtook him. While passing his small Austin, a car-load of rowdies threw a bottle out of their car .. shattering Len's windscreen. Though badly cut-up and temporarily blinded, he survived this episode, caused by wanton stupidity.

We were not told how long Len required to make a full recovery; but thankfully, he did so. About a decade later, my civvy career had taken me to Garrett's home town. Now promoted to Cdr, he had become C.O. of HMCS "Nonsuch", the Reserve Division in Edmonton. When I was hired as Planning Officer - with the Public School Board, he assisted us with educational 'specs' for the new McNally Composite High School. Len later became its Principal, and was the first person in that system ever to computerize a students' time-table. He was a real innovator, long before PC's (computers, that is).

L Cdr Garrett's successor as C.O. of the "Jean" was another Len - Cdr L.D. Stupart, who at that time was X.O. of HMCS "York" in Toronto. A few years later, he would take command of that 'stone frigate'.

This Len was shorter, stalky, white-haired and bald; a WW II veteran, probably in his late forties. Though he deserves no unfair comparisons, when I think of him now, I am reminded of the "Peanuts" comic strip - that determined little guy, with his cap jammed squarely on his head. Similarly, this man's cap lacked any jaunty slant. At times, it seemed to cover both of his ears; weighed down by the Commanders' gold braid on the peak.

You could barely see his eyes peering out; at first glance, he seemed aloof and withdrawn. I found him in fact to be a slightly shy, but wise, student of human behaviour. Though outwardly gentle, he had an inner deep determination. In less than a fortnight, I grew to respect him, and to value his judgement and wisdom.

In later life, this Len was one of the prime movers in establishing the Toronto Brigantine, a non-military program for teaching young people time-honoured skills of sailing and on-the-job training on the lake. A few years ago, with my wife and several naval friends, I enjoyed an afternoon cruise in "Pathfinder" in company with "Playfair": the two training ships. Over half of the crew appeared to be teen-aged girls, competent and obviously revelling in it! They were a living tribute to the late Len Stupart's foresight.

* * *

A few days after yet another Change-of-Command, in the final days of August, we had to make ready for the ship's return to home port in Halifax. Several of our summer Reserves departed for their homes, while others opted to remain a while longer. Also, some new faces joined us for this trip. One, CPO Adamson, became the senior seaman aboard, supplanting PO Jones as Coxswain during his time with us. This man was an experienced WW II veteran now in his late 30's, I guessed. He was well-built and looking physically fit, but appearances can be deceiving. Our Reserve officers aboard at that time included Lt George Kearney and S/Lt J.P. Guyon. For all of us, some exciting experiences lay ahead.

As I recall it, after turning our backs on the HMCS "Star" jetty, and cutting through the Burlington spit one last time, we put into Toronto to take on diesel fuel. Thence to Kingston for an overnight stop, which gave me time to phone Janet, the young Queen's student who had shown me Fort Henry. While there, we arranged to take on a Department of Transport employee ... the mandatory River Pilot. Once aboard, he took complete charge of conning the ship in difficult waters.

* * *

River current under the Thousand Islands suspension bridge, near old Boldt's Castle, ran about seven knots, as I recall. I am unsure whether or not this man was relieved by another at Prescott, where the old "Rapids Prince" passenger ship used to start a run downstream to Montréal. All I remember is a Francophone who had descended from a long line of St. Lawrence Pilots. He exuded an air of ownership over that waterway.

Remember, this voyage pre-dated the modern Seaway. That would evolve a bit later with deeper locks, a new power dam and level-controls near Iroquois, flooding of some villages and restoration of the historic Upper Canada Village. But, in 1953 there did exist a good lock system to facilitate constant summer ship traffic in both directions. Perhaps to save time or money in transit (or was it out of a sense of bravado?), it had been decided that we would avoid some of the locks ... in effect, 'shooting the rapids!'.

We may have seen no rocks nearby in the channel, or wild white-water such as Long Sault near Beauharnois below Lake St. Francis; but the river route we chose was still VERY rapid; downright nerve-racking at times! Did our expert Pilot mis-judge "Jean's" capabilities? We will never know; but even HE seemed a bit confused at times. In the tricky parts, he stood outside but near the wheelhouse, barking orders to the Coxswain. Mainly from curiosity, I lingered near the pair, which soon proved to be a useful move.

* * *

The Pilot already had been told about our left-hand single screw and was coping with same. But, when the river current approached 12 knots, he soon discovered that our engine could not deliver sufficient forward speed to maintain good steerage-way. While he adapted quickly, with a strategy unique in my experience, his orders had the Coxswain in a complete flap.

For example: "Right Standard Rudder; Reverse Flank Speed"; and so on. It was then that the Coxs'n revealed he had an old stomach ulcer .. now beginning to protest under the strain ... Could I please translate this gibberish?

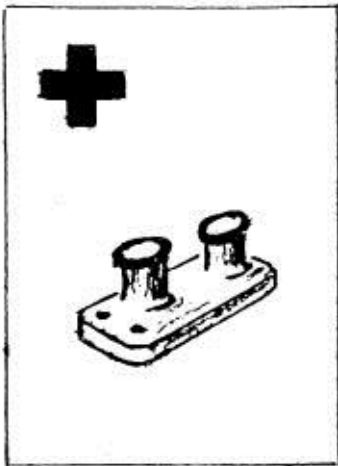
The Québecker apparently had learned his basic helm-orders in the American Merchant Marine. It did not take long for me to figure he really wanted: "Starboard Fifteen; Full Astern." The Coxs'n relaxed as I became, in effect, Co-pilot for the next hour or so.

This man who spoke in strange tongues really knew his profession. Using reverse power along with rudder turned opposite to the normal side, he SLOWED the ship below the river's speed, allowing the current to PUSH on the rudder and keep the ship on the desired heading. The sensation, while somewhat like that in a following sea, had required a more radical technique to restore control of the ship's direction. I now understood why he behaved as if he owned this grand river. He had a rare talent ... one of a very limited corps of élite who could accurately read its moods.



HMCS "Porte St. Jean" in Canal

17.

Bollards

Later that day, we entered the old Lachine Canal - in the south-western part of Montréal Island, berthing starboard-side-to along the concrete wall, about 100 yards upstream from a lock. Though not taking any leave that night, I did find time to nip ashore and phone the parents of Ed Maxwell-an old Toronto friend. They had just moved to Montréal. Asked for his kid sister, with whom I'd had a few dates while she was still in high school. No luck; she was about

to celebrate her university graduation with a trip to the U.K. in a Canadian Pacific Liner. Disappointing.

* * *

The next morning, we were to proceed at 0800 hours. Men of lower ranks with overnight leave were due back aboard at 0630. About 0715, I happened to see LS Jack Duff clambering over the gangway; so I inquired why he was adrift by 3/4 hour. He swayed a bit as he replied obviously feeling the effects of too much refreshment and little or no sleep, the previous night. He gave a feeble excuse concerning a beautiful French girl plus difficulty finding a cabbie who could understand him.

I had come to like Duff, perhaps because he went out of his way to "butter me up" occasionally. He was a handsome Glasgow Scot from "York"; here for two weeks.

A good seaman; usually reliable. We needed men of his ability and strength to handle the lines as we entered the locks; so I told him to "Carry On" .. thus letting him off-the-hook. That soon proved to be a big error in judgement ... which I would regret to this day.

* * *

Unlike the Panama Canal, where mechanical 'mules' tow and check ships into the locks, the St. Lawrence system in 1953 required a lot of human muscle-power in a ship like ours. The lock authorities disliked high revolution of engines, probably fearing that propeller turbulence could cause structural damage to the walls or gates. With the gates open, moving slow ahead, and then coasting with only slight astern engine action, we relied upon about four men, pulling aft on the #2 line (forespring) to halt our forward movement in the lock.

The forespring was made of flexible steel-wire rope fed through a fair-lead on the right side of our well-deck. Once the eye on the outer end of this rope had been looped over a cleat ashore, the ship-board end of it had to be wrapped in figure-of-eight loops around bollards just astern of the fair-lead. Held taut ... the ship should stop and move snugly to the lock side, protected by fenders dangled between the hull and the wall. It was then to be secured in place with three other ropes, from the head, stern and aft of midships.

That is the theory of how it SHOULD work; but steel wire rope is cantankerous. One kink in the wrong spot and it rebels, sometimes flailing about wildly, a real threat to necks and limbs. LS Duff had the experience to know all of the above, which is why he was the lead man that day on our forespring. As the order to "Down Slack" was given ... an accident was waiting to happen.

* * *

As we moved in and passed the spring over the cleat, something went horribly wrong. The figure-eight loops popped off our bollard, whipping like an angry snake!

Duff and his three helpers were leaning back at steep angles. One slipped; then they all tumbled backwards. In succession, they skidded along the steel deck; then came the blood-curdling shriek of a man in terrible pain. One of Duff's legs had been caught in a loop of the wire and was literally wrapped around the bollard! He looked white as a sheet; but apparently he remained conscious, staring at his twisted limb. The Captain somehow managed to take the way off the ship; and the uninjured men secured the lines.

With consent of the Captain, I jumped to the lock wall; ran into the lock-master's office and phoned for an ambulance. Its response-time was impressive. Our injured ship-mate was rushed to hospital, never to be seen again in "Porte St. Jean". He did survive a bad compound fracture; but when I happened to see him at "York" the next year, he walked with a permanent limp. There flowed some pesky paper-work ... which only reinforced a feeling that MY poor judgement had changed this nasty accident from possible to inevitable ... a very uncomfortable feeling.

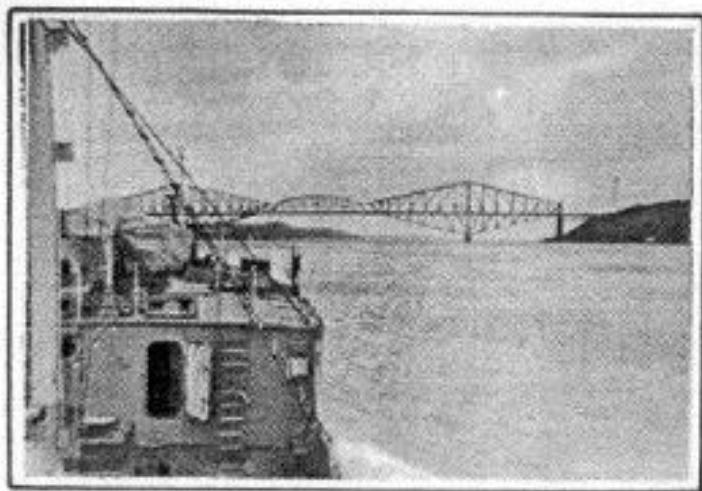
Thinking in some selfish manner that I was doing LS Duff a favour, I had ignored the regulations, thus abandoning my duty to the man ... Not only should he have been charged with being AWOL, he also should have been relieved from duty until he had sobered up. That 'break' I had given him was in nobody's best interests. At such times, regulations should be strictly enforced ... the kindest route to compassion.

