



THE NEWSLETTER



Of The UNTD Association of Canada

SPRING EDITION

MARCH 2007

EDITOR Robert Williamson Volume 3, Number 27 ISSN 1709 -3406



UNIVERSITY NAVAL TRAINING DIVISION HMCS HUNTER 1947

Seated - Left to right: R. Marshal, R. Lamontaigne, Lt. R. Rohmer, J. Docherty, T. Smith

Standing: G. Merlinan, J. Metcalfe, T. Mulvihill, G. Morrissette, W. McGuire, P. Deneau.

AN EXTRAORDINARY PIECE OF NAVAL HISTORY. See Cover Story inside.

COVER STORY

A photograph like the one that appears on the cover of our Spring Edition of the UNTD Newsletter is an editor's dream. It represents a significant piece of UNTD history, revealing a situation that was unique and all but forgotten.

Thanks to Arthur B. Harris, UNTD, Queen's University, 1943 - 47 for sending this archival treasure to our attention. Art rose to the rank of Commander and was appointed Commanding Officer of *HMCS HUNTER* 1965-68.

The photograph is important for a number of reasons. To begin with, it is the **First** class of University Naval Training cadets at *HMCS HUNTER* in Windsor, Ontario. The picture was taken in 1947. Most University Naval Training Divisions were formed in 1943, but there was no university in Windsor until Assumption College was created as an affiliate of London's University of Western Ontario in 1947.

What makes this photo especially interesting is that it contains two men who would become a future Major General and a Rear Admiral, respectively.

Seated in the centre of the front row is **naval** Lieutenant, Richard Rohmer, a man we associate with the **air force** in World War II. How he became the first staff officer of *HUNTER'S* University Naval Training Division is certainly a curiosity.

One of our own UNTD Association executive members, and the NOAC Toronto Branch Newsletter Editor, Bob Willson, did the research and produced the following story.

Major-General Richard Rohmer began his military career in 1936, serving with the ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) at Eagle Rock High School in Pasadena, California. He joined the RCAF in 1942 as a fighter-reconnaissance pilot. He took part in the D-Day Operation; served in France, Belgium and Holland, completing a 135-mission tour of operations in November 1944. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. At 5:05 p.m. on July 17, 1944, while leading a section of four Mustang fighter aircraft on a low-level reconnaissance, Rohmer caught Field Marshal Rommel in his staff-car southeast of Caen. Rohmer called in Spitfire fighter-bombers that shot up Rommel's vehicle, seriously injuring the

Field Marshal, thus taking him out of the Battle of Normandy.

Upon completing his tour of duty in 1944, Rohmer was sent home where he applied to register at the University of Western Ontario. For reasons that are not clear, Rohmer transferred to the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve in London. Gil Hutton claims that Rohmer made the switch because it gave him more flying opportunities. When Assumption College was formed in 1947, Rohmer was assigned duties as the Staff Officer UNTD at HMCS HUNTER. In 1950, he returned to the RCAF, flying Vampire jets and commanded the City of Toronto 400 Squadron. He reached the rank of Wing Commander and retired in 1953. He resumed his association with the Canadian Armed Forces in 1971 as Honorary Lieutenant Colonel and later Honorary Colonel of 411 Air Reserve Squadron. Major General Rohmer is still living in the Toronto area.

Seated on the right side of the photo is Tom Smith, future Rear Admiral, OMM, CD**. Born and raised in Leamington, Ontario, Tom Smith joined the Naval Reserve at *HMCS HUNTER* in 1946 as an Ordinary Seaman. He transferred to the newly formed UNTD at Assumption College in 1947. After 3 years in the Regular Force ('50-'52), he became the Staff Officer UNTD at *HUNTER* and eventually Commanding Officer ('68-'71).

He rose through the ranks to the position of Chief of Reserves for the Canadian Armed Forces. With his appointment to Rear Admiral in 1983, **he became the first Admiral (Reserves) in Canadian history.**

He was the chairman of a Naval Reserve Consulting Group 1972-4 that led to the formation of the Maritime Defense Association of Canada and also served as the Canadian delegate to NATO in Brussels. He was awarded Commander of Military Merit in '81 and the NOAC Bronze Medallion in '75. Admiral Smith played a part in resurrecting the title UNTD as a Reserve Officer Training Program in 1985. It had disappeared with Hellyer's revamping of the Canadian Armed Forces in 1968. Qualified with a command ticket, he was a well-known face at the coast and at the Great Lakes Training Centre in Hamilton during the 1950s and 60s. He passed away October 29, 2000.

