



THE NEWSLETTER

Of The UNTD Association of Upper Canada



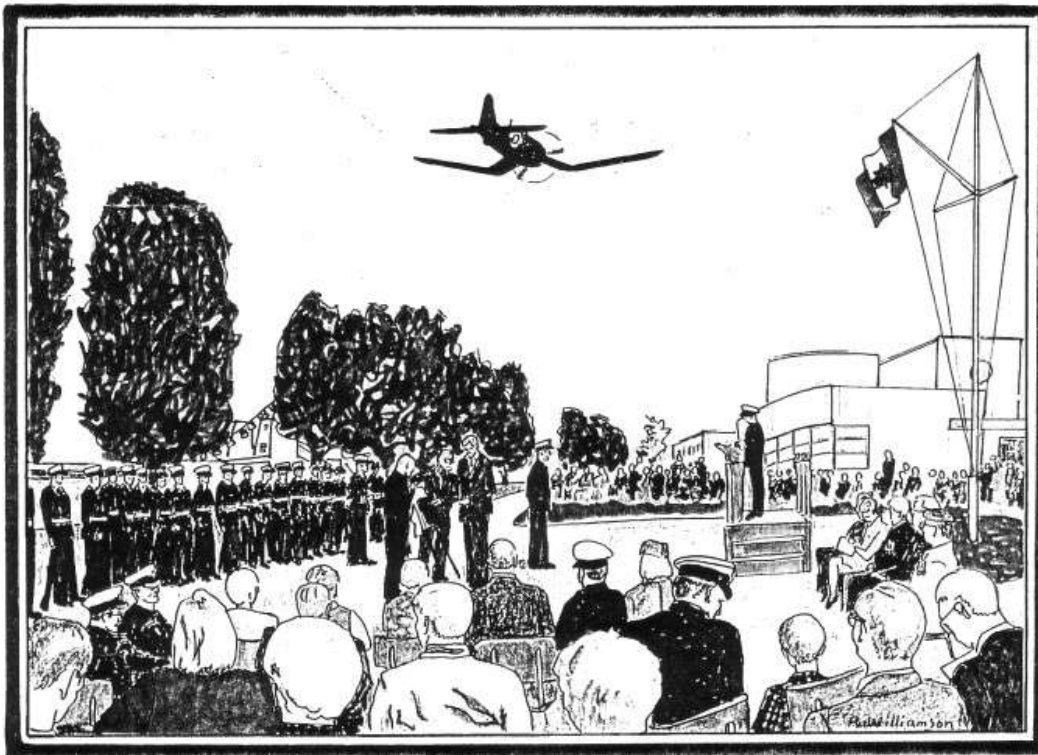
SPRING EDITION

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EDITOR Robert Williamson

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H.M.C.S. STAR'S DEDICATION CEREMONY



Painting by Cdr Robert Williamson

ONE OF THE OLDEST NAVAL RESERVE DIVISIONS IN CANADA BEGINS ANEW

The dedication of the new stone frigate, *HMCS Star*, on September 27, 1997 was presided over by the Minister of National Defence, Art Eggleton and Vice-Admiral Gary Garnett, CMM, CD, Vice-Chief of Defence Staff. Also participating were: Member of Parliament for Hamilton West, Stan Keyes; and Commodore Ray A. Zuliani, who was appointed Commander of the Naval Reserves on May 5, 1997. The ceremonies were enhanced by the presence of the Coastal Defence Vessel, *HMCS Shawinigan*, and culminated by a fly-past of the Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, VC, RCNVR Memorial Corsair from Canadian Warplane Heritage in Hamilton.

Cover Story Inside

STAR'S DEDICATION CEREMONY

All eyes looked upward as the distinctive whirl of a Pratt and Whitney radial engine purred above the Hamilton waterfront on September 27, 1997. A gull winged, navy blue fighter swooped towards the spectators, giving rise to a spontaneous goose bump thrill. Little did the crowd, assembled for the dedication ceremony of the new HMCS Star naval building, realize that they were witnessing the last public flight of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Chance Vought Corsair. As the Minister of National Defence, Art Eggleton and MP Stan Keyes, unveiled the official dedication plaque, Canada's only World War II naval fighter aircraft executed a perfectly co-ordinated low level, fly-past: a salute to the proud heritage of HMCS Star and its promising future. The naval air connection with HMCS Star is not just fortuitous. A Naval Reserve Air Arm was established there in 1946 and for several years thereafter a Swordfish and two Seafires were maintained on the ship's inventory.