Speaking of rules, here is an up-date on "Robi":

Aug. 30/53 - "did fail to fall in for Sunday Divisions at 1000;"

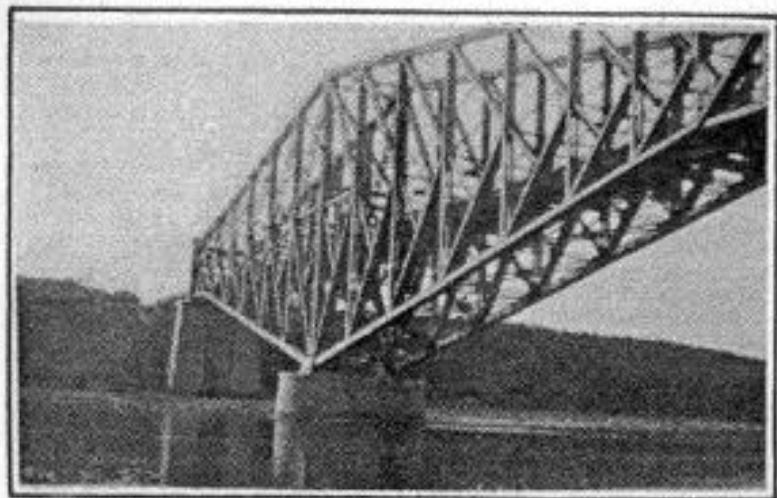
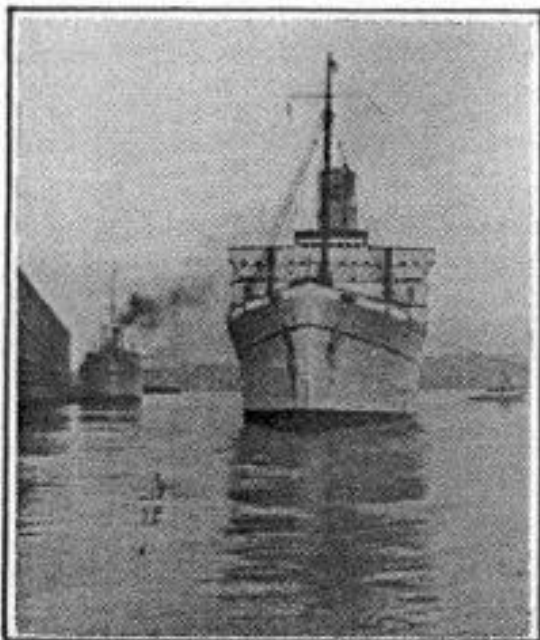
Sept. 3/53 - "did leave ship without authority under stoppage of leave. Time unknown; returning on board about 2300."

For these, he was awarded a total of 6 days of #5.



Approaching Québec Bridge

CP "Empress of Scotland"
Docking at Québec City



Québec Bridge from
"Fort St. Jean"

18.

Ville de Québec



It seems to me we exchanged pilots at the north terminus of the Lachine Canal; then proceeded down past the mouth of Richelieu River and through Lac St. Pierre. Thence past Trois Rivières and later under the massive old Québec Bridge ... berthed at the lower-town pier in Québec City which was built to accommodate the largest ships in the world. To-day, there was ample room for two 'Gates' plus the CP "Empress of Scotland". Poor old LS Duff would have liked that!

Since it was my turn for shore leave, I wandered off through Lower Town and, using the inclined 'ascenseur', climbed to Dufferin Terrace on the river-side of the Château Frontenac. Saw Champlain's statue and several calèches waiting for fares around the park in front of that impressive hotel. Ambling along Rue St. Louis, I encountered the gate which had lent its name to "Porte St. Louis". It is one of several in this old walled city; but I didn't track down OUR ship's namesake.

Beyond that gate, the street name changed to Grande Allée .. the road flanking Québec's National Assembly. Also saw the Plains of Abraham of 1759 fame, or Champs de Bataille of infamy, depending upon one's viewpoint. Near the Plains also was HMCS "Montcalm", the Reserve Naval Division. What about that big bad Wolfe? Truly one of Canada's most beautiful cities!

I found Québec City residents gracious, hospitable and charming. Was this simply because Francophones are a dominant majority there, thus feeling no threat from the Anglos? Whatever the reason, I felt thankful that this wonderful place was part of MY country.

* * *

About two years ago, at a UNTD Mess Dinner, I asked the guest speaker if Québec was still the same: he was retiring as C.O. of Naval Reserves, now headquartered in that city. He answered in the affirmative, saying he and his staff were well-treated there. His pretty bilingual female Flag Lt beamed as the Commodore said: "They love tourists!" This bodes well, especially in contrast to some more recent experiences in Montréal. There, regrettably, the major inter-face of our two 'Solitudes' sometimes seems to produce rude behaviour. Nevertheless, "Vive Québec!" ... La Ville, that is.

* * *

All of which reminds me of a young Francophone S/Lt we had with us on that journey. Jean Paul Guyon could REALLY tell a story! On many evenings, he regaled us with his wonderful, infectious sense of humour. As in his tale of Farmer Paul whose wife Marie called out of the window saying she was ready for love, waiting for him on the kitchen floor - to save time. You see, on a previous occasion, climbing the stairs, Paul had "lost the hurge". This time, he ran through their "happle horchard"; burst in the door and yelled: "Get up, YOU SEX MANIAC; the house ... she's ON FIRE!" Another one some readers may know but I've since lost: "One stormy night on Lac. St. Pierre; By gar, the wind, she blows!"

J.P. also often sang HIS version of Muir's 'Maple Leaf Forever' :- "In days of yore, from France's shore, Maurice (Duplessis) the dauntless hero, he come .. and planted firm the fleur-de-lys in Québec's fair domain." At that time, it all seemed to be good clean fun; but with hindsight I wonder if he was trying to warn us of sadder times ahead. Either way, I liked him for it.

* * *

Returning to ship later that evening, and admiring the "Empress", it occurred to me this was to be Ed M's sister's passage to England. Next morning, I climbed the rather long gangway and inquired for Miss Maxwell of Montréal. She was located; soon appeared .. and we had a brief chat. Cursing myself that I hadn't looked her up the previous night, it turned out she had just arrived by train. This fun was not to be.

As our ship was to depart well before the Empress' sailing time, I had to get back to prepare for leaving harbour. We soon did just that, now in tide-water and taking advantage of the ebb to make greater distance toward the Gulf. Before sunset, we caught a glimpse of Montmorency Falls to port. In September, tree colours were magnificent. We passed Lauzon to starboard (our ship's birthplace, so I had been told). The only real delay to be expected ahead ... a scheduled pause near Father Point, just beyond Rimouski on the south shore, when the Pilot Boat would come to remove our competent man of strange tongues. Our C.O. would once again be in full control of his ship. Darkness was now upon us.

As I had the watch from 2000 to midnight, I was on the bridge when the look-out reported a ship - off our port quarter. She was "Empress of Scotland", gaining on us quite rapidly. Probably broke regulations; but this time it would not risk any lives; it was harmless enough. I yielded to a devilish urge ...

Switching on the Aldis lamp and directing it toward the liner, I signalled our ship's name; then "Message for you". She acknowledged. Then I flashed: "To your passenger Marion M. of Montréal: Bon Voyage." Signed off with: "Your pal Bill-the-Pill", which had been her young sister's teasing nick-name for me. The "Empress" crew must have wondered what sort of naval vessel was THIS! Did she receive it and then deduce the source? Who knows? I never saw her again .. since that starry night on the lower St. Lawrence.



<

"Empress of Scotland"
in lower St. Lawrence



CSL Passenger Ship "Tadoussac"

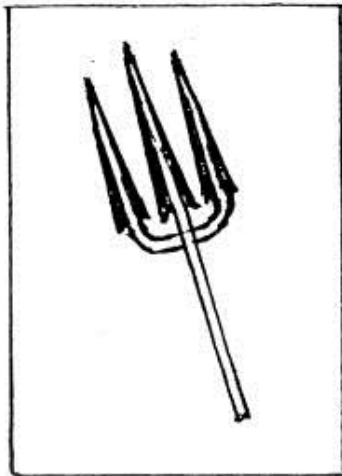


"Porte St. Jean's" Aldis Lamp
with CSL Ship in background

Saguenay River Mouth



19. Bow Down Facing East



Anticosti Island had passed to port, barely visible on the horizon. We had rounded the Gaspé peninsula and entered Gulf of St. Lawrence; then proceeded south-easterly toward Cape North, headland of the Cape Breton Highlands. Dead-reckoning a course of about 125° for the Cabot Strait, I think the lights of Bird Rock and Magdalen Islands already had passed to starboard when a forecast warned of impending high seas and headwinds.

The C.O. instructed me to have the ship ready for foul weather ... I passed the order to "close all water-tight doors and hatches."

* * *

I also spoke to PO Jones, whose main duty now was "Buffer", like a labour foreman. Suggested he secure the cable-deck, especially those two apertures in the bow which passed for hawse-pipes. Pipes they were not.

H.M. Seamanship Manual shows conventional foc'sle designs, with anchor cables feeding in from outboard, through enclosed large tubes in the hull, upwards to the wide-open upper deck. Thence around cable-holders to a capstan, which delivers power for hauling in the cable and directing it below to the cable-lockers near the bilges. In smaller ships such as ours, power comes from a windlass engine which employs warping drums and 'gypsies' to achieve the same result.

Unlike "Porte St. Louis", our "Jean" was first of her class and cursed in this regard. Our anchor cable fed through re-inforced open holes in the ship's side, thence directly to a windlass on the cable-deck, which was enclosed and one deck below the weather. At first look, this appeared more user-friendly for the crew. Only in calm weather! In order to keep the sea out of this 'sheltered' compartment, some misguided designer had specified two heavy steel plates, each shaped to fit around the cable as it came through the hull.

It is doubtful if one could ever drop anchor fast enough in an emergency with those plates in place. In any event, PO Jones and his men failed to locate the proper clamps for securing the plates in position; and I failed to double-check their work. As if to further compound this leisurely preparation for dirty weather, nobody bothered to tidy up the paint-locker, a small compartment at the aft starboard corner of that same accursed cable-deck. To my shame, I again failed by relying on inexperienced subordinates to prepare what became, in effect, a time-bomb waiting to go off. As events unfolded, their apparent inability to carry out orders, and my failure to check their efforts, could have cost all of us our lives.

