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Llewellyn, April 12, 1950

AN UNFORGETTABLE PASSAGE

Al Hutchings (inset), a 1950 UNTD cadet from Sunnyside, Newfoundland, had an unforgettable passage in HMCS Revelstoke after a period of Continuous Naval Duty in Halifax. Al thought he could hitch a free ride home when HMCS Revelstoke was sent to St. John's Newfoundland after an August 1952 refit in Halifax. Revelstoke was built as a wooden minesweeper for port security in 1944. Sister ship, HMCS Llewellyn is shown here.

(Feature story inside).

Photo credit: Ships of Canada's Naval Forces 1910-1981.

AN UNFORGETTABLE UNTD PASSAGE

By Al Hutchings

At the head of the foggy isthmus that connects the Avalon Peninsula to the rest of Newfoundland is a place with the ambiguous name of Sunnyside. Facetiously, one of its claims to fame is being the birthplace of Al Hutchings and the community where he spent the first seventeen years of his life. He left for Nova Scotia in 1949 to attend Acadia University. There he joined the University Naval Training Division (UNTD) and his wonderful life adventures began. Although attached to HMCS Scotian, the division did their naval drills at the university on Wednesday nights.

His first summer of training was in 1950 at HMCS Stadacona and in the frigate HMCS La Hullose. The second summer was spent at HMCS Naden in the Supply School, followed by a training cruise to Hawaii in the destroyer HMCS Crusader. Upon his return, the cruiser, HMCS Ontario, provided passage for many of the East Coast cadets from Victoria to Halifax via the Panama Canal

By the end of the summer of 1951, he had completed two years of university and two years of UNTD training. He must have been having a good time because he discovered that he did not have sufficient funds to continue his studies that fall and applied for one year of Continuous Naval Duty (CND). He was only the second UNTD cadet ever permitted to do so. He served as one of two principle secretaries to Commodore H.F. Pullen, commander of the naval base, HMCS Stadacona, in Halifax. It was one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of his life and a story in itself.

In June of 1952, he was granted leave to visit his home in Newfoundland. At about that time, a wooden minesweeper, HMCS Revelstoke, had just come out of refit and was on her way to St. John's Newfoundland for use as a naval tender. (Revelstoke was one of ten wooden sweepers built between 1942 and 1944. She was employed on the West Coast until December 1945, then sent to Halifax to join sister ships HMCS Llewellyn and Lloyd George. She was paid off in October 1953 and transferred to the Department of Indian Affairs.) Seizing the moment, Al requested permission to take passage home in Revelstoke as a supernumerary member of the crew. Thus his unforgettable experience began and his account of that follows.

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Revelstoke had just come out of drydock and so the first requirement was to proceed to the middle of the

harbour and swing the compass to ensure that the necessary corrections were made for accurate navigation. When that was done, we set sail. It was Friday evening and the trip was expected to last about two and a half days.

The Captain was LCDR C.A. Binmore and the Executive Officer, LT. Knight, - both RCN officers. The Navigating Officer, LT. O'Grady, was a reservist from *HMCS Cabot* in St. John's.

Everything was going well. The weather was great with a fairly quiet sea. However, early Monday morning upon approaching the south coast of Newfoundland, heavy fog set in. Lacking sophisticated navigational devices, we were unsure of our exact position. As the day wore on, the fog burned off. We could see land but were unable to identify any landmarks in what we believed was Placentia Bay. After a while, we saw a fishing vessel and decided to pass at slow speed within hailing distance. There was some discussion as to what we might say. I suggested that we ask, "Where are we?" That of course was rejected as unprofessional and too embarrassing. A brilliant compromise was decided upon and someone shouted. "Where are you from?" "Robert's Arm," came the reply.

Great! We all rushed to the chart but could find no such place. The closest facsimile was Bay Roberts, away around the north side of the Avalon Peninsula in Conception Bay.

Following the shoreline we eventually got a navigational fix in Placentia Bay, almost within spitting distance of my home at Sunnyside. We came about and headed southeast across St. Mary's Bay, intending to round Cape Race and head north to St. John's.

At about 1300 hours in the middle of St. Mary's Bay we suddenly realized that the ship was rapidly taking on water. This was most alarming and if the source of the flooding was not found quickly, we would be in danger of sinking. An SOS was sent off, then the Captain left command of the ship in my hands as he and the other officers went in search of the problem. I thought, "Oh great! My first command and it's sinking."

A number of "lost at sea" scenarios passed through my mind. What would the news headlines say? Would I ever be found and how would I be remembered? My macabre musing came to an end with a jolting realization. My wallet with \$120.00 in it was in my cabin, one deck below. "What price my free passage to St. John's now?"

