NAVY DAYS

HMCS *CORNWALLIS*

1 applied for enlistment in the Navy at *HMCS York* in Toronto, and was told I would be inducted in July on my 17th birthday. The induction did not occur until a month later in August 1949. I signed on for a period of 5 years. The reason for the delay in the swearing in was that the Navy medicals showed that I was diabetic; I had been rejected, but not advised. I finally phoned the recruiter, and was informed of the situation. The only way I would be admitted was if I could prove through civilian doctors that this was not the case. I went to the family doctor and after a series of tests he gave me a clean bill of health. I took the documentation to the Navy and was admitted. The reason for the conflicting tests was that on the day before I took the Navy tests I had just finished 5 days on the road. During that time I was on a very bad diet, it also had been very hot, and I had been consuming soft drinks non-stop. I think the blood tests reflected this

A few days later, I was a passenger, along with 70 seventy other men, en-route by train to Digby, Nova Scotia. On arrival in Montreal, we were greeted by 2 petty officers. They were to escort us the remainder of the way to HMCS *Cornwallis*. When we boarded the train in Montreal, the petty officers searched us for alcohol. We travelled on a train to St. John, New Brunswick, and a ferry across the Bay of Fundy to Digby, and finally another short train ride directly to the *Cornwallis* train station. I remember our arrival clearly; the small station area was surrounded by mud and there was a cadre of petty officers, all bellowing at us to fall in and to stand at attention. We were then marched to the clothing store and issued full kit. After the issue of the kit, we were marched to a large empty building, and instructed to lay our kit out on the floor. We were to mark it with our name and official number. The marking was accomplished using black and white paint and stencils pre-cut with our identification. We then bundled up our civilian clothes for shipment home. It was the end of my civilian life for 11 years.

Cornwallis had just re-opened in May of 1949. During the Second World War, it had been the largest naval training base in the Commonwealth, with facilities for 10 thousand men. The base was huge and spread over a very large area. On our arrival, there were approximately 700 hundred men in groups of 70 men per division. The Navy had been at its peak in 1945 with close to 100 thousand men, but had now shrunk to approximately 10 thousand.

The Canadian Government had a commitment to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) to produce a naval force of 20,000 men, which was to be equipped with 100 ships. The admirals were determined to build a better more efficient peacetime Navy. There was to be more stringent training for the personnel, but all training was still based on the English Royal Navy Model. The basic training was 21 weeks. It included parade and rifle drill, seamanship, boat work, physical training, and other general naval disciplines. The Navy also provided an opportunity for high school dropouts, to raise their education level to grade 10 in basic subjects. Of the 70 men in my division (Fraser), there were only 3 men I am aware of who had completed high school. These 3 became officer's candidates.

In April of 1949 Newfoundland became a Canadian Province; Fraser division had the first 10 Newfoundlanders to join the Canadian Navy. (As Canadian citizens.) We had a hard time understanding them, they were mostly from the out ports, and spoke different dialects. I remember each of them fondly, and I had the opportunity to serve with many of them later in my naval career.

Cornwallis was a revelation for a 17 year old; it was rigid routine and harsh discipline. Rise and Shine at 6:30 a.m. then strict scheduling continued all day. For example, a morning could consist of one hour of rifle drill, one hour of class, one hour of physical training, and finally boat work. All the activities require different rigs (uniforms) so you were continually running back to the block to change and shower. For example, divisions and prayers at 8 in the morning would be blue uniforms. At 9, it would be dungarees with belt and gators for rifle drill, and at 10 sports clothing for physical training, then at 11 back into dungarees for parade drill. This would go on all day; at secure you had to change into night clothing, which were usually blues and singlet. If the weather changed, you were continually changing your outerwear from greatcoat, to slicker, to dungaree jacket. All of these rigs had to be in immaculate condition and all laundry and ironing was done by hand. You could not walk on the base during working hours, all trainees had to double [run] at 180 paces per minute in organized groups from place to place.

There was a philosophy in the Navy that if one member of a group screwed up, the whole group should suffer. The thinking was that the group would put pressure on the individual, not to do it again. If the fire sentry in your block fell asleep at 2 in the morning, and the Officer of the Watch discovered it, the whole block mustered on the roadway. We would then be marched and doubled for an hour. It was at these times I wondered, what the hell I was doing there!

We had no liberty for the first 2 weeks. We were then allowed leave on Saturdays and Sundays until midnight if you were not duty watch or under punishment. The base was located between 2 very small towns; Digby and Annapolis Royal, each town about 20 miles away in opposite directions from the base. The Navy provided no transportation. We had to band together and each contribute 50 cents to rent a cab to town. The towns were small, had a couple of restaurants, were dry, and the locals knew enough to lock up their daughters. We graduated from Cornwallis in Feb 1950. The seaman and communicators were all drafted to the west coast for further training.

HMCS *ONTARIO*

We traveled by train across Canada to the Esquimalt naval base in Victoria. We had been assigned to the cruiser HMCS *Ontario* for hands-on seamanship training. The travel was pleasant. We had upper bunks in the sleeping cars, were issued 3 meal tickets a day, and ate in the main dining room. The trip took about 4-5 days. Naval personnel did not fly in those days. The ship was the only commissioned Cruiser in the RCN (Royal Canadian Navy.) It had 3 triple mounts, 6 inch guns and a crew of approximately 800. At the end of 3 months, there were 9 oral examinations, conducted by 9 different officers.

We did a lot of boat pulling in the cutters, and sailing in the ship's dinghies. We also had to stand seaman watches at sea, and were mustered and assigned different duties on each watch. The assignment could be: port, starboard, bow, stern or bridge lookouts, or standby boats crew in case of emergency. On this ship, the cutters and motorboats were lowered and raised by hand, and it took about 20 or more men to perform this function.

We had various cleaning stations, I recall on several occasions having to scrub the wooden bridge decking by hand at 6 in the morning. We could not use mops anywhere on the ship. The cleaning of the ship's decks and bulkheads (walls) was done with hand scrubbers and the residue wiped up with deck rags. There were captain's inspections on Saturday mornings. The captain wore white gloves in order to find any missed locations during his rounds. Besides our mess we all had an assigned morning cleaning station, my station was in one of the officer's flats (halls). The deck had to be scrubbed, and the bulkheads washed down every workday. Painting and chipping of metal never ends on a ship. There was a saying among the ordinary seaman on the *Ontario* "If it moves salute it, if the object does not move then paint it."

Because we were ordinary seaman and under training: we had to press our uniform trousers with 7 folds, one every 2 inches, to represent the 7 seas. The Duty Officer inspected us before we could go ashore. I considered this a little ironic for the uniforms, at the time, were of inferior quality. One manufacturer, made the blue tops, another made the pants, and so the tones did not match. We wore heavy boots, and had to sew our Canada patches and insignia on by hand. We could not wear navy Burberrys, but instead had to wear oily slickers, or bulky heavy great coats ashore. The white uniforms were made of tent canvas, which was uncomfortable. Two different manufacturers also made the blue and white caps, some were oval and others round. The uniform had no buttons or zipper on the jumper, and the pants had only buttons (5 in total.)