My own duty that afternoon was Officer-of-the-Watch. With the weather inclement, I stood in the wheelhouse part of the time, checking the radar and also ensuring that the helmsman was on course. He complained that she was sluggish in answering the wheel. I chalked it up to heavy seas; but I do recall noticing that when we dove into the ever-steeper oncoming waves, the ship would shudder before rising again, oh so slowly. She had a rather deep draft for her size, which seemed to this amateur to explain the wallow and slow response.

On the open bridge over the wheelhouse for possible visual sightings, CPO Floyd Noble from the engine room startled me with: "SIR we have over a foot of water in the forward Mess. We've rigged pumps; but they can't seem to handle it. If this continues, we could SINK!"

So she really WAS starting to founder. I got Cdr Stupart from his cabin. He took the con and, wisely, slowed to a speed just fast enough for steerage-way. He signalled our change to "Porte St. Louis"; and then asked me to find the source of the problem and report back ... on the double! He had earlier told me of a wartime episode north of Scotland when compass failure might have meant disaster ... but for an alert crew. Somehow, I felt that he would see us through this one.

My mind drifted back to a 1948 UNTD training cruise not far from this region of the Gulf. Our C.O. in a WW II tribal class destroyer, in company with "Haida", dropped a 'practice' depth charge pattern, having used the echo-sounder to locate a school of fish. Dozens of these soon bobbed to the surface ... and we enjoyed fresh cod for supper that evening. In the enlightened 1990's, this could rank as a deplorable measure. Was Neptune now about to deliver long-delayed retribution? Even then, it had struck me as unfair ... tantamount to spear-fishing with a flashlight.

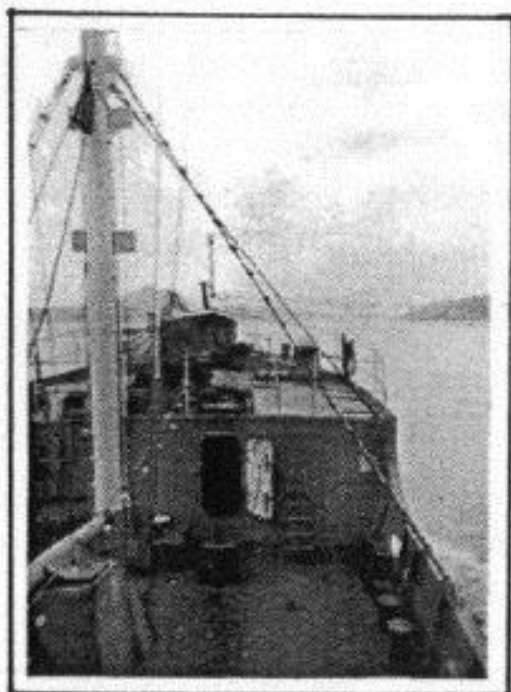
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With Chief Noble, I saw the worsening flood in the Mess, located below water-line even in normal times. The sea water was being pumped IN - from a ventilation duct. We traced that forward to its air intake; guess where? In that 'friendly' cable-deck, which was waist-high in sea water ... or worse when we dived into each successive wave. Noble soon shut down the offending air ventilation system ... step one in damage-control.

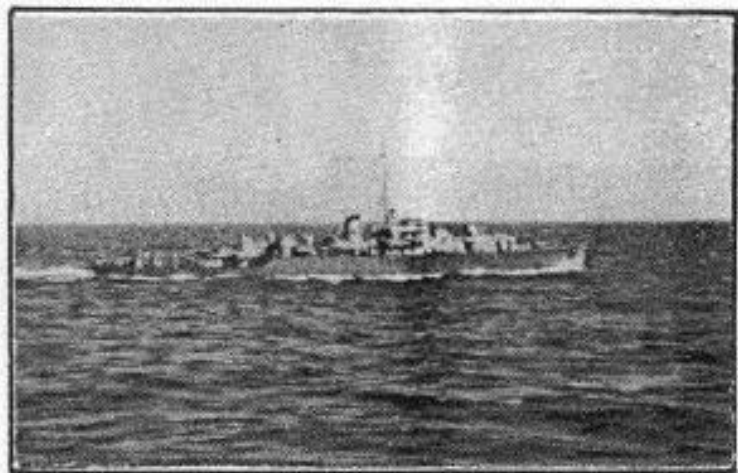
I located PO Jones who seemed incapable of devising any plan of action. "What can we do, sir?" he pleaded. All I could think of was that well-worn: "Put on your Jassus-boots and start walking!" He may well have been terrified; but I was too worried for that. With many inexperienced Reserves (myself included) and a Reserve PO who appeared paralyzed, the passing buck had come to rest on ME. Supposedly, I had been trained to take responsibility and, when called upon, to lead others. The 'chips were down', meaning our buffalo was empty.



Ship's Name on Port Side
of HMCS "Porte St. Jean"

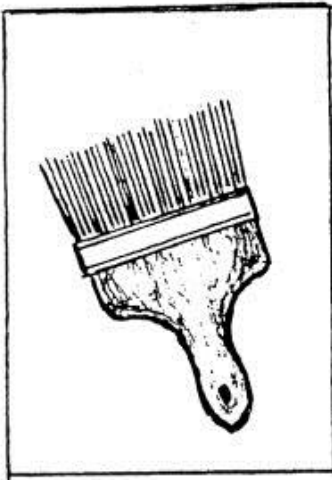


Entry to Cable Deck in
HMCS "Porte St. Jean"



HMCS "La Hullose" in Gulf
Sister ship of "Swansea"

20.

Paint-locker

"In a crisis, the man who does something may occasionally be wrong ... but he who does nothing .. is ALWAYS wrong!" Viscount Byng of Vimy.

Reporting back to the C.O., I said I personally wished to go to the cable deck 'aquarium'; and try to correct the problem. "Please do #1". I had no desire for heroics; just instinct for survival. If there was any hero that day, surely it was Noble from the engine room, who sensed a danger

and reported it. (Something to do with spending one's working day well below the water-line?) Perhaps I was so angry at PO Jones that I sought to rub his nose in it ... by showing that I at least had earned my rank. Stripping down to my shorts, I waded through the cable deck door, with Jones looking as if he were comatose.

* * *

First off, everything was soaked with oily fresh grey paint, which had come from open cans floating in the 'secured' paint-locker. I pitched over-board any loose items I could grab from the murk around my arm-pits. Then I looked over at the so-called hawse-pipes. No cover plates, with gallons of water rushing in at each plunging dip of the bow, Found some life-jackets and bunged them into the gaps ... they slowed the flow slightly. Finally it dawned on me: Why is this water SO deep here in a space normally above the water-line?

Why doesn't it drain somewhere besides down the air intakes, two feet above the deck? Holding my breath, I went under to where the scuppers (drains) should be allowing gravity to remove the damned water. As in a kitchen sink with too many food scraps, these scuppers were clogged with cotton waste (for cleaning), which had been poorly stowed in the locker. After four more dunkings and stinging eyes, I removed all the wayward cotton, giving it 'the deep six'. The drains resumed their normal function; and Neptune's waters subsided.

* * *

An unnecessary crisis had passed. After cleaning up, I resumed my watch on the bridge and contemplated a stern sermon for the crew, especially PO Jones; then decided this would be redundant. Everybody knew and already had the lesson. Besides, I was also to blame for letting it happen. Some personnel experts might say that my image was tarnished by my having 'leaped into the breach' ... doing what all those subordinates should have done. Perhaps so; but for an hour or so, I felt a wee bit taller. Maybe it was just the weight of fear lifting from my shoulders? In any event, our ship WAS taller ... riding higher in the water again.

For the first time since Ordinary Seaman days I had a good stiff shot of rum while at sea - before turning into my bunk that night. Pain-go-bye-bye Juice. ... As I nodded off, memories of the 1948 cruise came back again. We had come to anchor in St. Ann's Bay, south of Ingonish in Cape Breton, followed by a game of softball in a clearing on shore. When the time came for our return to the ship for supper, we found the whaler partially grounded on the beach ... due to an ebb tide. We all had to wade in, huff and puff, in order to re-float that monstrous boat.

* * *

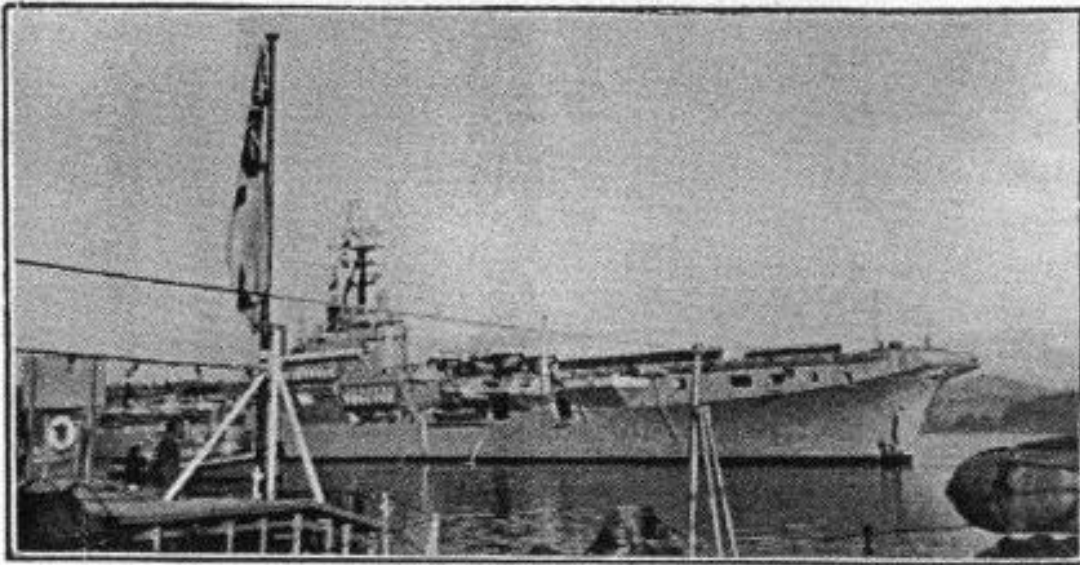
Never have I experienced such cold water! It must have been below 40° F... No polar bear club for THIS kid! Thank God we didn't have to swim from the "Jean" in that Gulf water ... weeks later in the season.