After what seemed like an eternity, the captain returned to the bridge and I was gratified to find out that everything was under control. Around noon a pump in the engine room had been turned on to pump the bilge. It was discovered that while in refit, the bilge pump connection had been reversed and instead of pumping water out of the ship, the pump was pumping water into the ship! The pump was turned off. “Phew! Troubles over. – Not quite.”

There was still a matter of the SOS transmission. Cancelling it was not so easy. The RCAF had been alerted and was sending out a search and rescue plane. By the time the plane arrived, we had reached the nearest point of land and secured to a fishing wharf. The aircraft tried to send a message to us by signal lamp using Morse code. However, we were unable to read their message. Whether that was due to their sending or our receiving I do not know. Sensing our communication dilemma, the pilot placed a message in a canister and flying low over our ship, dropped it within reach. Well almost! The canister knocked out our antenna and disappeared overboard. Now we were without a radio transmitter. Consequently the captain went ashore to find a telephone to reach Search and Rescue Operations in St. John’s. When everything was cleared up, we got underway again and arrived in St. John’s early the next morning.

Word of the SOS had got around and we received a typical Newfoundland welcome. It was “Up spirits” in celebration of our safe arrival. As for me, I collected my wallet containing the \$120.00 and headed off up island to regale the home folks in Sunnyside with my UNTD story of an unforgettable passage.

Al Hutchings was promoted to Acting Sub-Lieutenant on Sep. 1, 1952, Lieutenant on Sep. 1954 and LCDR in 1965. His last two periods of active duty were in the summers of 1962 – 1963 at Naval Headquarters. He began teaching in 1955. After teaching Business for 28 years in Orillia he retired in 1986. He lives at 233 Lawrence Ave., Orillia, L3V 5M3.

His closing comments to this story were in appreciation of the UNTD Association and the Newsletter for “keeping UNTDs informed and keeping us together”.

There are many more stories out there like the one Al Hutchings has submitted. It is hoped that his efforts will inspire more members to write down their once-in-a-lifetime experiences before it is too late. We are all that is left of a one-of-a-kind naval training program called the University Naval Training Division.

Editor.



L. to R.: R. Levy, Eric Kipping, Joe Duffy, Al Hutchings and Bill Langstroth met on HMCS Sackville for a UNTD Reunion in 1985. All but Levy trained together as UNTD cadets at HMCS Stadacona in 1950.

18TH UNTD ANNUAL DINNER

Another fine Reunion Dinner at the Canadian Forces Staff College has gone into the record book. It was a “dine the ladies” function and members came from far and wide – Vancouver, Ottawa and Kingston to name a few cities. Not only was the setting and food of high caliber but the speaker, Fraser McKee, was also top drawer.

Commander Fraser M. McKee, CD, was born and educated in Toronto. He joined the RCNVR as an Ordinary Seaman and was commissioned a year later in 1944. He remained in the Naval Reserves until 1975, becoming an anti-submarine warfare specialist. He spent most of his career in the communications industry. He is the author of a new publication, **Sink All The Shipping There**, sixty accounts of Merchant ship sinkings. Three previous books written by Fraser McKee are, **The Reserves**, **The Armed Yachts** and **HMCS Swansea**.

Since Fraser had served on the armed yacht *HMCS Vison* when it was attached as a training vessel to *HMCS Cornwallis* during the war, he was asked to speak on the unique subject of armed yachts. He accedes that armed yachts are so typically Canadian because we don’t like preparing for war.

In 1939, the Canadian Navy was seriously under equipped. Sixteen instant patrol vessels were needed to fill the gap before corvettes and other warships could be built. The first Canadian corvette was not commissioned until November 1, 1940.

The navy was so desperate for ships that two naval officers in civilian clothes were sent to the neutral United States to scout American marinas for useful yachts. It was a secret mission because American yachts had to be purchased without contravening neutrality regulations. The government circumvented the problem by requisitioning Canadian yachts, regardless of how inadequate they were. The Canadian owners were then directed to replace those requisitioned vessels by purchasing pre-selected American yachts in the United States. The government then returned the Canadian yachts and requisitioned the larger American vessels. The whole clandestine operation was so secret and mysterious that one businessman's wife thought he was having an affair.

The names of the yachts had to be changed to hide their origin. All but two were named after native animals and so became known as the Animal Class Yachts. They were all armed with a 3-inch gun manufactured by Massey Harris of farm equipment fame. They also carried depth charges that could be dropped from stern chutes.