We had detachable collars, silks and lanyards for the uniforms. The collars and silks faded after a couple of washings. When we were mustered as a group, all the men had a different colour collar or silk, which gave the group a rag-tag look. The uniforms of the officers and petty officers were of good quality, and they had light khaki uniforms for their summer attire. The uniforms for the ratings changed about 1951. These new uniforms, were of better material, had zippers and were of lighter material. My first sea time was to Hawaii, San Diego and Mexico.

The living conditions on the *Ontario* were crowded. The mess area had 3 long tables with 20 men per table. We had small 20-inch square lockers to store our clothing. We slung our hammocks over the tables after evening rounds at 9 p.m. and took them down by 7 a.m. in the morning. There was not room for all of us to sling our hammocks. I had to sling mine in an officer's flat (hallway) 2 decks up. Our hammocks were lashed up with 7 lashings, and stored in the hammock rack during working hours. At least once a month we had to scrub the heavy canvas hammocks on the floors of the washrooms.

We were divided into 4 watches, there were always one quarter of the men on watch, one quarter about to go on, and the remainder worked general duties, or were in class. The food was drawn in trays from a central galley for each 20-man mess; the meals were kept in a hot box for those men still on watch. There was no rum ration at this time as we were all under age (20).

Punishment was dependant on the crime and consisted of extra work, stoppage of leave, and in some instances, 1 hours doubling with a 10-pound rifle. In harbour, we doubled on the jetty, but at sea, if conditions were favourable around the boat deck. Leave was granted 3 days out of 4 from 4.30 in the afternoon, until midnight on weekdays, and from noon to midnight on weekends. After our training on the *Ontario*,

I was again drafted across Canada by train to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, for a 10 month Communicator Course. I was to learn all aspects of radio, and visual communications, the course also included cryptography. I did not realize at the time but in 1 year I would be back aboard the Ontario as a radio operator on my way to Australia. The training at *Cornwallis* and on the *Ontario* had been very intense. On the *Ontario* we had been isolated from the rest of the crew and considered to be the lowest of the low. Ordinary seamen under training were not treated as individuals but as bodies with official numbers. At our next posting we were accepted as bonifide members of the Navy.

HMCS *STADACONA*

In the year 1950, *Stadacona* was the main training and transit base on the east coast. Most of the infrastructure from World War 2 still existed. It was located north of HMC Dockyard and was sandwiched between Gottington St. and Barrington St. in North West Halifax. It included a gym and swimming pool, a hospital, playing field and both an indoor and outdoor drill shed. Training was conducted for electrical, communications, engine room, gunnery, and various seamanship trades. There was an officer accommodation facility, and chief and petty officers block. The ratings were housed in the old wood frame B and C blocks, at the bottom of the base. There was also a cellblock and clothing store. The supply school was located on the west coast at HMCS *Naden*.

There were divisions and prayers most mornings and classes were marched from point to point, doubling was not mandatory, as it had been at *Cornwallis*. I arrived there in May of 1950 for a 10-month Communicators Course. Naval headquarters decreed, at the time, that all men in the communications branch had to be first trained as a seaman, before being trained in both the visual signalling and radio branches. I had just finished 3 months on *Ontario* learning how to be a seaman, and I was now on a 10-month course in naval communication.

There were about a dozen men in our class and we had a superb chief for an instructor. The complete school only consisted of possibly 50-70 men. We stood regular 1 in 4 duty watches on the base, and were allowed liberty the other 3 days until midnight. We were all under age (under 20). We were not only under 20, but were ordinary seaman, and had our station cards marked with the underage designation UA. An ordinary seaman is the lowest rank in the Navy; he does all the grunt work and has few privileges. There is a saying in the ranks that UA means two tots shit hot, underage and cannot swim.

The duty watches on the base were mostly for sentry duty, or clean up jobs and work details for things that could not be done during work hours. For example, you might be assigned to be a fire sentry in the men's block from 2 to 4 a.m., which meant you patrolled the halls entering your observations in a logbook every 15 minutes. Later when I took my trade group 2 courses, most of the duty watches were as shore patrol. On Saturday mornings, all hands were assigned to scrub and wax the hallways and classrooms of all the main buildings. Were not allowed in the wet canteen, but had no problem entering the local beer joints in town, and there were bootleggers galore selling rum. There were no cocktail bars in Halifax and liquor could only be purchased at a government store with proper identification. The working hours were 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. but we also worked on Saturday till noon.

There was no mixed drinking in Halifax, only men's beverage rooms; I believe that in the 2 large railway hotels you could order beer in the dining rooms with mixed company. The officers had their wardroom and the petty officers their mess, but the ratings had no place to entertain the opposite sex and this led to many problems.

Going on liberty we had to request permission to proceed ashore from the officer of the watch at the main gate. He would inspect us before taking our station cards. These cards had to be picked up when you returned to the base. At midnight the officer would be then aware of any men who had over stayed their leave. This did not deter the braver of us who could easily jump over the small stone wall in front of the hospital, and come back at whatever hour we wanted. It became a sort of a challenge to many of us to find different ways of getting on and off the base without going through the check at the main gate. I must admit that in the Halifax of the time, there was not much going on after midnight anyway.

Except for a gym and swimming poll the recreation facilities on the base were non-existent for ratings, and we spent a lot of our time at the Seagull Club on Hollis St. The Navy League of Canada ran this club. They had a large beer hall, which served quart beer for 50 cents, and you could get a bunk for the night for 50 cents. They ran dances, which attracted the local girls, and there was no drinking allowed in the dance hall. This small dance was mostly for the teenagers in the Navy, and is something I fondly remember. The dance was the way we met local girls our age. The other dance was on Friday or Saturday nights at the Palladium uptown, this dance attracted an older crowd and had a live orchestra. It was a male dominated society on the base; the only females being a few secretaries to senior officers. The WRENS (Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service) had not been re-introduced to the Navy at this point. It was similar to being on a ship at sea during working hours. The Naval

brass had not yet digested the lessons of the Mainguy report and the social distinction between officers and men was as it had been in the Royal Navy for centuries. The Navy had to change and become more Canadian.

Part of the problem for the young rating was not being able to get away from the discipline of the base. He was under-age, and not allowed overnight leave. During and after working hours he always had to be in the dress of the day, and be prepared for officers rounds at 9:00 p.m. Lights out were at 11:00 p.m., and wakey-wakey was 6:30 a.m. Even on weekends he had to be up, clean up his quarters, make his bed, consume breakfast by 8 in the morning, and then if not on duty watch, he could lounge around the block. He had to always be in the dress of the day. At 4.30 p.m. he had to change into the assigned night clothing.