Part Four

Overtime



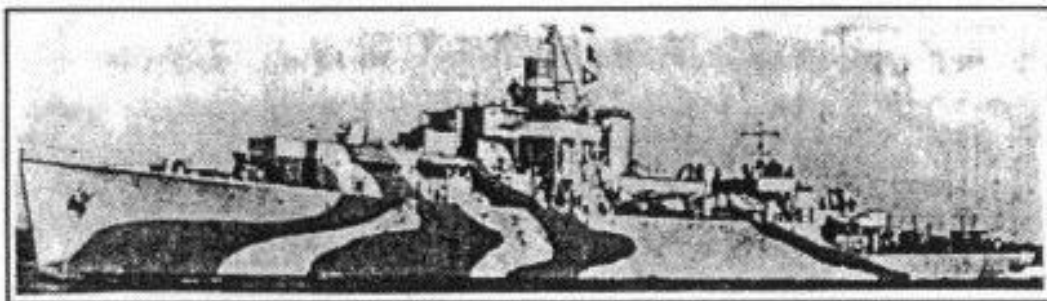
The Ship's Badge
"Porte St. Jean"



HMCS "Magnificent" entering
Esquimalt Harbour - Nov. '54

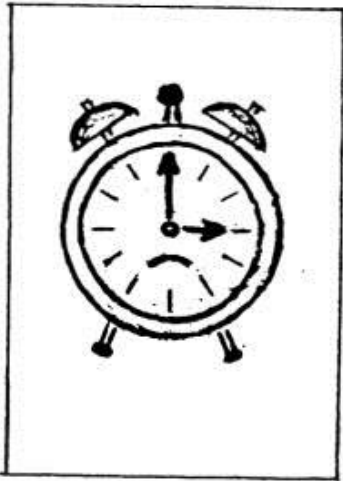


'Avenger' Torpedo-Bomber
which replaced 'Firefly'



HMCS "Swansea" in Ww II Camouflage
from a news photo after D-Day '44

21.

No Need For Alarm

It was probably late next afternoon when we berthed at Halifax Dockyard. At this time a number of our Reserve crew members opted, or were due, to return to their home Divisions and civilian jobs or schools. It seemed like only a few days elapsed when we were ordered out again. Much-wanted leaves were shortened or cancelled, as the ship was under sailing orders.

We slipped the jetty with our sister ship at the specified time, arriving within 20 minutes, or less, at a pre-arranged station on the chart ... at the entrance to Halifax harbour. We were met there by a specialist team from Dockyard.

This was to be a NATO exercise, dubbed 'Cordex II'. Our role was to operate the Gate (anti-submarine net), in tandem with "Porte St. Louis" -she was a few cables off our port beam, to the west of McNab's Island as I recall. Keeping station was easy because the Dockyard team had shackled each of us to concrete weights which lay permanently on the bottom. To accomplish it, they were connected to our anchor cables. Trouble is: they took the anchors home with them!

Our Captain (still Len Stupart) had been briefed on the exercise; so he up-dated us. Once the games began, we were to keep constant watch for all surface traffic, especially the inbound, any of which could be 'enemy'.

Both visual and radar sightings were to be employed; and each ship was to be challenged by flashing a light via Aldis lamp. If they failed to respond as required, they were denied entry to harbour. Needless to say, all 'friendly' shipping in the vicinity had been made aware of the 'password'.

How submarine threats would be identified, I cannot recall. We had no ASDIC (SONAR) ... only echo-sounder for reading the depth of bottom. Presumably, several escorts would be patrolling the approaches to seaward.

It seemed that finally "Jean" and "Louis" would be performing the tasks they were designed for. Only in make-believe, though. We had no fixed nets from ship-to-shore, and no gate net to lower/raise between our vessels. Just a pretend game to test harbour defences. We were to be scored for our alertness, or otherwise.

All was in readiness for 'Cordex II' to begin in 24 hours; so overnight leave was granted to about 1/2 the crew and to all officers except myself. A navy cutter picked up the 'libertymen' and was scheduled to return them the following day, well in advance of game-start time. That was not to be. By then, Mother Nature had thrown us another curve. Could her name be Ms Murphy?

* * *

We all had known it was out there; but a Caribbean-spawned hurricane had fooled forecasters and suddenly wandered off course, bringing its side-effects closer to Nova Scotia and US. Overnight gale-force winds and their companion high seas made it unsafe for the small liberty-boat to deliver men returning from leave to their ship. This meant no relief for me keeping radar watch and challenging ships. The good news:- our link to the bottom held fast. The designers of that set-up had done their job well.

Somebody must have said: "Let the games begin"; and they did, gradually wearing on and on. Darkness fell; visibility worsened; radar checks were now essential.

In my position, I was less concerned with receiving bad scores than with the real risk of being rammed by a passing ship. Some might have swum to shore; but not every sailor can swim; and North Atlantic waters can be very frigid. Clearly, the safest defence was: keep a constant sharp look-out. We did.

We had ample men for the visual job; but I really began to tire after 12 hours ... worried about falling asleep on my feet. I cannot recall any naval contacts but numerous merchant ships were challenged and OK'd during the long night. This gave me a better sense of just how important those sea-lanes are for our foreign trade. A Navy is vital to prove our sovereignty there

Desperate for a snooze, I finally chose to lie down on the deck of the wheelhouse, below the radar display screen - its long white finger sweeping forever around in clockwise circles ... with our ship at the centre. Its dependable range from our rather short mast might have been fifteen nautical miles; I wasn't sure.

Reasoning that the fastest approaching traffic, if spotted at the outer edge of our range, could close to only about half that range in 1/4 hour, I left orders with the forward look-out to shake me till awake, once every 15 minutes. Even though I had then, and still have a reputation for enjoying the sack = oversleeping (even through alarm-clocks), the terrified young man never had to wake me up. Despite a series of good cat-naps, my internal alarm somehow clicked on and did the job for him. How so? I can only take a guess: given a real danger, adrenalin or something else in our body can activate a hidden ability to overcome even a well-ingrained bad habit. Or so it was for me in Cordex II

Finally, the winds abated; and our crew was back to near-full strength. So ended my longest watch. What frustrates me about all this: I can't recall hearing our score in the exercise. So much for martyrdom! As the liberty gang finally made it back to the ship, you would think THEY had it tough, just WAITING for action

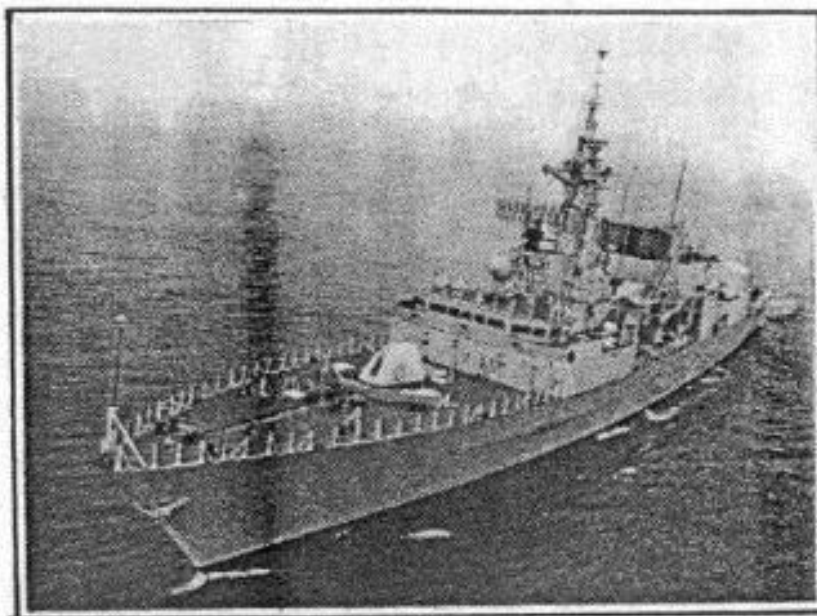


Russian Warships survived Cold War
and visited Halifax in July, 1993.

Λ

Original photos were taken by
David Mc Lay of Kingston, Ont.

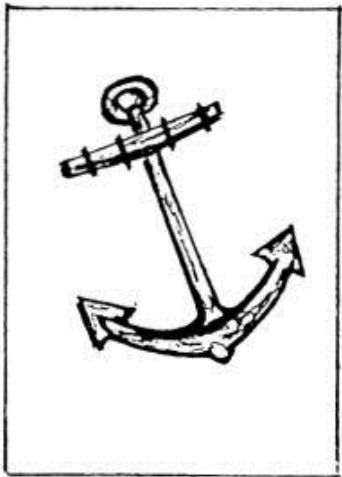
V



One of Canadian Navy's Twelve
New 'Halifax' Class Frigates.
from DND 'On Watch for Canada'

22.

Anchor Man



Cdr Len Stupart had been named C.O. at the last minute for our Hamilton to Halifax voyage. This wise choice had accepted his task reluctantly as it interrupted important activity in his civilian career. Probably, his senses of loyalty and duty are what gave us the good luck to serve with him, albeit for only a brief period.

In any event, his available time had now run out, to my regret. With the exercise complete, he told me he would be relinquishing command BEFORE "Porte St. Jean" returned to berth in Halifax. While this bothered me, I was even more apprehensive when he told me who would replace him. For many reasons soon to become apparent, that person appears here simply as "Mr.K",- a disguise to protect the innocent ... or should I say the guilty?

In the early afternoon, as I remember it, a cutter came alongside and the C.O. ordered that its passenger be piped aboard ... here was our new Captain. The two removed to Stupart's cabin, which then became "K's" .. and shortly re-appeared. Len said a few words to the assembled Ship's Company; then HE was piped over the side; and he sped away. I was soon to miss this man's calm and quiet manner even more than I had anticipated.

"K's" first order to me was "Number One, Splice the Main Brace ... with rum from the Wardroom." In a ship of this size, as X.O., I was also our Mess President.

Tradition dictated that the C.O. was not a Wardroom member but only a welcome guest. This made sense, as he had to remain aloof in his lonely role- in order to retain respect for his leadership. Despite the excuse of celebrating Change-of-Command, I felt that he had no bloody right to use OUR rum! Even so, I passed along the order to the young rating who acted as our Steward.

It was now clear why the name "K" had disturbed me. We had met before. A WW II veteran, and a consummate seaman, like many of us, he had flaws. Most vivid in my memory was his love of booze. While imbibing, he would acquire a wild look in his eye .. often becoming downright belligerent. I decided right then to have no rum until we were safely tied to the jetty.

* * *

A few moments later, that Dockyard maintenance craft re-appeared at our bow. A Special-Branch L Cdr hailed me, saying we should make ready for return to harbour. He was there to disconnect our cables from the bottom. Our cable party should close up to haul them in. BUT: "What about our anchors?" I said. "Ah" he said softly, "they're somewhere in Dockyard. They'll be returned eventually." This really pissed me off!