They achieved no victories and two were lost during the war - *HMCS Otter* by fire off Halifax and *HMCS Raccoon* by torpedo from *U-165* in the St. Lawrence. The majority of the vessels were scrapped after the war but a few were transferred to commercial ventures such as ferries, tour boats and restaurants.

The names of some of the yachts - *Beaver*, *Wolf*, *Reindeer*, *Cougar* and *Moose* were commemorated by transferring them to Fairmile motor launches that were assigned to the Great Lakes Naval Reserve Divisions in the 1950s.

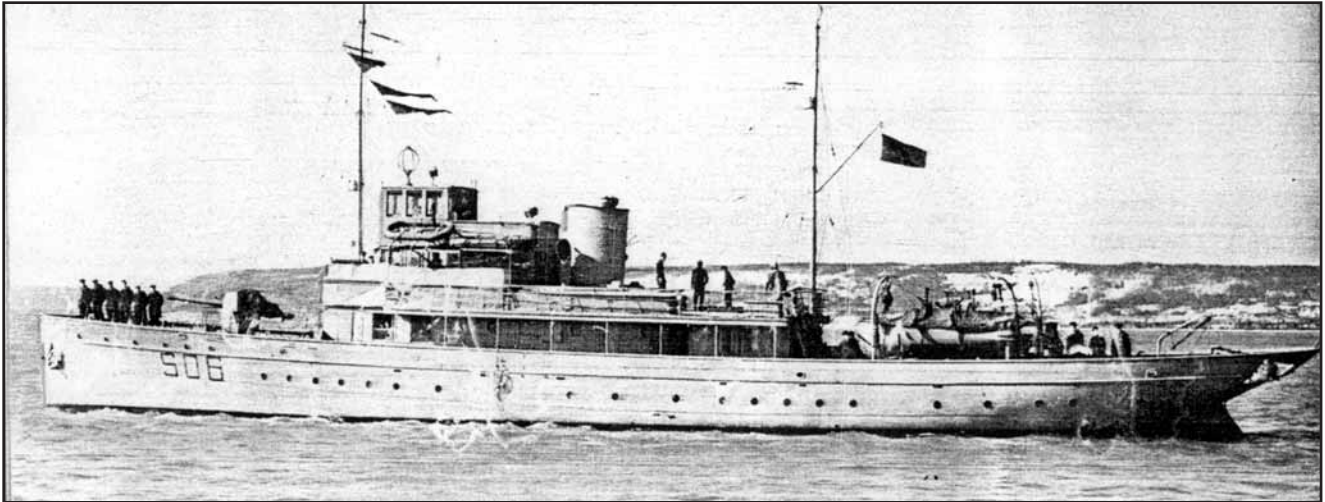
Editor.



Left: Fraser McKee, Guest Speaker, in animated conversation with Newsletter Editor, Bob Williamson after the 18th Annual UNTD Dinner.



Below: Guests enjoy the conversation and port wine. Left side: John & Sharon Bate, David & Libby Bate, Laura & Bob Morris. Right side: Catharine & Derek Bate, Bill & Jane Milne, Bill & Carol Farrell.



Armed yacht, HMCS Husky saw service at Halifax & Cornwallis. Sold into mercantile service in 1946, she

Photo: Ships of Canada's Naval Forces 1910-1981 became a sport diving tender in Honduran waters and a floating restaurant in New Orleans.

UNTD Rendezvous OTTAWA 2005

By Bob Duncombe

An Idea Is Born

During the late winter of 2005, Ottawa residents and former UNTD Cadets, Grant Thompson, Bill Rompkey and Jim Maxwell were meeting and remembering their UNTD training of 50 years ago. After all those years of being educated and earning a living, Grant had now found time to sort his picture memories and was developing a UNTD DVD.

UNTD Cadet/author Peter C. Newman has described UNTD training as, "a few shining seasons in the youth of our lives". In the spirit of that description the three former cadets conceived an idea to try and organize a Mess Dinner for former UNTDs in the Ottawa area to recall those shining seasons.

In the period 1987 – 1990, annual UNTD Dine the Ladies events (but not Mess Dinners) had been held in Ottawa, including two in the Centre Block on Parliament Hill. They used to attract 40 people. 1990 is not that long ago, but it was certainly a time before any of us had heard of email addresses. Because I had helped organize the 1987 – 1990 affairs, I was contacted by the trio to find out if I had kept a list of names and snail mail addresses.