Everyone, especially the out-of-town dignitaries were greatly impressed by the unique atmosphere created by the Corsair fly-by. But only a few were aware of the hidden significance of that flight. After the Canadian Government passed an Order in Council creating the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) on January 31, 1923, Hamilton was the second community (after Montreal), to form a Naval Reserve Half Company. A local barrister, Lieutenant Ralph Howard Yeates, was asked to form and command this new RCNVR division. Coincidentally, this fly-past recalled the distinguished military career of Lt. Yeates as one of Canada's first naval pilots in the Royal Navy Air Service in World War I.

Ironically, on the eve of the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the RCNVR, Canadian Warplane Heritage announced that the historic Corsair will no longer grace the skies over Canada. Dedicated as a memorial to Canada's only World War II Naval Victoria Cross recipient, Lt. Robert Hampton Gray, RCNVR, the aircraft has been sold to a United States broker for \$1,060,000.00. Consequently, one of the finest memorials to the RCNVR in Canada has been lost.

Less we forget why Robert Hampton Gray, RCNVR, is the only Canadian Navy Victoria Cross winner in World War II, here is a summary of his story, a piece of our heritage that can't be sold. Born in Trail, British Columbia, on November 2, 1917 to Scottish immigrant parents, he attended the University of British Columbia where he worked with Pierre Berton on the school yearbook. In 1940 he joined the RCNVR in Calgary and signed up for a Royal Navy officer training plan (there being no UNTD or other equivalent in Canada at the time). Once in England he transferred to the Fleet Air Arm and was promptly sent back to Canada for flight training at Kingston, Ontario as part of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. By November 1941, he was flying operations on Hurricanes and sent to Africa. After a spot of leave, he was returned to England in June 1944 for a conversion course on Corsairs.

Assigned to the aircraft carrier, *HMS Formidable*, he was soon making raids on the German fleet harbouring in Norwegian fiords. He was Mentioned in Dispatches for undaunted courage, skill and determination in carrying out his air to surface attacks. When *HMS Formidable* was transferred to the Pacific, he was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross for sinking a destroyer on July 28, 1945. He lost his life on August 9, 1945 while sinking another destroyer in Onagawa Bay. For repeated gallantry in the face of the enemy, he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

There were 200 Canadians serving in British Pacific Carriers in 1945. Another, Lt. Don Sheppard RCNVR, was Staff Officer in HMCS Star after the war. He had the distinction of being the only Canadian Corsair "Ace" and the first Fleet Air Arm pilot to accomplish this feat.

Robert Hampton Gray's story and Don Sheppard's success are a priceless part of our RCNVR history. It was thrilling to be reminded of this and the 75th Anniversary of the Naval Reserve at this auspicious dedication ceremony. A new building with a new MCDV along side and overhead, a flying memorial of a glorious heritage. What more could anyone ask for on opening day?

Editor

REUNION MESS DINNER Another Great Success

Hope you were there because the Reunion Mess Dinner (Dine Your Sweethearts) on November 15, 1997, was another great success. Former UNTiDies and their significant others, assembled from far and wide in the wardroom of HMCS York. The food was outstanding and served in a very professional manner. The theme of the dinner was support for the Haida, and guest speaker, Cdr. Robert Ashton Willson, CD, served as Captain of the naval museum, HMCS Haida at Ontario Place for the last ten years.

Willson joined the navy in 1951 as a UNTD Cadet at McMaster University. At the end of his first summer of training (1952) in HMCS Sioux, he transferred to Herbie Little's newly created Regular Officer Training Plan. In 1953 he was one of the first class of ten ROTP Cadets (Executive Branch) to train in HMCS Beacon Hill with UNTDs. By the end of 1953, he was a full-time midshipman in HMCS Ontario. He served in many ships, rising to command HMCS Annapolis 1975-77, but his talk was mostly about his first appointment as navigating Officer in HMCS Haida 1956-58. It was clearly a memorable experience and made his last

appointment to the Haida museum all the more poignant.

He remembered how he was kidded about his first passage plan to Bermuda. He was instructed to sail south 'til the butter melts, turn right and head for the point on the radar plot where all the aircraft disappear. During a cruise in the Baltic, one of the ship's characters, LCdr. Bunji Taylor, made a scrap book of samples of all the different toilet paper that they encountered. He noted that every sheet of Royal Navy Standard Issue Tissue was stamped for identification purposes. One page of the book even contained some tree leaves where tissue was scarce.