No ship should enter harbour without anchors ready to 'let-go' in emergency. If main engine or steering should fail, this would be our last resort .. the only means of taking the way off the ship (slamming on the brakes). Some knuckle-head had deprived us of our one safeguard. Then I told him our Captain and crew would soon be sozzled on rum. "Who cons us into Halifax?" "Lard Jasus Bye ... take her in yerself." he suggested. As he seemed to lack a full knowledge of rules for the Executive Branch, I explained: I did not have a watch-keeping ticket. Even if I had, "Mr. K" would be in no mood to let me do that. His reply: "My work cannot be postponed; I have strict orders; Better round up your cable party ... By now, your ship should have a signal from CANFLAGLANT telling you where to berth." In fact, that was received well after we were under way.

Before ordering the cable party to muster, I sought CPO's Noble and Watt in the engine room. Explaining my fears, I asked them to stay 'dry' till after we had berthed, promising them a bottle of rum at my expense. Unorthodox on my part; but so was the entire scenario. They too knew "K's" reputation, agreeing without pause. I also asked them to supply only standard revolutions unless Emergency Speed was ordered on the engine room telegraph. In such a case, they should try to confirm it by voice-pipe. They agreed again without argument. Soon afterwards, the C.O. thrust a glass into my hand. "No thanks." "DRINK!" he barked. I took a mouthful; wandered out of his sight and spat over the side. All I could think of then was: "Such a waste."

A burly, heavy-set man with a good head of reddish hair, "Mr. K" had been transformed, seemingly, into a character straight from a Jack London novel. If this had been the 1980's, I might have said: "Beam him back up Scottie!" But, it was '53, long before Star Trek. Even Sputnik I lay four years in the future. WE were facing a very uncertain NEAR future with no clear plan for coping. No time now for 'Walter Mitty' day-dreams to help conquer THIS Red Baron. Only the Almighty may have known what lay ahead.

The cable party did as required, with no anchors to weigh. "Start Engine" shouted the C.O.; and the Bos'n piped "Hands to Stations for Entering Harbour." This meant I had to be at the bridge. The wheel was manned by Coxswain CPO Adamson. In charge of the foc'sle was Lt Coulter aided, he hoped, by PO Jones .. my wanna-be helper during our recent Gulf crisis.

The Captain stood beside the wheelhouse, ordering "Half Ahead" and telling the Coxs'n to steer a course for the channel left of George's Island. As luck had it, he was familiar with this. About five cables off our starboard beam, probably from Eastern Passage, was a British sub on a closing course. On the surface, she had a 'bone in her teeth', the bow-wave suggesting her speed was far greater than our maximum of 12-13 knots.

The C.O. spotted this perceived rival and ordered: "Full Ahead". The telegraph rang; the propeller shaft rumbled louder and our speed did increase ... slightly. Unsatisfied, he kept ordering higher revolutions; but the sub still gained. This excellent seaman on a whim induced by demon rum, seemed to imagine he could win this race, when the 'opponent' probably was capable of at least twice our speed, if not more.

Although he finally gave up this sub-chase, "K" by then was turning redder with frustration at losing the game. Our destination was now in sight, a few points off the port bow ... as I wondered what could possibly happen next? He ordered "Half Ahead" followed soon by "Slow Ahead". Perhaps the sensible old seaman in him had regained control. I breathed a silent sigh.

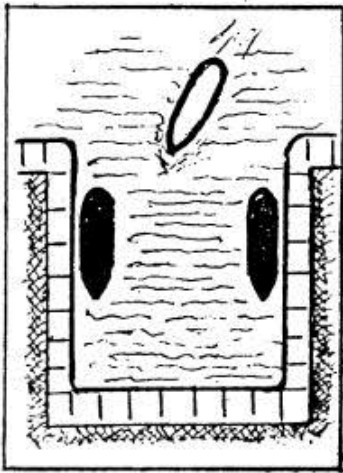
Frank Coulter's foc'sle party was ready with a hand heaving-line; the remaining upper deck crew all took positions to man the fenders and handle the lines when we came alongside "Porte St. Louis" starboard-side-to. As a standard courtesy, she also would have men ready to take our lines. Unlike many Halifax naval jetties, which usually were parallel to the shore, the one to which we were headed was almost perpendicular, thereby presenting us with an additional un-wanted hazard.

If anybody were ever to 'over-shoot' this approach, he would drive right into a concrete wall, perhaps a ship's length ahead, and could put a big hole in the bows ... if not sink in the aftermath. This did not really concern me, as "K" was a good ship-handler and unlikely to blunder. He probably could do this in his sleep. With his blood-shot eyes fixed upon "Porte St. Louis" already at her berth, he altered course to port; "Steady on that Heading, Coxs'n".

Then, "K" unveiled his mad-cap scheme ... or was it just another whim? "OK Coxs'n; Over to You; YOU take her in!" He turned and climbed a ladder; entered his cabin ... and he closed the door behind him.

23.

Robi Redeemed



Welcome to our world of sheer lunacy. Remember the Coxswain's ulcer in the St. Lawrence? Looking helpless and scared, he turned to me: "What do I do, sir? I've never had to do this before!" I feared he would shit his breeches. What would you have done?

In Hamilton I had been allowed to con the ship alongside once or twice; so in virtual unreality I said "Calm down; I'll guide you."... We were up that proverbial creek without a ...

Captain. Up the ladder I went to the open bridge for a better view right over the voice-pipe. "Starboard ten; Stop Engine; Midships; (to the foc'sle: Throw the heaving-line when ready); Slow Astern ... Stop Engine." This time, it was Frank who might poop his pants. We had ceased forward movement; came nowhere near hitting that wall. BUT, the hand heaving-line had dropped in the water, short of its target; and no spare had been coiled in readiness for a second try. To make matters worse, we were drifting to port quite quickly, beyond the possible reach of any hand-thrown heaving-line.

Then, this fresh-water sailor came to his senses .. Apart from a lack of salt in Great Lakes water, after four months of that, I had forgotten the power of moon and sun on the sea. We were being carried away from "Porte St. Louis" by a strong EBB TIDE ... just as if some satanic force were moving the whole ruddy harbour!

Through my own stupidity, the Mother of all Murphys had tripped me again. Having never honed my 'driving' skills in a fluid medium, I had been uneasy throughout this episode .. given a few spare moments, I too would have welcomed a chance to visit the 'heads'. Thinking back on it, our left-hand screw also was an impediment. As we moved astern, it had kicked our bow to port.

Our target jetty formed one side of a U-shaped dock area. To our left was an old hulk of a WW II Corvette painted black. No longer in naval service, she seemed employed in some dirty Dockyard chores. Rather a sad sight, she looked to be the sole local survivor of her class, all others having been scrapped/sold at war-end. We were about to bump against her; so I ordered three seamen to hold fenders over our port side to minimize possible paint damage. One of these young lads was OS Robillard ... he who was a minor head-ache all summer.

* * *

Before I had figured the safest way to back off and try again, "Mr. K" emerged from his cabin, shouting at me: "Who told YOU to take command? Is this a MUTINY?" I looked at him directly: "No Sir!" Either because of discretion or fear, I knew that there was no point in arguing with a man in his condition. Besides, the job needed finishing. Saying: "You have the con, Sir?", I walked away, feeling that anywhere in the ship would be preferable to staying in his company at that moment.

"Mr. K" ordered: "Midships (Wheel's amidships) Half Astern" (Engine half astern sir). Was Coxswain still stressed out? I couldn't tell. Heading for the port side, I heard Robillard yelling: "Hex-Ho, sir, stop de ship .. I can't hold dis rope!" Fearing he could lose an arm, I said: "Let it go; you did your best." Maybe the first time he had a compliment in our ship. While he had shown all summer an instinct for trouble, in a crisis to-day he had been BRAVE. As Robi released the fender, there were crunching-groaning-snapping sounds. No, it was not our loyal Québecker ... he who had just tried in vain to rescue HIS ship!

The noises came from our stanchions or possibly our rather high bow dragging against the Corvette's Carley Float rack. As we began to move rapidly astern, I saw twisted steel where our ship had so rudely intruded on its neighbour. No crew appeared to check the damage. She seemed abandoned. You may be wondering about just who was this innocent by-stander? It was "SACKVILLE". Some years later, she would be restored to her wartime configuration and "western approaches' camouflage. As Canada's Naval Memorial she has a regular summer berth in downtown Halifax, obviously out-living her marauder.

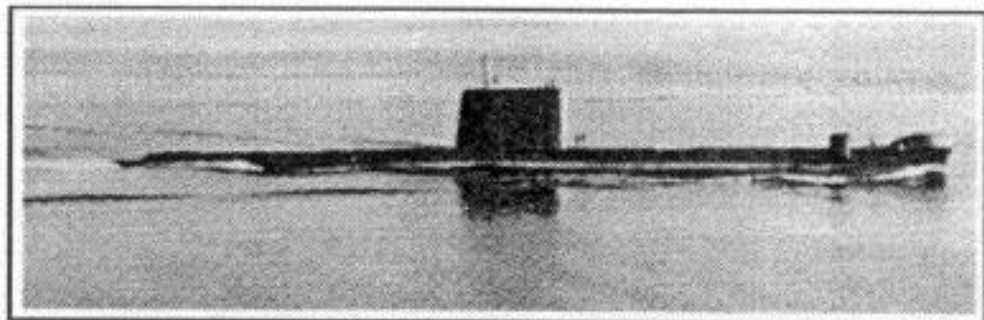
This time, our foc'sle party were prepared to try harder; but that was unnecessary. "Mr. K" brought her in beautifully; all lines passed to "Porte St. Louis"; were secured and then doubled up. "Finished with Main Engine." The C.O. retired to his cabin; when I looked in later, he apparently had fallen asleep on his bunk. I sensed that he too should have taken time - to visit the heads. Another 'affair to remember' having passed, I conveyed the rum to Noble and Watt, with thanks.

* * *

Why had "K" created this situation? Ticked off at having been drawn away from his desk job, maybe? Some diabolical grudge against Reserves? I think not; the man came from there before WW II. Testing the Cox's'n AND X.O. for skills? Or was it simply to show off HIS skills? If so, he certainly succeeded at THAT.