Two other interested former UNTDs volunteered to help: Peter C. (Chip) Milsom and Bob Wootton (Bob had attended the dinners in Ottawa 15+ years ago). An organizational meeting was held overlooking the historic Ottawa River at Grant's home on a warm evening in early June. Ideas were tossed about. Decisions were made rapidly. The upshot was to agree

to organize a Mess Dinner for Saturday, October 29th. We agreed to place the Dinner in the larger context of a reunion and call it "UNTD Rendezvous Ottawa 2005" and to include as many former cadets as we could reasonably find from St. John's to Victoria.

Because 1957 Cadet Captain/Senator Bill Rompkey was the Deputy Leader of the Liberal government in the Senate, he readily offered to make the large, two story neo-gothic Senate Foyer available for a 90 minute pre-Dinner Reception. The House of Commons officials also agreed to make available the historic Railway Committee Room off the Hall of Honour in the centre of the Centre Block for the Mess Dinner. Bill also offered to arrange that a grand piano be available: an interesting, if small detail, in June -- but a big one on October 29th!

From June to October two big tasks were undertaken. Firstly, the 1990 mailing list had to be up-dated from the 1993, 2000 and 2004 UNTD Association of Canada's nominal lists and the Ottawa NOAC membership list. Secondly, Jim Maxwell started preparing and costing a menu with a local caterer that fortunately specialized in military Mess Dinners. Then there was menu printing to be done and an overall program to be developed and printed and marketed to the snail mail and email addresses across Canada.

The Reception

By mid October we knew that the number attending the Rendezvous would probably reach 65 - sixty-five former cadets who, for the most part, had not met many of the other cadets at the reception for 40 to 55 years. So the decision to hold a 90-minute reception was a wise one. People had time to mix and mingle – and to

look at Grant Thompson's DVD and Bob Wootton's slide show. Bob had also arranged for the band of RCSCC Falkland to greet everyone as they opened the great oak doors to the Senate entry level, below the grand staircase to the Senate Foyer. The welcoming naval music near the sign-in and "badging" desk created a great first impression of energy and organization.

Chip Milsom brought along his own proper and polished rum puncheon and when "Up Spirits" was piped, he invited all to a tot of rum, poured in front of, and below, the official portrait of Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Canada, commissioned for the Golden Jubilee in 2002. HM was keeping an eye on the pouring of the tots by Chip and UNTD Cadet/NOAC Executive Director Bob Nixon!

At 2000 the band played the dinner guests down the hall to the Railway Committee Room to the strains of *Heart of Oak*. (The band knew how to eat a lot of pizza but it had never heard of *Roast Beef of Old England!*)

The Mess Dinner

Mess Dinner President Bob Duncombe escorted Dinner Speaker, UNTD Cadet (1957-1960)/Minister of National Defence Bill Graham, to the head table under the well-recognized portrait of the Fathers of Confederation at the 1864 Charlottetown Conference. They kept an eye on the Mess Dinner etiquette! The three vice presidents, Shawn Gill, John Derbyshire and Chip Milsom took their seats after the other UNTDs had found their place names. All sat down while being formally welcomed and the rules of the Dinner briefly stated. Then all were invited to rise and start the Dinner by singing lustily, *The Song of the UNTD* per the words in the menu folder.

The Mess Dinner continued apace for three hours of wide-ranging and very active, quick repartee. Bill Graham made a brief speech recalling his UNTD training. He described how it had helped to shape his character and provide him with a good understanding of the rules of life to be followed in a UNTD divisional or political party context.

At the end of the Dinner, 65 UNTDs stood together at the E shaped table and sang lustily, *Heart of Oak*. Attendees came from Ottawa for the most part, plus St. John's NL, Vancouver and Victoria, B.C. and 8 from the Toronto-Hamilton region. In 1985-1987 the Naval Reserve officer cadets were identified as UNTDs and 6 of them attended and sat together at the Midships table, one of their own, LCDR John Derbyshire, serving as Midships' Vice. Everyone who attended was an

interesting person including UNTD Cadet/Governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge.

The After Dinner Gunroom Sing Along

It was 2315 and the Dinner had been gaveled to an end when Bill Rompkey moved quickly from his seat at the head table to his seat at the grand piano, which he had ordered in June. He rapidly dressed down to rolled up shirtsleeves. Loosening his tie he started to play, *The North Atlantic Squadron*. The caterer set up a beer bar. And the Mess Dinner morphed into a 1.5 hour Gunroom sing along of "Newf", Nova Scotia and Quebec folk songs and very raunchy/bawdy Navy ditties. The song sheets were printed off the internet, including 33 verses of *The North Atlantic Squadron* and *Balls to your Partner*. Bill stayed at the keyboard and played by ear the entire 90 minutes, taking time out only to swig beer placed for him on the piano. We did get to the great anthems such as *Rule Britannia* but not to the great hymns such as *Amazing Grace*. The hour was late. The 0100 bell boomed out from the clock on the Peace Tower. Time to call it a night.