In 1958, off Newfoundland, at the height of a Russian submarine scare, Haida went to battle stations to attack an unidentified twin echo on the radar which was suspected to be a Russian sub doing a RAS (Replenishment At Sea). As the Haida, with a bone in her teeth, entered a fog bank, she almost collided with a twin peaked iceberg.

The C.O. of Haida, Cdr Beck, was a man with an exemplary naval record. But Willson remembered Beck's one eccentricity that caused him, as Nav. O., a lot of grief. While on the bridge, Beck, who constantly studied the charts, would take them off



Guest Speaker Cdr. Bob Willson shares a moment with Cdr. Herbie Little, post-war re-organizer of the UNTD, who was about to celebrate his 90th birthday.



Chairman of the Board, Gil Hutton flanked left and right by Norm Balfour and wife, Margaret; Conn Baker and wife, Ann, daughter of Admiral Debbie Piers.

the chart table, fold them up like a road map and carry them with him in his pocket. The chart depot was always most unhappy with Willson whenever he tried to return these badly folded and generally mangled charts.

Such were the stories told by Bob Willson. Today, he is serving as the President of the Ontario Navy League. If you would like to support the Navy League or Haida, you can reach Bob at 416 927-1496.

The Reunion Dinner attracted guests from far and wide. Cdr Herbie Little and Bob Duncombe were there from Ottawa, but the furthest of all were Murray Boles and Barrie de Veber. Both doctors, Boles with his wife came from Columbia, Missouri, while de Veber had just returned from a year in Riyadh, Arabia. Fellow diners were rocking in their chairs with laughter as they swapped funny stories about their intern days. Don't miss the next dinner.



Centre table guests at the Reunion Dinner are: from the left; Ruth (Baker) Wright, daughter of Capt. Jack Baker, Cdr Bob McRae, first CO UNTD U. of T., Cdr Herb Little, Hilda MacKinlay. From the right; Terry Doran's hand, Gordon Wright, Trg.O. UNTD O.A.C. Bob Duncombe, former CO Carlton & Ron MacKinlay, Program Chairman. In the background at the Head Table from the left; Cdr Larry Barwick, CO York, Doug Hain, President, Gil Hutton, Chairman of the Board, Bob Willson, Guest Speaker and Norma Kilgour.

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SPECIAL EVENTS FOR 1998

Your Board of Directors have planned another year of interesting events and opportunities to meet old friends and reminisce. With only three parties scheduled, mark them on your calendar and don't let any of them pass you by.

UNTIDy SUPER SPRING WEEPERS AND BBQ WARDROOM H.M.C.S. YORK

Friday May 8 from 1730

Wives, Friends and Significant Others are Welcome

FEATURING

AN EXCLUSIVE TOUR OF CABOT'S SHIP, THE MATTHEW

And

AN EVENING WITH MATTHEW'S FIRST MATE, TERRY NASH

Including a

**30 Minute Video of the Matthew's Construction
& Atlantic Crossing**

UNTIDy AUTUMN WEEPERS AND AGM H.M.C.S. HAIDA

Thursday Sept. 17 from 1730

FEATURING

CDR HERB LITTLE'S STORY

FROM

THE SEASONED SAILORS VIDEO SERIES

A Premier Showing

Only \$10.00 including sandwiches

UNTIDy REUNION MESS DINNER H.M.C.S. YORK

Saturday Nov. 21 from 1830

FEATURING

CAPTAIN(N) PETER C. NEWMAN

**Nationally Acclaimed Editor, Defence Critic, Historian
and former UNTD**

TIME TO PAY UP

The Treasurer for the UNTD Association of Upper Canada has been reporting a DEFICIT for the last several years; not much, but over time it adds up. The simple fact is that the Association pays out more than it collects in membership dues each year. Here are some options we may have to consider to balance our books.

Increase membership dues. This is a strategy that would not be necessary if all members paid their dues. It is also unfair, because it transfers the burden to regular paying members.

Remove unpaid members from the list to reduce mailing and newsletter costs. This defeats the purpose of the organization which is to keep in touch with as many former UNTDs as possible.

One of the major costs of the Association is the printing of a newsletter. Cancel the newsletter and maintain communication by flyers or bulletins only.