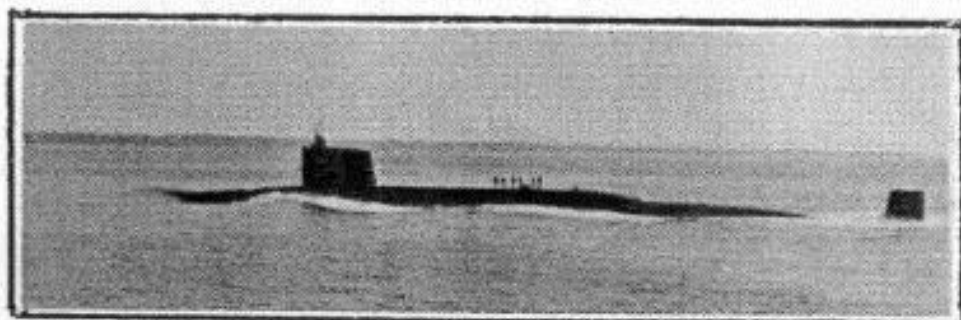
Or could it have been just a joke, to scare us all while he DID make a quick dash to the heads, which took longer than intended? Had this been in the 1990's, our investigative media would have had head-lines damning such behaviour. Thankfully, this was and is rare.

In the aftermath, one observer urged Court Martial. This Reserve lacked the guts to destroy the old seaman nearing retirement, and soon needing a pension. Was I wrong in just hoping this 'Gate' was his last command? Years later, it helped to see "Sackville" had healed. She was the silent witness ... let it rest with her.

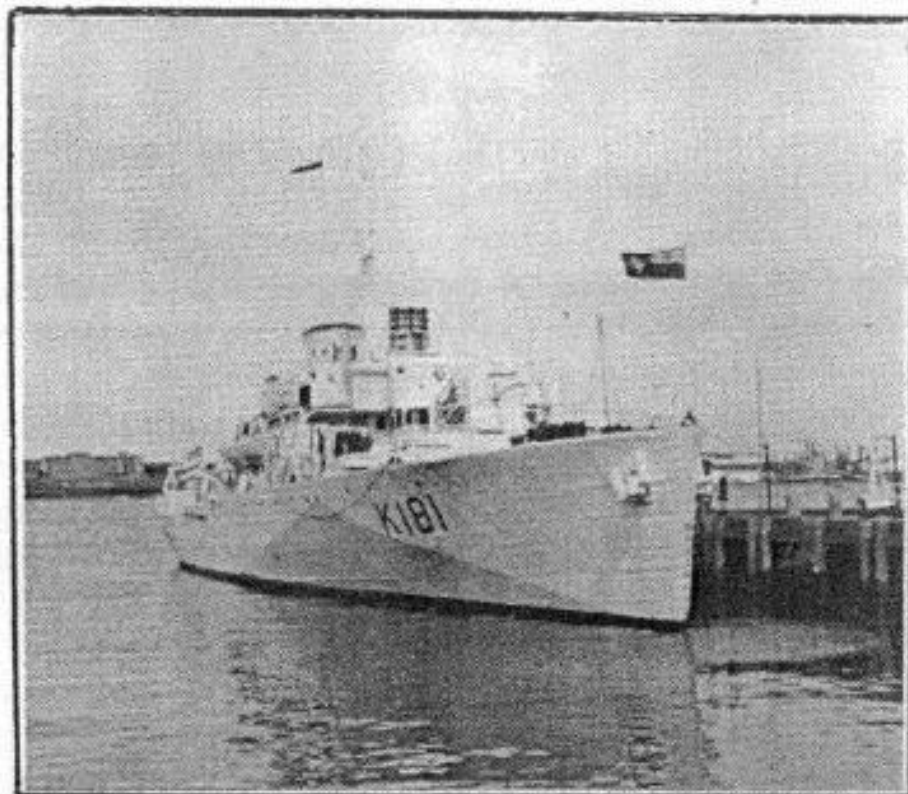


from a DND photo

Out-moded 'O' Class Submarine
to be replaced by 4 newer Subs



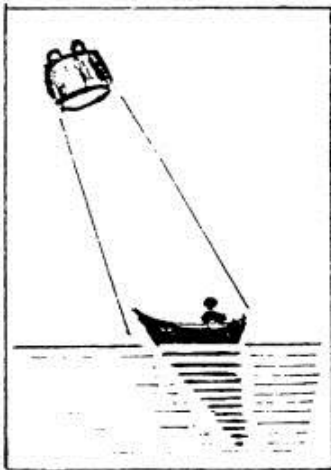
US Nuclear-powered Submarine
approaching Halifax in 1993



HMCS "Sackville" at Halifax
WW II Corvette in Camouflage

24.

Light Up My Life



Having survived the triple crises of near-sinking in the Gulf, Cordex II with its hurricane, and this fresh-water mutineer failing to berth his ship at ebb tide, what follows ought to have been a relaxing anti-climax. Not so! Murphy's Law still plagued us on a seemingly daily basis.

With Cdr Stupart gone back to civvy employment in Toronto, and Mr. "K" at his former desk in Dockyard, my duty, before returning to college, was to oversee the complete de-commissioning of this ship, i.e.- take her out of service for the winter or longer. I literally had no clue where to begin; and I longed for somebody with experience to guide me. Mr. "K" could have done this far better than I. Needless to say, Dockyard bureaucrats lost no time before they pestered us with directives and demands, either with face-to-face orders, or through radio naval messages. All these did was rattle my nerves even more.

We faced fundamental problems, first of which was a double-edged personnel pain. Not only did most of our summer Reserves 'terminate' (we simply couldn't refuse such requests from volunteers after 14 days' training), but also RCN Depot was drafting elsewhere many of our permanent-force crew members. In addition to reducing our meagre work-force, this also generated paper-work before their service records could follow them.

During that final week, as I recall it, I was the sole officer left aboard the ship, which meant virtual confinement to "Porte St. Jean" in the evenings, i.e.-zero social life. Completely out-of-character for the so-called Saturday night sailor. Although there is no proof remaining in my files, I am reasonably sure that I was designated Acting C.O. for the final five days or so. If correct, that was my only command ever, and one I would not wish to revisit under such conditions.

One fairly minor pain was the typical pesky routine of ship-board life .. like ensuring that our old white ensign was raised for 'colours' daily at 0800 ... then lowered at sunset (calculated from Admiralty Tables for slightly differing times each day) .. and dipping that flag if another H.M. ship passed by with a C.O. senior to myself ... ALL of them! Most of these duties were second-nature and merely unwelcome interruptions of an already over-loaded daily schedule.

Another near-daily irritant really got up my dander. Perhaps due to the Cold War, or Korean conflict, the Admiral's staff had beefed up Dockyard security. One duty of his Officer-of-the-Day, or assistant, was to use a cutter or small motor-boat to cruise beside all the ships at Dockyard jetties. If unchallenged by any ships' sentries, he was to clamber aboard, leaving his cryptic calling-card; then report same to his superior. Our nick-name for this duty-boat eludes me; I remember it only as one BIG pain-in-the-arse! (or maybe dander).

With only a skeleton crew, we were caught with slack security two or three nights in a row which, in theory, could have meant destruction of our vital warship with plastic explosives left by the intruder. We were then required to report to the Admiral's staff the next day with an explanation. Certainly not calculated to help us in de-commissioning; but what to do? When reacting to unrealistic demands (known by some as chicken-shit), one has two choices: either knuckle under and play by the rules; or say: "to hell with this game" and rebel. Need you ask my choice? Which makes a better story?

The latter course cost me some sleepless nights but yielded great satisfaction. Those infernal saboteurs seemed to prefer the darkest hours ... the night watch between midnight and 0400 hours. Having reasoned that a pre-emptive strike was quite legitimate both in war and in war games ... I stationed myself by our Aldis lamp near the bridge and awaited my prey. Before long, the culprit appeared ... and was nailed by our bright signal beam just as he attempted to board us!

As he backed off and turned toward his next victim, I followed him with the spotlight .. spoiling his game with several nearby ships. By now somewhat displeased, he ordered me to turn it off. I complied but since he had not said to LEAVE it off, on it came again! Then, threats and shouting ensued, during which he was told that we had been criticized too often for lax security and were now trying to rectify the weakness, while also reducing the 'threat' to our neighbours. Team spirit.

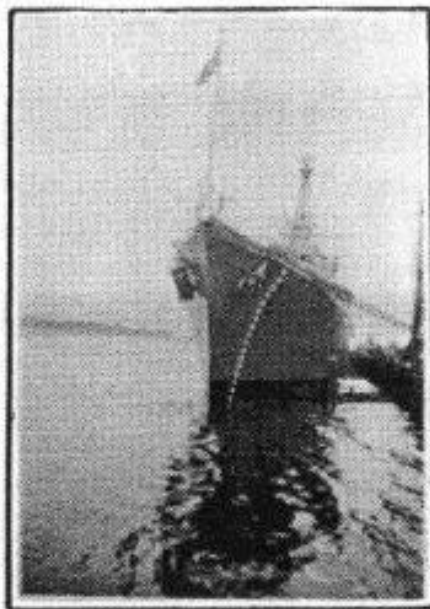
After a second night of such vigilance, we received an order to cease such horsing-around. I said that we would, if left in peace to finish paying-off the ship. Either that, or please restore our full complement of crew. No further harassment; problem resolved. While this probably earned me no Brownie-points with the top brass, for once, being pig-headed seemed to have worked.

* * *

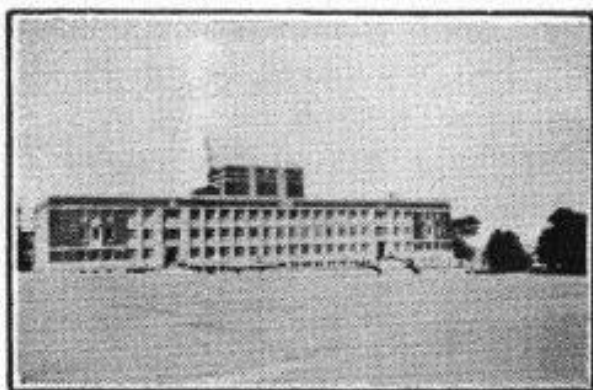
Since that nonsense, I've often wondered if it may not have been better to let a Russian spy really sneak aboard and check out our ship. Just think of the time he could have wasted back at USSR Naval HQ, trying to figure out the advantages of our crazy hawse-pipes ... and even more frustrating for their bright scientific minds; why did we have a left-hand screw? Imagine the research. Perhaps a typo error meant to be: left-hand CREW? Is this type of Canadian more intelligent, some kind of secret threat? ... WE certainly thought so! ... Left-hemisphere, creative thinking and all that?