He was not allowed in his living accommodation during working hours on weekdays. He had to eat at specific times, or did not eat at all, there was no canteen open on weekends, and if there was he had little discretionary income. The pay at that time was $68 a month, which came to the grand total of $816 a year. You were also given a small clothing allowance plus your room and board. The men were housed in large open dorms, there was no privacy and there was always a duty petty officer visible in the dorm. There was 1 phone in the office and no television. There were 1 or 2 movies a week on the base, and if you wanted you could go swimming at certain times. When they did get ashore, there were very few places to meet people their own age, also memories of the Halifax Riots of 1945, were still in the minds of the Halifax population.

I left Stadacona in February 1951 after being in the Navy for 19 months. During this time I had taken 5 months new entry training, 3 months seamanship, and a 10 months communication course. I was now sent back to the west coast. The drafting notice stipulated that I was only on loan to the west coast for a year. My first assignment on this coast was again to HMCS *Ontario*.

I returned to *Stadacona* in November of 1955 for a trade group 2 course (6 weeks). I saw little change on the base. We again were accommodated in B block. In addition, while stationed at the naval radio station, Albro Lake, we were considered a tender of *Stadacona* and most of our administrative functions were handled there; for example, it was to *Stadacona* I went to be awarded my petty officers rating. I was also discharged from *Stadacona* in 1960. My memories of *Stadacona* and Halifax are not fond ones.

In the 1949/1950 periods Naval H.Q. decided to join the existing Radio and Signalling branches together. These men would be called a COMMUNICATOR. The

Communicator would be trained to man either the bridge or radio room, and perform cryptography duties. The theory was that they could change about depending on the staffing requirement of particular ships.

The course was a long ten months and consisted of:

Typing 25 word per minute
Morse code reading 25 WPM on typewriter
Morse code reading by pencils 12 WPM.
Morse code transmission.
Radio Teletype machines transmission and reading
Reading and sending flashing light on ten inch signalling lantern and Aldis lamp at a defined speed.
Naval Flag Hoisting: Code interpretation and use.
Semaphore. Sending and receiving.
Direction finding.
International flags.
Cryptography: coding and decoding.
Communication codes and communication publications
NATO publications.
Transmitters and receivers, their operation and tuning.
Etc.

Some of training had to do with operating procedures used with United States navy or procedures to use with NATO navies

A great deal of the time was spent in bringing the men up to the require speeds of morse code reading. There was only a two-day session on Radio Theory, as men from the electrical branch carried out maintenance of the equipment. This Policy changed in the early 1970's and radiomen were brought back onto the school and trained as user maintainers

The training was changed again in the early 1950's when the Communication school moved to HMCS Cornwallis and the branches and training were separated. The branches became, Communicator Radio and Communicator Visual.

In addition there was a separate branch call Radiomen Supplementary. These men were trained for intelligence gathering duties and were trained in Ottawa at HMCS Gloucester. I served at this base later in my career

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HMCS *ONTARIO* (Second Draft)

Our 10 month Communication Course in Halifax was terminated a few weeks early when word came from Ottawa that they needed our class on board the *Ontario* for an upcoming 3 month cruise to the South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. We were not excited about going back on a training ship again, but were enthused about the 12-15 ports we were scheduled to visit. I soon found myself on a train travelling across the country to Victoria B.C. We arrived in Victoria in February and again were impressed by the green grass and flowers around the city. When we left Halifax it had been cold and foggy, Toronto had 2 feet of snow; this impression never left me during my working career, and I knew that someday I would return to Vancouver Island B.C. to live.

Now as a trained communicator I could be assigned on the *Ontario* to either signalman or radioman duties. Fortunately I was assigned to the radio office. Radio, telecommunications and their related spin offs were to be my work for the next 40 years. The communication ratings had their own mess with a hatch opening to a small Bofors gun deck in the super structure of the ship. When the circumstances allowed we could sun bath on the Bofors deck. There were about 20 men in the mess, we slung our hammocks above the mess deck table and drew our food in large trays from the galley. When the 6-inch gun batteries were fired the mess was not the place to be. The vibrations were extreme in this high point of the ship and asbestos chips rained down from the deck head installation.

The *Ontario* was still a training ship with about 750 men aboard. We now were trained Able Seaman and considered to be ship's company, and as such had related privileges. For example we were allowed overnight leave on occasion, and were exempt from most seaman duties because of our communication watch keeping. We were not required to attend when lower decks were cleared for boat raising or lowering, provisioning, ammunition, or for shore patrol duties. We had to attend divisions and prayers most mornings and, church parades in foreign ports. Rum issue was at 12:00 noon and the issue was 2 ½ ounces of rum mixed with 2 parts coke. In the communicators mess the petty officer of the mess distributed it to the other ratings. I was still not old enough for rum issue, but I did receive an issue of 10 packages of cigarettes every week. They cost me 10 cents a pack, as I did not smoke I traded these cigarettes for another man's rum issue.

Our watches were 1 in 4, with 2 men per watch. This meant on a 4-hour watch, we could alternate hour about, one copying the broadcast while the other did

administrative duties. When seas were rough, both men copied the broadcast with a bucket sitting between them.

For those of you who are not familiar with the term "Broadcast Stations," they are a series of naval radio transmitters sending messages simultaneously on 5 or 6 frequencies (4/6/8/12/16 megacycles,) to ships in their operational area of the world. The broadcast contains messages to task groups, squadrons, and individual ships: it contains naval messages, weather reports, navigational aids, and telegrams. The ships copy the different frequencies depending on the time of day, their distance from the station, and the atmospheric conditions known to exist in the latitude and longitude in which they are operating.

Messages were numbered, starting at 0001 at the start of the month. The ships identify which messages they should be interested in, by the call signs that follow the numbering. In some ships, the captain required that all messages be copied and decoded that are addressed to the task force in which he is a member. To make sure no messages are missed the senior radio operator has to keep track of the numbers, and scrutinize the call signs (some of which are coded); to make sure no messages are missed. If a message was missed, or too garbled, the senior operator had to get in touch with the shore station, on the ship/shore frequencies, and ask for a rerun. To say that he does not like to do this is an understatement, asking for a rerun, reflects on his radio department and his ship. There was a great emphasis on copying the message right the first time.

Departing Victoria we were reading the Canadian broadcast (call sign CKN) at about 20 words per minute. Mid- Pacific we switched to Honolulu (NPM) and further south to Guam (NPN). Approaching Australia we copied Sydney (VIS) and in New Zealand, Waiouru (ZLO), and the reverse on the way home, The Canadian, Australian and New Zealand broadcasts were at 20 words per minute with little traffic, but the American broadcasts were at 25-28 words per minute, and were continuous 24 hours a day. In addition to the broadcast watch, we also had a receiver on a speaker tuned to the International Distress Frequency, (500 kilocycles.) We had a 100-watt transmitter and receiver on remote to the bridge, on another distress frequency. There were various other radio rooms on ship that housed transmitters and receivers. This equipment was mostly of British make, and I did not get the opportunity to train on it. Being a training ship we used morse code circuits, semaphore and flag hoists for most exercises. Later in my service, on the new Canadian frigates and destroyers we were equipped with 8 very high frequency or ultra high frequency transceivers for, ship to ship, intra squadron, hunter killer, ship to air, and emergency assignments.