Editor

MICMAC DIVISION SUMMER OF 1952

At a November Mess Dinner, the Newsletter Editor asked everyone to send stories from their UNTD days. I started thinking about events in what I consider one of the best times of my life. What came to mind was the building of an Esprit de Corps in *MICMAC* Division at *STAD* in 1952.

We had done something bad and were being punished. Cadet Captain (C/C) Brock had us doubling in our heavy woollen 5Bs with Lee Enfield rifles at the slope, resting on the brass button of our white twist. All we had to do was double around C Block several times and that would have been the end of it. We decided, however, to do it the hard way. Every time we passed C/C Brock we would chant "Hooray for Brock, Hooray for Brock, for he's a horses ass." This of course prolonged our doubling. We were still there at Lights Out when the Duty Officer put a stop to the foolishness. We were bruised and sore, but from that moment on, I belonged to a band of brothers.

Another inspiring incident involving the "Naval Officers' Creed" also came to mind. Almost fifty-five years later on, I can barely remember the essence of the doctrine but it went along the lines that a Naval Officer would never drink to excess. However, if he did drink to excess, he would do so in such a manner that no one would know that he had drunk to excess. If however... and so on.

On our 1952 *MICMAC* cruise to the Magdalen Islands, we arrived in Sydney, NS, where we were invited to a great party – good food, lots to drink and beautiful girls to dance with. We took full advantage of everything provided. At some outrageously late hour, we were shambling back to our ship, *HMCS SWANSEA*, when we were picked up by one of our reserve officers who reminded us of the Naval Officers' Creed. When we arrived on the jetty, he had us marching in reasonably good order. As we approached the brow, he admonished us to "look sharp" and "snap off" a good salute at the top of the brow – "Longest way up, shortest way down".

Unfortunately, a high tide at Sydney had canted the brow at a very steep angle causing the top of the brow to be a few feet higher than the deck. A box step had been put in place to fill the gap. The officer, leading his ramrod-stiff cadet charges up the gangway, snapped off a perfect salute, missed the step and timbered to the deck like a fallen tree, breaking his leg in the process. For me he became the model of a naval officer and a lifelong inspiration.

Should any of you remember or have a copy of the "Creed", I would much appreciate having a copy. I can be reached at: <carolyn@vianet.ca> 17 Colwill Drive, Elliot Lake, ON. P5A 2Z6. 1-(705) 848-6392

Bill Farrow

Micmac Division Photo. See page. 8 for list of names.



IN MEMORIAM

Commodore Ross Taylor "Buck" Bennett
CMM, CD, Nov. 1928 – Nov. 28, 2007, UNTD
HMCS STAR 1947 – 51, McMaster University.

"Buck" Bennett was a member of the UNTD Association of Canada and attended the Halifax UNTD Reunion in 2004. As a UNTD Cadet, his claim to fame was that of being aboard *HMCS MAGNIFICENT* in 1949 when she ran aground, seventy miles southeast of Halifax (see UNTiDy Tales of Officer Cadets, pp. 71 – 74). He graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School and was called to the bar in 1955.



Lois and Lieutenant "Buck" Bennett, 1954
Photo courtesy Lois Bennett.

After serving as the Commanding Officer of the UNTD at McMaster University, he was appointed command of *HMCS STAR* 1966 – 1969, after the sudden death of Commander Tilbury in an industrial accident. Bennett was the first UNTD graduate to command *STAR*. Until 1991, all but one future CO would be a product of the UNTD program.

Promoted to the rank of Captain, January 1, 1971, he served as Base Commander at CFB Hamilton until 1974. "Buck" Bennett became one of several UNTD graduates to hold flag rank when he was promoted to Commodore on January 1, 1974. He completed his naval career as the Senior Naval Reserve Advisor, 1974 – 77, a role created with the unification of CAF in 1968. Bennett provided a great deal of leadership

and prestige to the navy at a time when support for the military in Canada was declining.

He was justifiably proud of the fact that both of his daughters, Jennifer and Julie, joined the navy and went on to command other Naval Reserve Divisions. His youngest son, David, is a Chief Petty Officer at *HMCS STAR*. His oldest son, Robert, predeceased him.