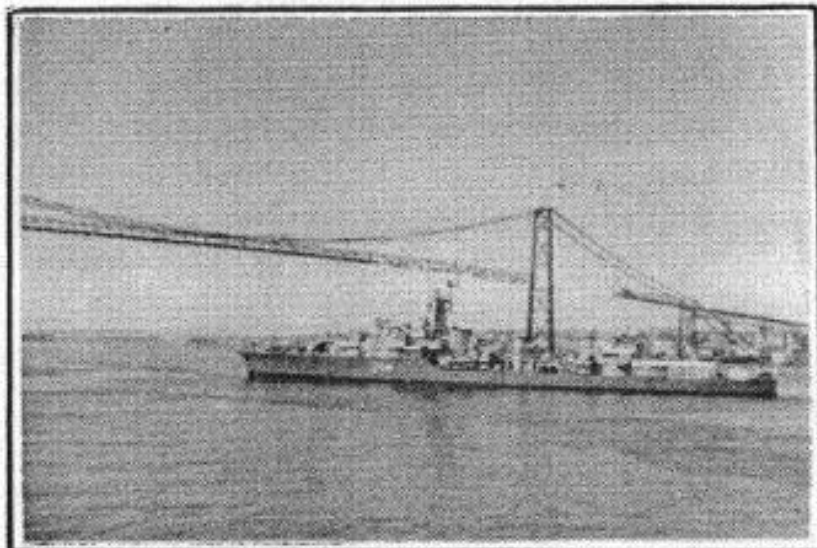
USN Submarine at Halifax



Tribal Destroyer at Berth
in H.M. Dockyard, Halifax



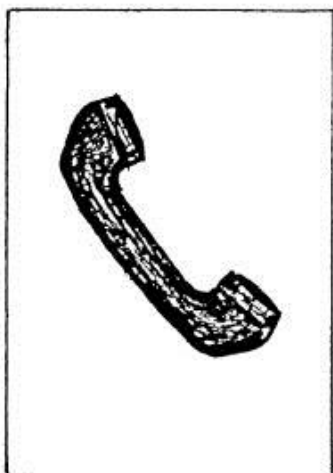
One of "Stadacona's" Schools
near Dockyard - in Halifax



HMCS "Micmac" near New Bridge
over Halifax Harbour in 1954

25.

My Soul For A Phone



Since the 30's, have you ever heard of anybody with responsibility able to function well without access to a phone? That was expected of "Porte St. Jean" in 1953. Although it was customary for all H.M. ships docking in Halifax to be given a phone link, on our return from Cordex exercises, guess what ... no phone. I visited the appropriate offices in Dockyard, seeking correction of the oversight.

The reply was: "None available - Fill out this form. We may be able to supply one in a week or so." Was it due to those visiting NATO ships? In "a week or so", we had to de-commission; and all disperse elsewhere!

Recall that 'buzz' network or navy jungle-telegraph? And remember LS Rankin, he of many dead grandmothers, now under stoppage-of-leave? On that same day, Rankin approached me with: "I heard that you need a telephone Sir?" "Well yes; but so what?" was my reply, starting to smell a rat. "Sir, you want a phone; and I need to get ashore to see my wife. I can get you that phone."

From the X.O. (or by now maybe Acting C.O.): "When?" Rankin: "Say, to-morrow from 0930 to about 1700 hours." Yours truly: "Perhaps I may be occupied away from the gangway around 0930 ... this talk never happened!" He saluted; and then he took his leave ... so to speak.

The following afternoon, voilà; we had a phone with wires leading to the 'Maritime Tel & Tel' lines ashore. I tested it; succeeded in talking to RCN Depot on some personnel matters. Later that day in "Stadacona" (the shore training base) on some errand, I decided to call our ship to check progress. Dialing Dockyard, I asked for "Porte St. Jean". "Sorry; that ship has no phone".

PERFECT! We could call out - nobody could call US. Just what we needed to finish a thankless job without constant meddling from ashore. During those final few days of frantic work the phone never rang; another big problem solved. Don't call us; maybe we'll call you?

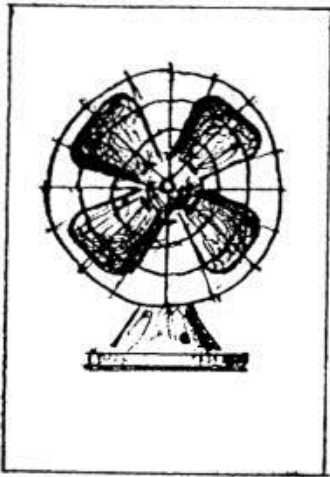
There was, however, a questionable moral issue here involving what some might choose to call a 'Pact with the Devil'. With all due respect to LS Rankin and his grandmothers, it worried me but only briefly. If ever required to do wartime service in a ship, I would most certainly want to be with a few devils such as this. Devious, maybe; trouble-maker, yes; but his propensity to ignore regular rules brought with it an imagination adept at finding novel solutions to problems. If the battle can be won sooner with no more casualties, then who would not favour that option?

A few years ago, I asked an officer acquaintance what he would have done? "Just what you did", he said. Now deceased, he was a WW II veteran Gunnery Officer - whose duties among others involved a long tradition of strict enforcement of discipline. At the appropriate times, I gathered; but on rare occasions, some rules need bending a little. Thanks Jim, wherever you are.

Our final day soon came; we lowered the ensign one last time; then packed our bags and said our good-byes. The survivors of a memorable summer. For me, this was the end of a significant learning experience, to steal a phrase from educators. So I thought; but NOT QUITE.

26.

Fan Club



A few weeks after returning again to college back in Toronto, in October, I received a phone call from a WREN S/Lt at my home Division HMCS "York". "Your presence is requested here by the Staff Officer." Sensing this as more command than request, I skipped two classes that week and showed up at the prescribed time in my blazer and grey flannels.

In the designated meeting room were two uniformed officers. One I knew as "York" Staff. The other proved to be the venerable Patrick Budge, by then a Captain or Commodore, RCN, on an official visit from Halifax. He came right to the point: in checking equipment and non-consumable stores after de-commissioning of "Porte St. Jean", two items were not accounted for. Namely: a spare radio crystal for transmission on a certain VHF frequency; and a 12" electric fan for operation on 220 volts DC (of no real use to a civilian). Since I had signed for the above, and hundreds of other items during the final Change of Command, could I "offer any explanation?" ...

A gut feeling told me this could mean big trouble; perhaps a tip of the iceberg, leading to tough probing about HMCS "Sackville's" damage. Although I had never before met the man, I knew his reputation. Unique in our Navy, he had risen up to his present rank from Boy Seaman in H.M. Royal Navy. Revered; but often feared!

All who knew him would have said this was no man to meddle with. Should I hedge or look guilty, he would surely be all over me and take my hard-earned two gold stripes. So, what would it be, flight or fight? The motto of my arts alma mater drifted through my brain: "The Truth Shall Make You Free." Answer him directly!

"Before departing Hamilton, Sir, perhaps in August, 'Porte St. Louis' crystals for that frequency became defective or were somehow damaged. Our Communicator, AB Martin wanted to help his counterpart in the sister ship. He loaned or maybe gave him our spare crystal, thus maintaining contact between both ships, and with CFH-Canflaglant in Halifax ... (I can still hear their call-sign droning from our radio-shack -:-· ·-·- ····) Evidently, he neglected the required paper-work .. but the crystal should be found in the list of 'Porte St. Louis' stores." My inquisitor said he would trace it. "Now, what about the missing fan? Surely that was not loaned to St. Louis?"

"It's on the bottom of the Gulf." Was he familiar with the lack of proper hawse-pipes in old "Porte St. Jean"? He nodded affirmative. I related our serious flooding in heavy seas and my personal effort to clear the debris from the paint-locker. Among other waste I had thrown overboard: one paint-soaked fan. "Have you any further questions, Sir?"

Methinks I held my breath for a moment. His reply: "Yes Lt Ogden, I do." (Here it comes!) "Do you think the experience you gained was worth the loss of one of Her Majesty's fans?" Did I detect a smile on his face? "YES SIR!" "Thank you", said the great man; "You may go now; and good luck in your studies." EXHALE!

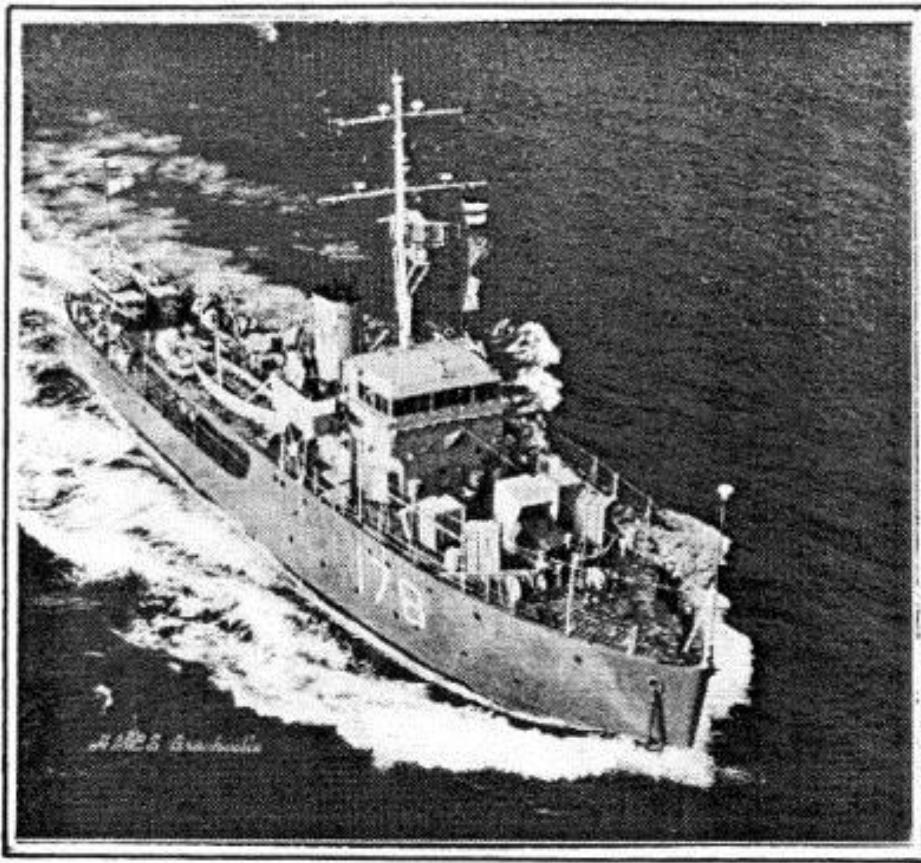
If he knew about "Sackville" (and I suspect he did) he chose not to open that can-of-worms. Did he sense that she would someday become a Naval Memorial? If so, she didn't need that blot on her record. But then ... come to think of it ... neither did I.