A le prochain – until next time.

Post Script

UNTDs in urban centres across Canada should start now, in 2006, to look ahead to 2010, the centennial of the Naval Service Act, a Navy Blue year. A Naval Centennial Project Management office has been established in NDHQ. A Board of Directors was named last year. Navy Captain K.J. Pickford is on the job with a staff. Planning is under way. Event space and accommodation are being booked in Halifax and Victoria.

In anticipation of a UNTD National Reunion, I urge UNTDs in other cities to organize something locally before 2010. A start must be made now in updating or gathering local names and email addresses in preparation for "the biggest one" (and maybe "the last one") in 2010. Hopefully the UNTD Association of Canada will initiate planning on either the Atlantic or Pacific coasts, or on both coasts in different months. It is very much worth the time and effort. The email feedback on UNTD Rendezvous Ottawa 2005 put a big smile on the faces of the six organizers, believe me.

Editor's note: Bob Duncombe, U-22115, spent his first summer in the UNTD in 1956 and was sent on Cruise Alfa to London, England. A former Commanding Officer of HMCS Carlton, he attained the rank of Captain (N) in the Naval Reserve. He is a very active member of the UNTD Association of Canada and NOAC. He tries to attend every dinner and reunion.

UNTD AGM

LOCATION

TORONTO NAVAL CLUB

14 Hayden Street (Yonge & Bloor)

THURSDAY MARCH 23, 2006

CASH BAR 1700

DINNER 1800

MEETING 1930

TOPICS

Election of Directors

Plans for:

UNTD Dinner Nov. 2006

Quebec 2008 NOAC / UNTD

Navy Centennial 2010

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

March 16, 2005

Dear Editor,

Tremendous publicity for the NOAC AGM & Reunion in the last Newsletter. Well done! Also, it was a coup to get Bill Graham's photo as a UNTD cadet. His classmates, Rod Ives and Bill Shead were both former shipmates of mine.

Yours Aye,
Mike Cooper, (Past) National President
Naval Officers Association of Canada.

January 26, 2006

Dear Editor,

I have recently been appointed General Manager of the Alberta Naval Museum in Calgary. In my work of going through innumerable boxes of documents and artifacts, I came across the following *UNTD Song*.

As an "old" UNTD cadet (U 1905) and member of the UNTD Association, I thought you might be interested. It is quite possible that everyone but me is acquainted with the "piece" but I have not seen this version before. I felt that whomever wrote it certainly had a true appreciation of UNTD life in Stadacona, Halifax and our annual summer cruises.

Yours Aye,
Cal Annis cfa@telusplanet.net

A UNTD SONG

(Sung to the tune of Gaudiamus Agitur)

Here we are U-N-T-Ds,
Chipping rust upon our knees.
Red lead's thick on dungarees
Cause the Buffer must be pleased.
Miles of deck are still before us,
Join us in our mournful chorus.

CHORUS

I should never have come to sea!
Send me back to the lone prairie.

Pulling whalers just for fun,
Seems our sports are never done.
Doubling 'neath the setting sun,
Soon you find us all marked run.
The golden ring is still before us,
Come you Subbies join the chorus.

Foreign gals we hope to try,
But when the news comes drifting by,
Then we all so sadly cry,
Newfoundland and P.E.I.!
Bedford Basin lies before us,
Put real feeling in this chorus.

Harbour watches we all know,
Seeing buddies come and go.
Tuck them in their carts below
When they come back all aglow.
Many empties float before us
Burp and join us in our chorus.

Halifax has maidens fair.
But we don't find them anywhere.
Semis come with cash to spare.
Girls appear from everywhere.
Victoria General looms before us,
Light your lamp and join the chorus.

Friday morning spit and shine
For divisions rain or shine.
All the weekend now is mine
With that girl from Digby Pines.
Miles of open road before us,
Back to STAD and join the chorus.

Pigeons polish Bomarc brass,
Pongos crawl through swampy grass,
But the navy sails in class,
In Cadillacs o'er seas of glass.
See the waves all leave before us,
Grab the rail and join the chorus.

CHORUS

I am glad that I came to sea
From my home on the lone prairie.

Anon.

The UNTD Association of Canada publishes this Newsletter twice a year. Send letters, anecdotes, or suggestions to Newsletter Editor: CDR Robert Williamson, 1 Clonmore Ave., Hamilton, ON. L9A 4R2; Phone (905) 383-6084 or e-mail cdrbob@worldchat.com

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<http://www.untld.org/>

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