"Buck" Bennett became a local magistrate in 1966 and presided in Hamilton's provincial courts for three decades. He is remembered as the last of the "old-time judges". His reputation for toughness inspired dread in the criminals brought before his court. With his sense of military justice, he was known as the last judge in Canada to order a penal flogging. He sentenced a young offender to 10 lashes for robbing and beating a helpless old man. The penalty was never carried out, but it scared the "s**t" out of the youth. Shortly after that, corporal punishment was banned in Canada.

Bennett was also a former district commissioner of Scouts Canada and volunteer governor / chairman of the Hamilton Division of the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires.

A memorial service was held at *HMCS STAR* on Saturday December 2, 2006. During the eulogy, one of "Buck's" old friends, Ron Joyce, (Tim Hortons) spoke of their relationship. They met at *HMCS STAR* before Ron Joyce retired from the navy. When he decided to enter the business world through a Dairy Queen franchise, he asked "Buck" to be his legal adviser. The Dairy Queen business proved profitable, so Ron decided to branch out in 1964 by purchasing a donut business that was failing. It was called "Tim and Jim's Donuts". Tim Horton was a part owner. There were so many liens against the property that "Buck" advised against the purchase. As "Buck" related the story, he said, "He wouldn't touch it with a ten foot pole". However, Ron ignored the advice and purchased the property anyway because he wanted the rights to Tim Horton's name. The rest, as they say, is history.

Known for his droll sense of humour, "Buck" would always chuckle when he told that story. And for all of his accomplishments, it is probably for his sense of humour, his story telling and his community involvement that we will remember him.

Editor

RENDEZVOUS OTTAWA – 2006

Scotch gets better with age. So do UNTDs with respect to reunions. The “Dine the Ladies” evening in Ottawa last October was proof of this. The large attendance filled the Railway Committee Room in the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings.

Bob Duncombe and his committee; Bill Rompkey, Peter Milsom, Bob Wootton, W. Grant Thompson, and Jim Maxwell, started the evening with a reception in the Senate Foyer and musical entertainment was provided by the Band of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps - Falkland

Before dinner, Up Spirits with pusser rum gave the Ladies (not to mention their escorts) the opportunity to participate in the serving of a tot. The Prime Rib of Beef au jus dinner was fit for the Queen. Mess dinner protocol was the order of the day, calling for Port wine & “Tall Tales”.

The Hon. Bill Rompkey, Lt. RCNR (Ret'd) spoke humorously, informatively and eloquently starting with his recollections of WWII in Newfoundland. He made us feel proud to be Canadian.

Bob Wootton led a sing-a-long in the Reading Room following dinner. WOW, what an evening!

Bob Morris (UNT D Guelph OAC)