The trip was a “Show the Flag” cruise, but we were also involved in exercises with the American, Australian, and New Zealand Navies. We were well received in all ports, and there were special activities scheduled for the crew. The officers hosted cocktail parties on the quarterdeck for the visiting dignitaries. There is nothing more depressing to a rating returning to the ship, than to see an officer's cocktail party on the quarterdeck. The quarterdeck is covered with white canvas, strung with shining white lights, and with colourful flags flying. The stewards are serving the officers and their guests’ canapés and duty free booze. The officers are surrounded by beautiful women, in gorgeous dresses, from the various government and diplomatic missions of the visited country. I know it sounds like sour grapes, but these scenes really made me realize my inferiority, and the social class to which I belonged. It was considered inferior to those cavorting on the quarterdeck, and I did not like it. These quarterdeck parties annoyed me throughout my career. It was made even worse when we were assigned to clean up the quarterdeck the next morning. I accept that officers had their privileges but I considered these parties flaunting it.

We departed to Hawaii on February 1951 en-route to the following ports:

Pearl Harbour, Hawaii.
Pago Pago, American Samoa.
Suva, Fiji Islands.
Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, in Australia.
Lyttleton, Wellington, Auckland, in New Zealand.
Homeward bound we stopped at the Fanning Islands and Pearl Harbour.

We sailed 19,025 sea miles, and had 42 days in ports abroad. On the second day at sea gale sprung up and 2 whalers were smashed, water came into some of the living areas and the usual weather damage was sustained. We spent 2 rainy days in Pearl Harbour and on the way to Suva crossed the Equator and performed the “Crossing the Line Ceremonies.” In Suva we were invited to a local home for tea, and had the opportunity to drink “Cava,” (the native brew). We attended a special dance, which had been arranged for us. All the women were Fiji or East Indian, except for one blond white girl, which we were all lining up for the opportunity to dance with. It turned out she was the only girl who did not speak English; she was a Dutch plantation owner’s daughter. The city of Suva was very English and it was my first experience with pounds, shillings and pence. The Fiji women had high bushy hair and the policemen wore skirts instead of shorts. There was a large population of East Indians who seemed to run the commerce on the island.

We then sailed to Pago Pago in American Samoa; this was my first trip to a true South Sea Island. To say it was beautiful is an understatement; the women still wore grass skirts, went around bare breasted, bare foot and lived in simple constructed grass huts. The native men performed a war dance for us on the jetty beside our ship and were dressed in scanty attire. The Samoans were indeed a beautiful race of people.

We rented a jeep to view an airfield, which had been abandoned by the Americans at the end of the war. On the way there we had an opportunity to see the countryside, and the tropical fruits growing alongside the road. The airport was open to the sea at one end and surrounded by very dense tropical vegetation on the other three sides. All buildings had been torn down and all that remained was a large concrete runway. The guide took us about 100 feet into the tropical forest and all of a sudden we could feel the presence of something looming high above us. When the Americans departed they apparently had left a squadron, of what I think, were Flying Fortress Bombers on the perimeters of the airfield. The jungle over a period of 7 years had completely encapsulated these monstrous aircraft. It was an eerie experience.

We then visited Brisbane, Australia. The welcome in this semi-tropical city was extraordinary. As we sailed up the Brisbane River, the population waved towels and bed sheets, out of the upper windows, to welcome us. I believe we were the first Canadian warships to ever enter the port. We had arrived in the land of Koala Bears, Kangaroos, Ostriches and beautiful Sheilas, as the Australian girls are known. I was invited by a man, in a pub to go to his home to meet his Canadian wife. (Those Canadian girls sure get around!). The girls liked the American and Canadian servicemen and we could do nothing wrong.

We did exercises with the Royal, Australian and Pakistan Navies in the Jervis Bay area. We stopped in Sydney for ten days of recreation. In Sydney we spent a lot of time in Kings Cross, which is similar to Piccadilly Circus in London. It was the location of all the action. We were a bit restricted in our drinking because of the liquor laws in force in the country at the time. The bars closed at 6:00 p.m. They closed the bars early in order that the workingmen go home to their wives and families. There was a bottle store in each pub, and you could buy beer or wine on the way out. In all taverns there was a men's stand up bar, and in the 5-6 p.m. time frame this would be 3 deep with men who had just got off work.

The women drank in a separate lounge and you had to be escorted by a woman to enter. The secret was to meet some young lady on the street or restaurant and invite them into a lounge for a drink. At 6:00 p.m. you made a purchase at the bottle store and started to look for a place to drink. In most cases the young women could not

bring us to their parent's homes, or their lodgings and we ended the evenings on the lawns under the Sydney Bridge. We also frequently went to an entertainment area called Luna Park. We were given a weekend leave in Sydney, I don't recall where I went, but remember it was to meet some girl and that I had to take the train to get back to the ship.

I would like to make a comment here about the hospitality these 2 countries extended to us. It was overwhelming. Organizations and civic authorities made special arrangement for dances, picnics, sports, concerts, and other forms of entertainment. In some cities we were issued free passes for streetcars and buses. In Sydney a nightclub band and floorshow gave a performance aboard the ship. The dances were always chaperoned, the girls hand picked by the church elders. On one occasion I arrived at one of these dances with a girl I had met at a Wine Bar earlier in the day, they would not admit us. I had experiences and adventures in every port, which I will not relate here, but suffice to say that overall it was a very enjoyable experience for a 19 year old.

HMCS *CRUSADER*

Shortly after arrival back in Victoria I was again drafted and found myself as Ships Company on HMCS *Crusader*, a "C" Class destroyer of World War Two vintage. I remained on her for over a month, again travelling to Hawaii and up the west coast of British Columbia. We were a training ship for UNTD (University Naval Training Division) officer cadets from universities across Canada. This ship was supposed to have a crew of 244, but was undermanned, and in fact, there were only myself and a petty officer aboard as radio operators. We stood what are called single operator watches, which meant I had to assume much more responsibility. My duties included the reception and transmission of traffic, crypto and direction finding. I lived in the seamen's mess, and had no other duties but radio. After our second cruise to Hawaii, I was approached by my divisional officer who informed me that the drafting depot was looking for a volunteer for the destroyer *Athabaskan* that was going to Korea. I jumped at the opportunity, and the next day moved my kit and hammock across the jetty to the ship. The Athabaskan was fully staffed; there were 2 other members of my communication class already on board. A few days later we sailed for Korea on an 11-month assignment.

HMCS *ATHABASCAN*
(Korea)

During the years 1950 to 1954 a total of 8 Canadian destroyers performed 21 single tours of duty in Korean waters. 6,000 Canadian sailors manned the ships over time. I was one of these men.