What is your opinion? None of the above suggestions would be necessary if everyone paid their fair share to help maintain the Association's activities. Membership Renewals have been sent out. You can give us your answer by paying your dues and lending us all the support that you can.

Editor

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The UNTD Association of Upper Canada was founded in 1989 to "promote among ex-UNTDs, a special bond & camaraderie". We now have members from Victoria, B.C. and California to St. John's, Nfld. and the United Kingdom.

Opinion seems to be evenly divided as to whether we should seek to do more in the Naval Community. In the past six months we have undertaken to give more help, financial and otherwise, to *HMCS Haida*. Enclosed you will find a notice which may be of interest to you for a 75th Anniversary Reunion Weekend in *HMCS York* on May 1-3, 1998. (Battle of the Atlantic).

Our 9th Annual UNTD Reunion dinner last November was, for only the second time, a Dine-the-Ladies function. It was a fabulous success, and these are not my words, but those of many in attendance who spoke to me afterward. The most common question of the 55 guests was "Why aren't there more people here?" Perhaps word-of-mouth enthusiasm will result in larger numbers in the future.

The Board of Directors and in particular, the Executive, have been unanimous in desiring that more of our functions in future be with spouses, and significant others.

As you may have otherwise been informed, our most important project now is the NATIONAL UNTD REUNION to be held in Victoria, B.C. in early July of the year 2,000. (This is only the one thousand nine hundred and ninety-ninth year of the Christian Era, but hardly anyone in the world seems to notice this so we will go along with the vast majority.)

Our next function will very probably be on Friday, May 8th 1998, consisting of a barbecue at *HMCS York*, preceded or followed by a visit to the replica of John Cabot's ship, the *MATTHEW OR* Plan B, a two hour sail in one of the Brigantines, *PATHFINDER / PLAYFAIR*. This will be with spouses and friends. Wear casual outdoor/weather gear. Details could not be finalized in time for the deadline of this Newsletter, but will be included in a separate notice when the newsletter is mailed during the first week of April.

Finally, Invoices for Membership Dues were mailed last week. PLEASE pay before you forget.

Yours aye,

Gil Hutton.

UNTD Star/McMaster, 1950

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Greetings from the East Coast. Many thanks for the Fall 1997 Newsletter. It is a vital link to the Association for those of us who are no longer resident in "Upper Canada".

I am able to keep an eye on the Navy from my cottage here on the Atlantic Ocean. The frigates exercise their Zodiacs here in Port Mouton Bay and the MCDVs come to the town of Liverpool for outfitting at the local marine shipyard.

A request. It would be helpful if in the next edition of the newsletter, you would include a list of the current directors with their addresses and phone numbers. It would be appreciated if you would pass on a request for a new Roster List. The last list was October 1991 and is now very out of date. This is important for those of us who do not live in the G. T. A.

I look forward to the Reunion on the West Coast in 2000. Please keep us informed of the plans so we can make arrangements. Thanks for the great job on the newsletter.

Charles Copelin, Past President
P.O. Box 127, Hunts Point,
Nova Scotia, B0T 1G0

I received the Fall Edition of your newsletter last week. It had a longer journey than most, travelling to Bermuda where I and my wife, Anne, lived for seven years, then forwarded to Halifax where we have now settled.

*I look forward to reading "UNTiDy Tales" during the chilly nights ahead. I think my blood has thinned out somewhat, but I have some Goslings Black Seal Rum, the nearest thing to Pussers in my "survival kit". If you run across that old reprobate, **Fred Lee**, give him my best regards and address. Last week I met up with **Pete Wilson**, formerly from Truro, who was in my division for two years and actually introduced me to Anne. He has retired from the faculty of Technical University of Nova Scotia, and we had a great sail in his C & C.*

Charlie Gun, Lt. RCN(R), Ret.
182 Spinnaker Drive, Halifax,
Nova Scotia, B3N 3C3

The Fall Edition of your UNTD Newsletter finally reached me when I visited Ottawa last year. We are now living in England for the foreseeable future and really enjoy it.

I was saddened to read about the demolition of the STAR building. It certainly holds many wonderful memories for me. Please give my best wishes to anyone at STAR who might remember me. The UNTD Newsletter subscription keeps me in touch with some of the most important days of my life.