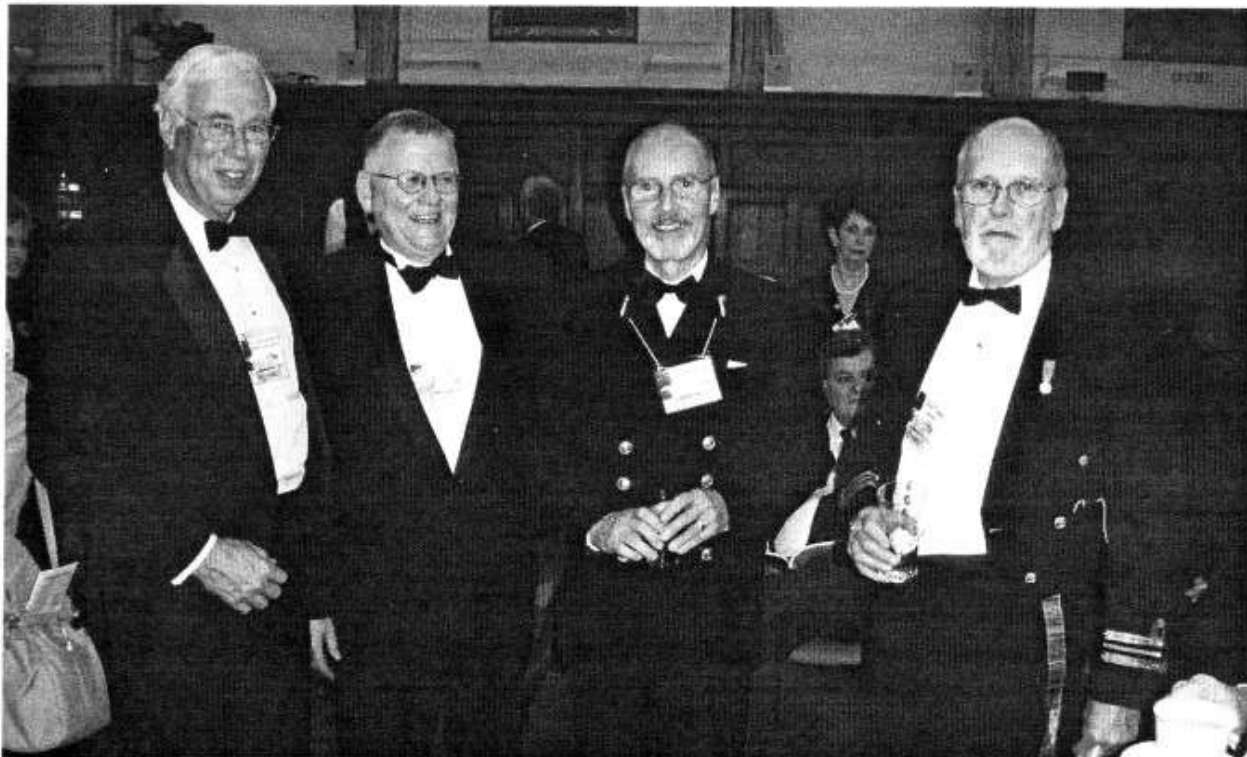
ROMPKEY'S DINNER SPEECH

An Edited Version

My name is Bill Rompkey (UNT D 1955) and I am an Old Oar. Let me explain the origins of the Ottawa Old Oars.

It all began at the home of Grant Thompson, former Chief of Gastroenterology and Assistant Dean of the Medical School at Ottawa University. He impressed Jim Maxwell and me with his compilation of UNTD movies and slides about shipboard life set to martial music. The audio-visuals, which you will see later in the Reading Room, are superb and got us thinking about a reunion work party of old oars. Thus Grant became the “**Doct'oar**” and Jim, Director of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, became the “**Geograph'oar**” while I became the “**Senat'oar**”. We got Bob Duncombe involved with organizing a mess dinner and he became, wait for it! – “**Bobby'oar**”. Later, Bob Wootton joined us with his knowledge of naval lore and compiled our unique UNTD songbook which you will receive later. He became our sturdy “**Woodon'oar**”. Later still, Peter Milsom, former DND Executive, brought his management skills to the group and became “**Pete'oar**”.

Photo Caption. Guests gathered for a sing-along after dinner. L. to R. are former UNTD cadets: – Brook Campbell, Vancouver, Bob Duncombe, Ottawa, Wynn Downing, London, and Gus Fraser, Ottawa. Photo by Grant Thompson



So tonight we have an opportunity to remember and share memories with mates from one of the great times of our lives. Recall the Parade Square, the Obstacle Course, the Gunroom, the Dockyard, and Barrington Street. Remember the Duty Watch, Cleaning Stations, Salt Spray over the Foc'sle, the White Ensign and the White Twist. For all of us, the UNTD was a new experience and the adventure of a lifetime.

For those of us from Newfoundland, it was special. I had grown up in the seaport of St. John's during World War II and experienced the convoys that formed there before heading across the Atlantic. By day we could hear the horns of the ships entering or leaving harbour, while at night the sirens would wail and the city was completely darkened. Our fathers put on their armbands and their tin helmets and took their stirrup pumps to practice with the Air Raid Patrol. At school we made ditty bags for the men at sea. We filled them with cigarettes, razor blades, life savers, a sewing kit, stamps, chewing gum and whatever a sailor could use –knitted caps, mitts or a wool scarf to keep out the chill of the North Atlantic.

So we were no strangers to the Navy. When we joined the UNTD in 1955 and were sent to Stad in Halifax, we had only been Canadians for six years. Now most of us were meeting other Canadians for the first time. "My God", we said, "they're just like us, except they have these funny accents. We can't understand a word they say". Now you know that first year at Stad, they put us on HMCS Quebec for a training cruise. We had joined the navy to see the world and the Navy sent us to Argentina, Newfoundland.