The *Athabaskan* was a Tribal Class Destroyer built in Halifax in 1948. She was the second *Athabaskan*, the first ship being sunk during the Second World War. The ship had just returned a few months earlier from an 11-month tour of Korea, and was now about to return to the war zone. A good number of the initial crew volunteered for the second trip. We sailed August 2 1951, and were to return home in 340 days. On this trip, as on the last, the ship would be spending over 80 percent of the time at sea on patrol.

The Tribal's were considered to be the greyhounds of the fleet. They were sleek and majestic to watch on the water and were heavily armed. The ships had the latest in sonar and radar equipment. In the Korean deployment she had:

3-twin mount, 4-inch mountings.
6 40 mm Bofors.
2 20mm Oerlikons.
2 triple barrelled Squid mountings.
46 depth charges.
4 21-inch Torpedo tubes.

The ship spent 1/2 of that time with the air carrier element and the other 1/2 with the inshore blockade element. With carrier element our duties were to provide an anti-submarine screen, anti-aircraft defence, and also act as a plane guard for any aircraft that might ditch in the sea. These assignments were usually very uneventful and boring. We worked with British, American, and Australian aircraft carriers.

With the inshore blockade elements our duties were to interdict the enemy's coastal sea-lanes of communication, to protect friendly islands, which lay a short

distance off the enemy coast, and to harass the Communists as they were attempting to rebuild port installations, harbour defences, and coastal gun positions. We also did some train busting along the coast. There was lots of action for the gun crews.

There were about 8-10 radio operators aboard with a petty officer first class in charge. Our watches were normally 1 in 3, but sometimes we had to stand 4 hours on and 4 hours off, depending on the operational area we were in, and the ships duties in the task force. When the ship had to ammunition or provision all men below the rank of petty officer, not on watch were required to muster. Lower decks were cleared of all ratings. This always seemed to happen after you had just completed a very arduous radio watch.

We usually spent about 21 days at sea, and then went to Kure or Sasebo, Japan for 2-3 days for repairs required. We also needed to top up our supplies of oil, ammunition and food after this length of time at sea. We oiled off Royal Navy tankers while at sea. As a radio operator you are usually in the bowels of the ship with a pair of earphones on, and do not get to see much of the action, however on one occasion I was on the upper deck when we were straddled by a shore battery I could see the shells exploding in the water alongside us as I dashed for my action station in radio 1. The night actions were stressful, the ship was darkened, and the crew was at action stations, you could hear distant explosions, our own ships armament shook the ship and the noise were deafening. The ship was also usually executing sharp manoeuvres, at high speed. I was thankful to be in the radio or crypto office, instead of on the dark cold bridge, or manning a gun on the upper deck.

During our tour of operation we only lost 1 man, he disappeared overboard after returning from a boarding party on a small Korean island. We returned later that night to the position where we thought we had lost him, the whole ships company manned the ship's sides. We searched the area carefully using our 10 and 20-inch searchlights on the bridge. We found nothing, it was in the middle of winter, and he could not have lasted in the cold water for more that 20 minutes. But we had to try. Two of the communicators serving on HMCS *Sioux* were killed in a jeep accident ashore. They were friends, and from my communication class in Halifax. Later, 2 of the seamen killed on HMCS *Iroquois*, when a shore battery hit their 4-inch gun, were men I had served with on the *Ontario*.

We lived in the port side, mid-ship mess, with communicators on one side of the mess, and the electrical branch on the other. Except for a small 2-foot entry hatch, the mess deck was a closed capsule. The mess continually smelled of food, bodies, and wet clothing. The mess was never quiet; watchmen were coming and going all

hours of the day and night. Most of the time the ship was in a high damage control state, hatches had to be closed and all scuttles (portholes) covered with deadlights. Adding to the congestion in the mess, frequently we were standing 4 hours on, and 4 hours off, our hammocks would be left up 24 hours a day. We had a good petty officer in charge, but if you were not quickly out of your hammock (15 minutes after wakey-wakey), he would cut your hammock clews with a knife, and you would end up on the deck. You would then have to spend all your spare time the next day repairing your hammock. When you came off the 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. morning watch you would have to do the dish-up and scrub out for your mess.

Dish up required drawing water from the washroom one deck above, then doing the dishes for the 15 men in your mess. After dish-up you removed the table and benches and scrubbed the mess deck floor. There was no water disposal system in the mess decks, and you had to get rid of the water off the stern of the ship. This was not always an easy task in rough seas or when the upper deck was covered with a sheet of ice. The mess decks and radio office were scrubbed out by hand every day. At 9:30 a.m. you reported to the radio office for other general duties. The general rule was that the men about to go on watch drew the meals for the entire mess, and the men coming off, did the dish-up. The noon dish-up was done by the Forenoon Watch (8-12 p.m.), and the dinner dish-up by the First Dog Watch (4-6 p.m.)

The galley was better equipped in this ship. The RCN had scrapped the “cooks of the mess system,” where designated duty men brought food in trays to their messes for servings. Each sailor now brought his plate to the galley for individual servings and was sure of a hot meal. Before the meals were always cold if you were late coming off watch. In the old system if you received the last serving you usually received the last of the potatoes and vegetables and the worst piece of meat. You would also get the smallest piece of duff (desert.) It was still not the Waldorf but better than before.

On board ship there were always many duties other than watch keeping, these duties consisted of corrections to operating manuals, painting, or general cleaning in the 4 radio offices. In harbour the radio department could be delegated other general ship maintenance, or supply functions. When standing 1 in every 3 watches we were generally given a “Make and Mend” in the afternoon if we were not required for watch keeping. A make and mend was originally created in the Royal Navy to allow the men time to make or mend their clothing. In the modern Navy it meant that the hours between 12 noon and 4: 30 p.m. were for leisure or recreation. In harbour it allowed you to go ashore at 12 noon instead of 4:30 p.m. This type of leave was

granted in port to ships that had spent a long time at sea, or as a reward for work well done while at sea.

We spent Christmas at sea and there was a rum issue for all. We were served dinner by our chiefs and petty officers. The youngest man on the ship donned the captain's uniform and made rounds of the messes. We spent New Years in a dry dock in Kure, Japan. Mail usually took a month or more to reach us. In Kure I received a parcel from a boyhood friend, and hidden in the parcel was a bottle of (carefully wrapped) Seagram's whiskey: I was glad he was doing his part for the Korean effort.

The first few months we drew our provisions from the Australian base in Kure. The food was horrible, all the meat was frozen mutton, the milk and eggs were powdered, and the black bread came in 4 foot lengths, and was stacked on the jetty like cord wood. Each mess had to be issued a small saw in order to cut the bread, plus there were no fresh fruit or vegetables. I believe the medical officer did not want to purchase the local produce, as it had been fertilized with night soil. The cooks used a chopping block outside the galley to cut up the mutton, but had to stand guard on it at all times, as any crewmember that saw the meat, with no cook in attendance, would chuck it over the side of the ship.