Epilogue ✻

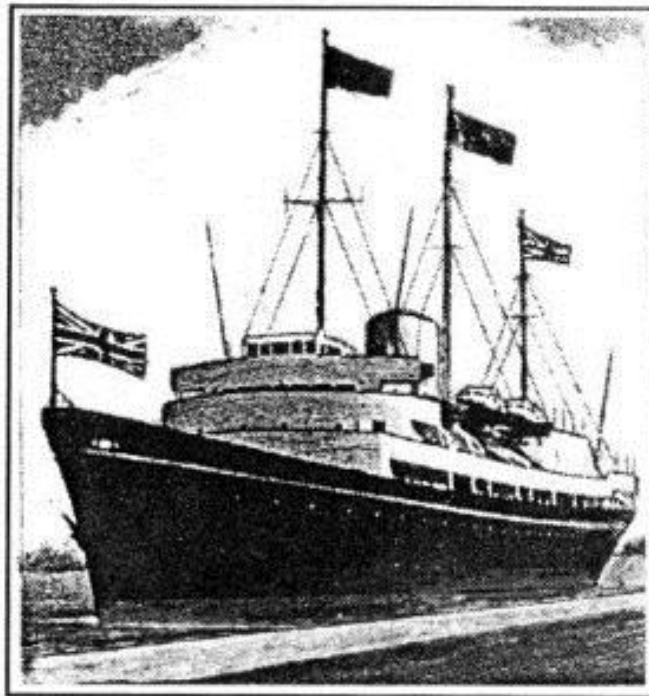
Farewells

"Sea King" Helicopter
It's time we said good-bye





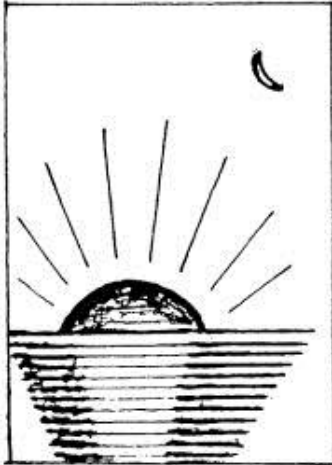
HMCS "Brockville"- WW II Bangor
Minesweeper near Panama in 1954



HMY "Brittania", which took the
Queen Mother back to Britain-67



Good Night Ladies



There still were a few more years of Naval Reserve experience ahead of me. At Great Lakes Training Centre, now known for pay purposes as "Patriot", the summer of 1954 was spent ashore as Personnel Officer, which involved arranging appointments and drafting of officers and/or men, respectively, for shore training and for sea-going cruises. On Christmas break of 1955, I worked with Staff Officer, Officer Personnel at FOND, Reserve H.Q.

Since I had been forced to repeat a key subject at college in the Spring of 1955, that meant the entire Fall of '54 was open to me for a memorable cruise from Halifax to Esquimalt in HMCS "Brockville", an old WW II Bangor minesweeper. This was a welcome bonus, if only for the new sights such as Nassau-Bahamas, Kingston in Jamaica, Panama Canal, Acapulco-Mexico, and Long Beach California. Also notable as we dodged 'round the north coast of Jamaica to avoid the 'eye' of Hurricane Hazel which soon would devastate Toronto.

Nevertheless for a personal cram-course in Murphy's Law, nothing has ever matched that summer of '53 with "Porte St. Jean". That 'Gate-Way to Maturity' taught me more than I thought possible about human relations, the need for discipline, how much I overlooked from my own training, and what I had forgotten about how best to earn respect from men supposedly responsible to me. At 24 years of age, I literally grew up in five months. Some of my friends thought it was about time!

Sea Power

In late 1966, my civilian career as a planner took us as a family back to Halifax for another four years. During that time, I renewed few personal contacts with navy acquaintances; but once bitten, old ships tend to draw one down to the sea, just to look at them. Anon:

One Autumn a vicious storm hit Halifax .. with high winds and seas, reminiscent of those during Cordex II. The radio reported a freighter had gone aground; so we drove out to see it .. in a cove somewhere near Sambro. This hulk of at least 4,000 tons was not just aground; she had been driven sideways high and dry, like a toy, onto the rocky shore! Her crew had been caught in the wrong place at the wrong time under adverse conditions possibly compounded by engine or steering faults. Our two sons were suitably impressed, as was I, with the awesome power of the winds and seas!

" Bonnie "

Our only aircraft carrier, HMCS "Bonaventure", was paid off early in 1970; and then sold for scrap. This spelled the end of our Air Arm or Branch as we knew it. We didn't go down for a farewell view of "Bonnie"; but I do recall her Tracker aircraft roaring overhead that day in their final fly-past. While a sad moment, this event was accepted by most as inevitable. The ship's planes, operation, maintenance and training had been gobbling up about half the annual naval budget. What many did question, however, was the timing ... so soon after a multi-million dollar refit of the ship.

This sort of news gives the Navy an unwarranted bad name, when it is often planners or politicians who lack adequate forethought. Cancellation of that 'Cadillac' EH-101 helicopter contract, in the 1990's, was another case in point. We are now paying for it in horrendous maintenance costs for the 35+ year-old "Sea Kings" and "Labradors", plus losses of crews which might otherwise have been prevented.

In the 'chopper' case, it was partly the tunnel-vision Peaceniks who, far too late for any economy, persuaded vengeful politicians to kill the deal. Better D.N.D. public relations might have saved this colossal waste of funds ... and some lives. In addition to the life-saving role in search & rescue, ship-borne helicopters have replaced the carrier and are now absolutely vital components of our current Navy. Without these 'eyes and ears', our modernized fleet would lose well over 50% of its defensive capability, while also suffering a diminished reputation among NATO's peace-keepers.

" Manhattan "

There was one other time, in '68 or '69 when I took our sons, aged 6 and 7, to Dockyard to see the "John A. Macdonald", a CGS icebreaker, and the US super-tanker "Manhattan". Just returned from their transit of the North-west Passage, a trial voyage to find out whether crude oil from Prudhoe Bay Alaska and the Beaufort Sea could be safely transported through Arctic ice-floes to east coast refineries. The "Macdonald" was there to confirm our sovereignty, while giving our 'consent'.

The Navy was represented by Cdr Tom Pullen, who was aboard as advisor. He had earlier experience in those seas in HMCS "Labrador", a Navy icebreaker at the time. A very competent representative and charming man who, in 1949, had been our C.O. in HMCS "Iroquois", a WW II Tribal destroyer employed then in UNTD training.

Since we know of no attempts to repeat this scheme, it appears that the findings were not too encouraging. Instead came the Mackenzie Valley pipeline with other equally serious environmental concerns. To maintain Arctic sovereignty to-day, our Navy relies heavily on fixed underwater hydrophone sensors to monitor surface and sub traffic. With better funding, though, nuclear-powered submarines in our fleet would be advantageous, with the ability to submerge for longer periods under the ice-cap. Nobody ever suggested nuclear WEAPONS be in such subs; but Peaceniks again killed the concept.

Rusty Gate

On our way out of Dockyard that same day, the boys and I ambled north along several jetties. Then a real surprise! I spotted a familiar silhouette. Somewhat ugly and un-naval in appearance .. it bore hull number 180. There she was: "Porte St. Jean", looking rather rusty and forlorn. Peering into the Wardroom, we saw three Commissionaires having late afternoon tea-break.

A brief chat; then we learned that the old girl was their rendezvous or snack-room between security rounds of various Dockyard sites. Heard a generator running, obviously for light and heat. In all other respects, the ship looked dead and uninhabited. For all I knew, some of them may have snoozed at times in my old bunk; but it looked dark below. And more proof of apparent neglect: the Wardroom bulkheads were still the hideous 'damage-control' peach colour which I had applied, at least 15 years ago. While contrary to official decor, I'd been unable to find anything more suitable in the paint-locker. Nobody since had seen fit to cover it.

Why should such a sorry sight evoke nostalgia in me, the Reserve who sometimes had ignored traditions and rules? I only know that it did. Here was a small but significant chunk of my memory ... dying a slow death through dis-use or lost purpose in life. That is the last time I ever saw the strange lady. While she may have been revived a few more times .. for training New Entries or NATO exercises (groan), I know she and her four sister ships were due for scrapping in the 1990's.

* * *

The one 'Gate' known to me for a real claim to fame was "Porte Dauphine". Seconded to the Canadian Coast Guard with Capt Archie Hodge as C.O., she was ^{among the} first in ~~July~~ ^{Nov.} of 1975 to locate the sunken Edmund Fitzgerald in Lake Superior, finding one life-preserver. Earlier in Lake Ontario, on 13 October 1973, Archie and his 'Gate' discovered the wrecks of the "Hamilton" and "Scourge", both of which sank during the War of 1812.

" Britannia "

In 1967, as Montreal's EXPO was winding down, again over local radio we heard that "Brittania", the Royal Yacht, was due to depart Halifax with the Queen Mother Elizabeth aboard for her return to the U.K. Dockyard was open to the public; so Gretta and I took our two boys down to the jetty to help bid her farewell. Many other youngsters also were there and, to be expected, fidgety. Behind her, my wife heard: "Mommy, I have to pee!" Then, she heard a splashing, and finally a warm damp feeling crept up the back of her legs. If this wee Maritimer was a republican, he surely chose a poor target on which to express his leanings. Gretta is a former American. All he managed to do was colour her tearful memory of the Queen Mum's farewell to us.

Her Majesty had hosted a reception aboard for VIP's including federal Cabinet Ministers. As they departed the gangway, it was obvious that some had enjoyed her bar's hospitality. After a long wait, the ship's main engines started and, as that gracious lady gave us all her familiar royal wave, the Royal Marine Band played 'Will Ye No Come Back Again'. There were few dry eyes as many recalled a similar scene, one summer long ago, when she and the late King George VI left in "Empress of Britain" to return home for WW II, which was about to begin on 3 September 1939. A VERY emotional moment!

Then, an almost surreal, slo-mo picture played out in front of us. "Brittania's" lines singled up; then let-go; and she drifted out, sideways, from the jetty. Probably assisted by one or two tugs, out-of-sight on her port side. It was almost dusk .. with a light fog settling in. Our boys were hoisted on our shoulders. One said: "What are those boats?" Out in the harbour, two silent greyhounds, her proud RCN destroyer-escorts steamed by in the spooky mist. "Brittania's" engines then throbbed; the waters stirred astern;

... and she was gone.