In our second year we knew that in the navy, we had chosen something very special. To get to Naden, we had to travel Canada from coast to coast. We went from the Maritimes to the sound of Mount Royal's Chimes, past Ontario's towers and Great Lake waters. We crossed the green fields of Saskatchewan to the Alberta highlands, then climbed up the clouds where the wild Rockies soar and followed the sun to the Vancouver shore. We learned that we were guarding a vast rugged land from sea to sea and knew that we were the envy of our buddies in the COTC and URTP. The mosaic of this new country caused a seismic shift in our psyches. We were still Newfoundlanders and would always be. In the gunroom mess it was our

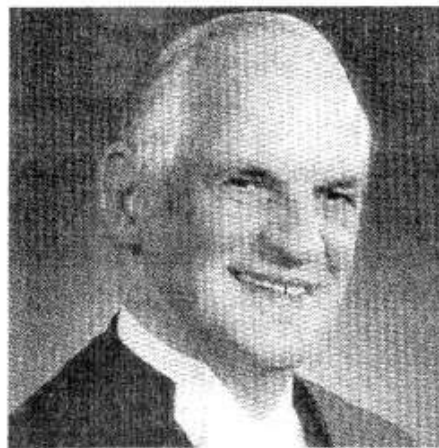
Newfoundland songs and joie de vivre that got the evenings around the piano started. But the UNTD added a dimension to our lives. It added a breadth to our outlook and lengths to our reach. In the UNTD we became Canadians.

Of course the UNTD changed all of us, from all parts of the country. After seeing Canada, touching Canada, feeling Canada, we would never be the same. With the discipline, pride and outlook we discovered in the Navy, we would go on to serve the country in our own ways as authors and broadcasters, entrepreneurs and doctors, judges and CEOs, engineers and lawyers, professors and presidents, politicians and so much more. And thereafter, wherever we travelled in Canada, we would encounter mates with whom we shared a common bond and a common sense of country. The Navy helped us to be full Canadians. We learned from Canada and we gave back to her each in our own way.

So tonight we celebrate that common bond and that common experience that changed our lives immeasurably. In the words of Canon Bill Thomas (UNTD Western U. in London), "We learned the rules of life, the rules to keep and the rules to break as well as the consequences". And there is no finer summation of what the UNTD meant to all of us than the words of Peter C. Newman, (UNTD University of Toronto). In his own inimitable way he described our summer training as, "a few shining seasons in the youth of our lives." Ladies and gentlemen, we are here to celebrate those shining seasons.

Edited from a submission by Bob Duncombe

OBITUARY



Doug Latimer, UNTD U.of T., a former member of the UNTD Board of Directors passed away Feb. 8, 2007. See <http://www.unttd.org/> for details

SHIPYARD CADET - PART II

In the last issue of the UNTD Newsletter, Shipyard Cadet, Bob Middlemiss, was sent on board Hull # 257, Restigouche, for sea trials.

I was assigned a bunk and given a pillow, sheet and blanket for the sea trials of *Restigouche*. I was in with some hard-nosed yard workers whose temperaments were mellowed by the fact that they were being paid 24 hours per day. We earned even while we slept. Some skilled men came ashore with over \$5,000 in 1958 dollars.

My assignment was twin condenser pumps in the engine room; my task was to tell somebody if they ran hot. Other than that, I sat on the vibrating catwalk and read a paperback book. Came the day – a hot bearing for sure, its heat building. I got the Vickers engineer. I interrupted his lunch. We headed down into the engine room where his experienced hands caressed flanges and bearings. He shook his head and said, "Better safe than sorry". Had I interrupted his lunch for nothing? He never said a word about that. I thought the world of him.

We were all sweating as we heaved on the pulley ropes, lifting the casing off one of the main turbines. Engineers checked the blades. The casing was lowered back into place. We were missing one bolt. Up came the casing again, sweat pouring from us. No bolt was found. A bolt would have torn up the rotor blades, which now shone in the artificial light like Swiss watch workings.

Later, off watch, I stood on the bridge as *Restigouche* went through her high speed maneuvering trials, feeling the wind and vibration, and looking back at the hot wafting funnel, and beyond that, the huge curving wake as she heeled over, her twin rudders digging in.

I was not there for her final sea trials. I had left to attend university. Consequently I missed the collision between *Restigouche* and a British freighter south of Luzon. As is sometimes the way of the sea, the woman who had launched *Restigouche* was killed that same day in a car accident.

My future was not to be in marine engineering although my shipyard experience did open another door. During lunch time I taught English to the new Canadian workers in the yard. A very astute foreman said to me, "You're in the wrong

line of work, son". I never forgot that. When money was bequeathed to me, I left the shipyard and registered in a university public library program with the idea of accomplishing some social good.

While I was working on my marine engineering program at Vickers, I attempted to join the UNTD but I was a square peg. As a freshman at Sir George Williams University, I returned to HMCS Donnacona and this time became a probationary UNTD cadet. My experience in the shipyard must have served some good because I was selected as the best first year cadet for my home division in 1960.