The food was not up to Canadian standards. After some communication between CANDESFE (Commander Canadian Destroyers Far East) and Ottawa, permission was given to draw our provisions from the Americans in Sasebo Japan. What a difference! This port had a "Service Support Squadron" which was spread over a lengthy anchorage area, covering 4 or 5 miles. Some of the ships were large refrigerator ships. The supply officer would make a shopping list, and some of us would be delegated to proceed in a landing craft to these ships to get our supplies. The ships had numerous decks of forward and aft refrigerator rooms, which depending on the food therein was maintained at certain temperatures. The refrigerators contained many delicacies, maraschino cherries, hershey bars, canned fruit, coke, canned salmon etc. From then on the food was acceptable.

One of my favourite memories is the treat we sometimes got on the middle (12-4 a.m.) and morning watch (4-8 a.m.). The radio office was just 20 feet away from a small bakery that was used by the cooks on the middle watch, to bake fresh buns. If you were on good terms with the baker you could usually get a few hot fresh buns right out of the oven for the radio office. The buns were consumed with "Kia," a hot chocolate drink, usually made for the watch keepers on the bridge. Kia was made from bars of chocolate. It was almost worth standing the middle watch to get these delicacies.

On the trip to the Korean operation area we visited Pearl Harbour, Guam in the Mariana Islands, then Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. We then sailed directly to Sasebo Japan. For the next 6 months our only liberty ports were Sasebo and Kure Japan. There was a 12:00 p.m. curfew for all allied personnel in Japan. It was difficult to get berthing space in Sasebo; we usually were secured to a buoy in the harbour. When we could arrange it we nested with other ships. Sasebo was a United Nations port where all the ships from the various nations went for supplies. At times there were ships positioned all over the 5-mile anchorage. It was a busy harbour, with landing craft, and ships boats dashing back and forth between ships and the shore facilities.

Adjacent to the jetty in Sasebo was the American "Tin Can Club." Here you could purchase 2 cans of beer for 25 cents; in fact you could purchase a full case at a time if it was your intention to stay there for the evening. You would deposit the case at a table of your shipmates. There were about 50 Japanese "Dime a Dance Girls" at the club. The rules were that the girls could not leave the club or engage in any activity other than dancing. Most men went uptown in a bicycle cab where there were no restrictions. I have always thought that if you put a roof over Sasebo it would be one large brothel. The city was full of bars to accommodate the multi-nation fleet that had assembled there; and the streets were full of older women trying to entice you to their homes, to sell you sake or rice beer, and introduce you to the young ladies of the house.

The houses were standard Japanese frame homes with woven mats on the floor, light wood sliding doors between rooms, and with few furnishings. You had to take your shoes off before entering, and squat on the floor to drink your beverage. The doors gave you access to other rooms. These rooms had no furniture except for a small round pillow and a comforter. The women seemed to run the bars and businesses, and the only men we encountered were those who were peddling the bicycle cabs.

I believe it was below the dignity of the average Japanese male to interact with us. It was only a few years since they had been defeated in the Second World War, and here we were, smothering their cities with service men, drinking their beer and taking their women for our own pleasure. There was a language barrier with the men, the bar women learned the language in the bars to earn money. Rice beer was 50 cents a quart; the services of a woman were 1000 Yen ($2.85). [My fellow shipmates told me this, of course!] We were not allowed to eat in the local restaurants because of hygiene concerns, and a few steak and egg restaurants were set up ashore by the military authorities for the servicemen to eat in. The Americans also had small

medical centers in the city for men who had sexual encounters. In these centres they could take showers and apply V.D. kits.

Close to midnight there would be hundreds of intoxicated young sailors from the various nations trying to find which motor cutter or landing craft was going to their ship in the harbour. One night, I had been drinking all evening with a British radio operator from the cruiser HMS (Her Majesty's Ship) *Belfast*. The landing craft we boarded was going to 5 or 6 ships in the harbour including our 2 vessels. He invited me aboard the Belfast for a tot of rum. In my frame of mind, it sounded like a good idea. We went up the ladder to his ship, I saluted the Officer of the Watch and asked permission to come aboard; he was very busy, and did not see my cap tally. We went the mess and consumed the rum.

I realized I was in a bad situation about 1.30 a.m. I was on the wrong ship, either of the ships could sail at any time, and my leave had expired at 12 p.m. I returned to the Officer of the Watch, told him I required transportation to my ship anchored at a buoy a mile away. I informed him I had been visiting a relative on the ship, and had fallen asleep in the mess. He was a young inexperienced officer, and seemed to be under a lot stress. He dispatched a motor cutter with a full crew to return me to my ship at 2:00 a.m. in the morning. [They were not a happy boat's crew.] I am not sure what the officer in the cutter told my Officer of the Watch, but my ship's officer was busy and I just went to my mess without talking to him. I waited in fear all the next day to be called to the quarterdeck to explain my conduct. I luckily heard nothing, and the incident went unnoticed. Sometimes in the Navy using sheer gall and bull, you could get away with quite a lot. I decided I would not try it again.

The port of Kure was very similar, it had been a large Japanese naval base during the war, and we could usually secure the ship alongside the jetty. The Canadian Army base "Camp Hero" was located outside this city, and men returning from Korea took their rest and recuperation there. We had the opportunity to mix with fellow Canadians soldiers in the bars. I had a permanent Japanese girl friend at this port.

After about 4 months in Korea we were given the opportunity to go to an American Army rest camp in an inland city for a few days. The facility was called Camp Wood; I believe it was outside the Japanese city of Kumamoto on the Island of Kyushu. We had a very pleasant and informative train ride through the Japanese countryside before arriving at the city, where we were transported by bus to the camp. The camp was equipped like an American city; you could play golf, tennis, ping-pong, or billiards. There was a large football field and a locker room equipped with 2 complete sets of uniforms, so that one ship's company could play against another.

You were served your meals, and there were women to make your bed for you. I only stayed at the camp one night; I ventured into this large Japanese city looking for adventure, and returned to the railway station a few days later, I did not see much of the camp.

It was a fascinating city; the people still wore traditional dress. The children wore school uniforms, and most of the transportation was by bicycle cab. I hardly saw another white face for 2 days. The one problem was that no one spoke English, so you had to get by with sign language. On the last morning, I almost missed the train, as I could not get my cab driver to understand I wanted to go to the Railway station. We drove around for an hour with me frantically searching for some signs of a train. Finally I thought of a military term RTO (Railway Terminal Office.) He replied "AHHSOO" and we were there in 5 minutes. The chief in charge of our party was standing by the side of the bus with my attaché case at his feet. He went up one side of me, and down the other, he spouted more than a few rather nasty naval vulgarities. The gist was that I was a pain in the ass, and to get my worthless carcass on the train.

On another occasion, while in Kure Japan I took a short train ride to the city of Hiroshima to see where the atomic bomb had been dropped. I found a friendly bar, spending the rest of the day there and did not get to see the bombed out area. In the cities that were inland, when you ordered a quart of beer, it was not seen as proper form, if you poured your own beer; it was the duty of the hostess to keep your glass filled. The hostess also followed you to the washrooms to run your water, and to hand you a towel on which to dry your hands. It was a man's world. The trouble was I was still a boy!