J. Brian Ellis,
69 Charles Ave, Chilwell, Beeston,
Nottingham, England, NG9 5ED

"Spindrift, UNTiDy Tales" brought back a lot of memories. At least two cruises that I was on are outlined in detail. Also I had forgotten entirely about the civilian hats we had to wear in 1949 when mustering for "liberty boat". Some of us had straw fedoras which after being beer-stained and in some cases, sat-upon, made us look anything but officers and gentlemen. Fortunately the idea was seen to be counter-productive and was done away with rather quickly.

Don Kennedy,
1701-2170 Marine Dr.,
Oakville, ON. L6L 5V1

*I was a member of the UNTD in 1943-44 at the University of Toronto and remember very well spending the summer of '43 in Halifax. This meant leaving behind my wife and son of 3 months. Late in August I was drafted to **HMCS Quesnel**, a corvette on the triangle run to St. John's and Boston. We were in St. John's when the blackout was lifted.*

After graduation in June of '44 I became an Electrical Sub-Lieut. and spent the rest of the war in the signal school in St. Hyacinthe. After the war I had a career in the RCN as an instructor Officer. So I am looking forward to reading about those old days.

W. Bruce Arnold,
2 Joshua Court,
Brampton, ON. L6S 3W4

The UNTD Newsletter is accomplishing one of its important goals. It is collecting, preserving and relating the reminiscences of former officer cadets. The Editor is pleased to report that there has been a steady stream of books, letters, memoirs and diary notes arriving on the story desk during the past two years. Members have been encouraged to send in their stories, and slowly but surely they have responded. It seems that one published story generates an idea for another and increases the interest of our readers. It also increases interest in joining the Association. A number of membership applications have been requested along with extra copies of the newsletter.

The story "*Dream Cruise Becomes a Nightmare*" by Charlie Miller in the last newsletter, attracted a lot of interest including the following response.

Nov. 2, 1997

I recently read and enjoyed your "UNTiDy Tales" and the last edition of the UNTD Newsletter. I recognize many of the working and travelling experiences which we all enjoyed as cadets.

I am enclosing a copy of a diary which I originally recorded during a trip on the Athabaskan from Halifax to Esquimalt in 1948. Only recently have I transferred it from a little black book written in pencil to a more legible form. I am sending it to you and thought, perhaps, a note of its existence in the next issue of the Newsletter might be of interest to some of those UNTD Officer Cadets who were placed in Quarantine. (for names, see last picture in the diary)

Thank you for your contribution to the history of the UNTD and for the nostalgia that I enjoyed in your stories.

Donald K.A. Gillies
R.R. 1, Beeton, ON. L0G 1A0

EDITOR'S NOTE: Extracts and pictures from Don's Diary will appear in future editions of this newsletters.

UNTD ALUMNI INVITED ON MILITARY HISTORY TOUR OF EUROPEAN BATTLEFIELDS

A thirteen day battlefield tour of Europe, November 5-16, 1998 is being organized by Rosemary Clark who helped to organize the 1994 reunion of UNTD Guelph alumni. Conducted by Jacques Pauwels, a PhD in history, who has lectured at the University of Toronto, the tour will visit Normandy and Flanders' Fields. The highlight will be November 11th at Ypres where the 80th Anniversary of the end of World War I will be celebrated. If you would like more information contact Rosemary Clark, Tel 519 822-4687.

SEASONED SAILORS VIDEO

A Seasoned Sailors Video Series has been produced to capture the sight and sound of surviving eminent naval persons along with their stories. Ten videos have been produced to capture Canada's World War II naval heritage before time runs out. Included in the list is the story of our own Cdr. C. Herbert Little. For more information contact: D.P. Ryan, Producer, P.O. Box 74001, Ottawa ON. K1M 2H9; or internet address, <http://www.oldsalts.com>

IN MEMORIAM

Shortly after Captain Littler's letter appeared in the last Newsletter, he passed away. His life's story, as told in his memoirs entitled, *Sea Fever*, has already been reviewed in the March 1997 Newsletter. UNTD excerpts from his book will appear in future editions of this newsletters.

SPINDRIFT UNTiDy TALES

A must for every UNTD alumni. Reserve your copy by sending \$15.00 + \$2.50 mailing, payable to R. Williamson (See below)

UNTD NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is published twice a year by the UNTD Assoc. of Upper Canada. Send Letters, anecdotes, suggestions to: Newsletter Editor: Cdr Robert Williamson, 1 Clonmore Ave. Hamilton, Ont. L9A 4R2.