I have had no connection with the UNTD all these years except in my remembrances. I went on the web out of pure whimsy and what a reward I got when I discovered the UNTD site! I am more grateful than I can say for the help of Chaplain Bill Thomas (Webmaster) who encouraged me to join the association. It appears that the road not travelled in the 1960s has curved around on me and I am drawn to it by all those wonderful memories I shared with other former UNTD cadets.

Bob Middlemiss U-823

Editor's Note

York University hired Bob Middlemiss as a library administrator in 1964 after he completed a postgraduate program in library and information science at McGill University. He immigrated to the United States and became an Assistant Professor at Indiana State University Graduate School in 1970. From there he moved into adult education and adult literacy, conducting workshops in English as a Second Language for the next thirty years. With these workshops his professional life had come full circle to his lunch time English classes in the shipyard.

Bob Middlemiss particularly enjoys conducting classes in creative writing and continues to do so even in retirement. He encourages retirees to document their personal histories for their families, especially their grandchildren. He finds this activity very rewarding.

He has published several books himself with good reviews in the New York Times and Publishers Weekly. His latest novel, A Common Glory, is an historical romance set in the segregated Deep South of 1941 where RAF pilots learned to fly with the USAAF.

He now resides at 1091 Cheney Place SW, Marietta, Georgia, 30064 USA with his second wife, Beth. Email: eyeballbooks@aol.com

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Dave Freeman

Dave joined the UNTD in HMCS NONSUCH in September 1960. Like a number of former UNTDs, he went on to enjoy a significant military career and now in retirement has become a published author. In his first summer of UNTD training he was a member of Micmac Division at CORNWALLIS. He took a year off and re-joined at DISCOVERY in September 1962. In his third summer at CORNWALLIS in 1964, he was appointed Senior Cadet Captain of the third year cadets in Mackenzie Division.

Promoted to A/S/LT. in the fall of 1964, he joined HMCS Discovery. In 1966 he was promoted to Lieutenant and in 1967 transferred to the RCN as an Instructor Officer. After being appointed Senior Divisional Training Instructor in Fleet School at Halifax, he enjoyed a number of appointments, ending with a six year term as a senior staff officer in Training System HQ in Trenton. He was then posted to Toronto as Personnel & Training Officer for the Tribal class Update and Modernization Program (TRUMP).

He worked on the TRUMP Program until the navy retired him in 1996. Then he started writing his first book, "Canadian Warship Names", which came out in 2000. He is now working on three more books, all about the RCN, the most interesting one being, "Badges of Distinction" a sequel to the Navy's "Gunshield Graffiti" printed in 1984. This will be a collection of over 500 unofficial badges and insignia used by HMC Ships from 1910 to 1948 when the official, circular frame badges started being issued.

He is a volunteer at the Naval & Military Museum in CFB Esquimalt and a member of NOA Vancouver Island. He can be reached at djfreeman@shaw.ca

Editor

MICMAC DIVISION PHOTO Page 3

Front Row: J. McLeod, M. Colls, R. Sutherland, J. Rogerson.

2nd Row: Heath, Potter, Ramjit, Perlstrom, E. DeBecker.

Middle Ends: **Bill Farrow**, Martin, Wang, Collins, Redfern.

3rd Row: C. Cigal, B. Creighton, L. Archer

Top Row: -(?)-, Sproule, Thom, -(?)-, Perry, -(?), Levy, -(?)-, Mallory, Swan.

Photo courtesy of Bill Farrow

GET ABOARD

THE UNTD DINE-THE-LADIES LUNCHEON CRUISE

**Sail on the Hamilton Harbour
Queen and see the largest
natural harbour on the Great
Lakes.**

Visit <http://www.hamiltonharbourcruises.com>

Date: Thursday, June 7,

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Tariff: \$50.00 per person

Includes:

**Cruise, commentator, lunch,
non-alcoholic drink, tax, and
gratuity.**

Cash Bar available.

**Extended activity could include a visit to the
Marine Discovery Centre and HMCS Haida**

Deadline for registration – May 25, 2007

**Contact Wm. C. Thomas, 7 Hilltop Place,
Dundas, ON. L9H 3Y5**

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Newsletter twice a year. Send letters, anecdotes,
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ON. L9A 4R2; Phone (905) 383-6084 or
e-mail <williamson@mountaincable.net>**

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Printed by PRINT SOLUTIONS, Hamilton, ON.
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