On returning from this trip I fell asleep on the train. The Japanese conductor did not wake me up, leaving me on the train, which was then shunted out to the rail yard. He must have called the military police, because at 3 a.m. in the morning I was rudely awakened by 3 burley Australian military police, thrown in the back of a jeep and returned to my ship. I was 4 hours over my leave and in trouble again. I spent all my spare time at sea for the next 2 weeks painting the various radio offices on the ship.

My duties on the Athabaskan for most of the tour were in the radio office, but for a few months I was assigned to work in the cryptography office. I assisted in the decoding of the large volume of coded messages received by the ship. Our captain, in order that he could have an assessment of all that was going on around him, required that all operational messages for the task force be decoded. This meant re-typing all messages for ships in our area into the British Type X machine or the American CCM cryptography machines. We also used book codes, stencil sub-tractors and bicycle

machines. We then pasted the decoded tapes onto message paper, and sent them to the message center to be retyped again.

A coded message was very labour intensive. It was the duty of 2 of us radio operators to man this small 4 foot by 4 foot room from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. We alternated 4 and 6-hour shifts, and were always busy. For the period from midnight till 6:00 a.m. the medical and supply officers were on call to decode any messages directly addressed to the ship, or for emergencies. I had the pleasure of training the medical officer on the use of these machines. In exchange I received free lectures on the perils of casual sex and its consequences.

One of the most memorable experiences on the trip was when we passed through the Inland Sea. This sea is an arm of the Pacific Ocean, between Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu Islands, linking the Sea of Japan by a narrow channel. The shores of the Inland Sea are heavily populated, with many of Japan's largest ports within its boundaries. The ports of Osaka, Kobe, and Hiroshima are there. The area is also a heavily industrialized. The shipping is unbelievably busy. We usually transited this area at high speed; we would be zigzagging around almost every kind of seagoing vessel you could imagine. If something could float, it was on the Inland Sea.

In Sasebo we received a Typhoon warning; all ships in harbour had to proceed to sea, to ride out the storm. This was the most terrifying experience of my naval career. Our ship was like a cork on the water for days. The vessel was completely buttoned up; you could not go on the upper deck, and the only men topside was the bridge watch keepers.

The galley could not function, but the cooks did their best, and cooked up sauerkraut and wieners in the bottom of a large caldron in the galley. A lot of the men were sea sick, and we had wieners and sauerkraut from one end of the ship to the other. Months later there still were mouldy old wieners rolling out from beneath lockers. It was impossible to stand on the ship, and you went directly from the radio office to your hammock. While I was copying morse code, the chair I was in was torn loose from the deck where it had been welded or bolted, and I wound up on the deck, with the typewriter on my lap.

We had life rafts swept away, whalers bashed in, and metal food lockers ripped off the upper deck, by the intensity of the storm. Once when a door to the upper deck had to be opened, I had a look out. The waves were so high I could not see where the sky started and the sea began, it was a nightmare. I was glad we had an experienced

commanding officer. There were hundreds of small fishing craft and junks lost in this storm.

Shortly thereafter, I was copying the broadcast one evening when I saw my own name appear in a plain language message. The message stated that two others and I were to be relieved by west coast ratings; later messages indicated the men were en-route to Japan. The 3 of us had been on loan to the west coast for one-year duration, our year was up, and Halifax wanted us back. This was a very pleasant surprise to say the least.

A week later we were on a troop train to Tokyo, where we were housed in a rest camp until air transit could be made available. We were given full liberty, and went to tour downtown Tokyo to sample its nightlife. We were well looked after at the rest camp, we had maids to do our rooms, were served our meals, and beer was 19 glasses of draft for 1 dollar. Tokyo was fun, and I was able to meet a girl in the American Armed Forces, she was the first white woman I had associated with since arriving in the Far East. I found I had to watch my language as I had been used to a total male environment for the past 7 months. A few days later we boarded a Canadian Pacific "Empress of the Air" prop plane for our 26-hour plane ride home. The occupants of the flight, beside the 3 of us from the ship, were 23 PPCLI (Princess Pat Canadian Light Infantry) soldiers. These men had finished their tour of duty, or were returning home for medical reasons.

There were also 2 gorgeous stewardesses aboard. They came into the airport lounge and spent some time with us. They looked like Hollywood movie stars, and as they walked up and down the aisles, 26 pair of eyes followed their every move. Finally after about 10 hours of this entertainment one soldier lamented “Christ I wish they would sit down so I could get some sleep.” It was nice to see a wholesome Canadian girl and we could not take our eyes off them.

We landed at an American Air Force base In the Aleutian islands, it was on one of the Near Islands called Shema, Here we ate a hot meal in the Military mess and changed flight crews. The base was a series of large huts interconnected by tunnels. It was too cold to venture outside. We then continued to Vancouver where we were quickly hustled through customs and told to report to Victoria for issue of the new style uniforms, which actually had zippers in the jacket and pants. We returned to Vancouver and boarded a train to Halifax with 44 days leave en-route. I stopped off in Calgary, Toronto and Montreal. In total I had spent 194 days in the Operating Area. With my leave and travelling time, it would be 2 months before I resumed duty at

Albro Lake radio station in Dartmouth N.S. My kit bag and hammock went by surface transport and did not arrive till 6 months later.

H.M.C. *RADIO STATION* (ALBRO LAKE)

In 1952-1954 the main naval radio station was located on Albro Lake Road, in the suburbs of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. I served there on 2 occasions. The first time was from April 1952 till January 1954. I was assigned there from HMCS *Athabaskan*. The second tour was from November 1955 to July 1956.

Albro Lake served all naval and merchant shipping in the western Atlantic. It provided a general broadcast as well as ship/shore service on 4/6/8/12/16/ megacycles. It relayed any commonwealth nation's traffic free of charge to Portishead, England, which in turn relayed to other British Commonwealth Nations. Most communication with ships during this time was in morse code; though ships could shift to radio teletype if they had a large volume. Hand transmission by telegraph key was about 12-15 words per minute. The broadcast transmitted at 20-25 words per minute using punched tape, only the message numbers were sent by hand. The service to Whitehall, England was radio teletype. The station also manned the "Landline Naval Tape Relay Network," as well as relaying telegrams to Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Telegraph companies. There was one Ministry of Transport operator on each watch, who did the administrative work for the commercial traffic.

About 20 single men lived in quarters on the base, and another 60 in married quarters, or ashore on subsistence allowance. The radio watches were continuous around the clock and consisted of:

2 days of day watches from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
2 days of evening watches from 4:00 p.m. to 12:00 p.m.
2 days of middles watches from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.
You then received 48 hours off, before repeating the cycle all over again.

The work was interesting, but the rotating of the watches restricted your activities ashore. Albro Lake was the receiving station; the transmitters were located some distance away at Newport Corners, and manned by radio technicians. During my first posting, the bridges across the harbour had not been erected, and all trips to Halifax were done by ferry. That was the only sea time I had during this period. During an eight-hour day watch on the 6-megacycle ship/shore bay, you could work

as many as 30 to 40 ships, receiving as many as 50 messages. These ships were from every maritime nation in the world. They used international procedures, and protocol; the ships were recognized by their call signs. I enjoyed this work very much; In January of 1954 I had spent 21 months at the station. I felt I had mastered my trade, and was ready for a sea draft.

We had not been required to wear uniforms when proceeding ashore, and I had acquired a significant civilian wardrobe. Our recreational activities for the most part were routine and repetitive. We would ride in the back of a small van to Dartmouth, where we boarded the car ferry to Halifax. We usually went to a local tavern, which was a hangout for communicators (Sea Horse Tavern), or go to the Sea Gull Club on Hollis St. The taverns were male only and served beer. After a few quarts of the local brew, we would proceed to the city's dances in search of female companionship. When we had enough money we would bring a pint of rum with us. On occasion I would develop a relationship, but they never seemed to last. I knew I did not want to be married and tied down. I was afraid of developing any long-term relationships.

A dilemma for those of us at Albro Lake was that the ferry to Dartmouth stopped running around midnight, and the next ferry was not till 6 a.m. the next morning. To complicate things further the truck to the base from Dartmouth had a rigid schedule. If we missed the last ferry we had to purchase a bunk at the Seagull Club (50 cents), and make sure, if we were going on watch at 8 a.m. that we caught the 6 a.m. ferry to Dartmouth. When the whole fleet was in Halifax, the Seagull Club would be full, and we would have to sit outside the terminal until 6 a.m. The city was like a graveyard after midnight, and there were no open restaurants in the area. In my whole time at the base, I knew of only 2 ratings that owned a car or motorcycle, and if they did, they still had to drive around Bedford Basin to get to Halifax. Besides, drinking and driving did not mix.

We were allowed leave twice a year, and I usually hitch- hiked to Toronto and back with a 2 to 3 day stop in Montreal. At that time Montreal was the liveliest of the Canadian cities. We also took day trips to St. John, Moncton, Charlottetown, Kentville, and the Annapolis valley. It was very similar to having a civilian job; we had no parades, divisions, shore patrol, or full inspections. We wore dungarees, or blues and singlets on watch, and I only recall being in full uniform on one occasion. There was also a comradeship between the chief and petty officers and other ratings that did not exist on other ships or establishments. We were all radio operators practicing our profession and far removed from the navy bureaucracy and brass. One officer and one chief handled the base's administration. I took my oral and written exam for leading seaman there and left in that rating in 1954.

Corruption exists in every facet of our society and it was no different in this establishment. The base had 2 cooks and a supply rating to look after our food supplies. The supplies needed to feed the 20 men who lived on the base were gathered once a week from the supply depot in Halifax. Shortly after the arrival of a new supply petty officer we noticed deterioration in the quality and quantity of our meals. The galley was always out of basics, such as sugar, milk and butter. When breakfast was bacon and eggs: there would be no bacon, and when there were steaks or pork chops on the menu there would not be enough to go around. Twenty of us living on the base decided to lodge a complaint. The Navy is not a democratic institution and we could not draw up one petition, sign it, and expect results. There was a possibility it would be seen as a form of mutiny. We all submitted individual requests to see the commanding officer to lodge a complaint about the food.

The day finally arrived for our grievance to be heard. We were fallen in outside the regulating office at 9 a.m. and stood at ease. I had just finished the 12 midnight to 8 a.m. watch and was exhausted. When the time came for me to appear before the investigating officer it was 12 noon and I had been standing there for 3 hours. I doubled in, saluted the officer and my complaint was read out by the chief of the base. The officer grilled me for half an hour with questions like: On what date was the food not up to standard? Who was the duty cook? Who was the petty officer of the watch? Did I report the occurrence to him? Did I think this was a restaurant? I did not have the dates and the names of the men on duty and he made me appear a fool. When the officer had me completely flustered, he started to threaten me. Did I know how good I had it at the radio station; would I prefer to be at the Halifax base, standing guard duty on the main gate for the next year? He had a good mind to draft me to one of the frigates, which were doing long boring fishery patrols off the coast. Or would I prefer to be posted to one of the Arctic radio stations. I was flabbergasted, I thought I would get a fair hearing, but I should have known better.

I was finally put out on subsistence allowance and got a room with 2 beds in an upstairs flat in Dartmouth. I had a series of shipmates sharing the room with me. One of the men, although living with me was married to 2 women. He was caught, charged by civil authority and discharged from the Navy. I met him years later in Ottawa where to the best of my knowledge he had remarried and settled down. Another roommate was later drafted to an aircraft carrier. One night on a drinking spree, with 2 of his buddies on citadel hill, he was a witness to them assaulting a 15-year-old girl. They were charged with statutory rape, and he was charged because he did nothing to stop the other 2. The last time I saw him in Stadacona he was doing a discharge

routine before his civil trial. He was dressed in a prison jump suit and was handcuffed. I met him on a streetcar in Toronto 10 years later. He was happily married with a family.

Both of these men were not criminal types; they were pleasant friendly outgoing types that got caught up in drinking and their youthful exuberance. There was always double jeopardy when you committed an offence ashore in the Navy. You first went to naval court and received your Navy punishment before proceeding to the civil court. If the civilian charge was serious enough you were discharged. I stayed out of trouble on this base except for one occasion when I was caught with a young lady in the upstairs dorm. (I was showing her my etchings). She was banished from the base and I received 30 days stoppage of leave.

HMCS *THUNDER*

In January 1954, with only 6 months left in my first 5 year enlistment, I was drafted to a new wooden Minesweeper, HMCS *Thunder* which was berthed on the Halifax side of the harbour. The girl I was going with at the time was still on the Dartmouth side and I had a lot of sea time going back and forth on the ferries to see her. A few years later, they constructed 2 bridges across the harbour. The ship was only in commission for 3 months, when the vessel was transferred to the French Navy. I only served a month on this ship, and our only time at sea was on the Nova Scotia coast.

The living quarters were cramped, and it was like being housed on a fishing boat. In the evenings, in harbour, there were only 2 or 3 men aboard. The ship was a good draft for a married man who wanted to be home with his family every night. It was not my idea of a good draft. I needed a larger ship. I did not consider this ship to be very sea worthy because in high seas she jumped around like a bucking horse. The ship was under manned and I was a very busy communicator. She was supposed to have staff of 38, but I only remember about 15-20 men. I was assigned 8 jobs on this ship, I was: radio operator, signalman, ships writer (I typed all the captains' correspondence,) navigator's yeoman, (I was in charge of the ships charts and winding the ships clocks) and various seaman's duties that I cannot remember, but last and most importantly, I was the mailman.

Being the mailman was a dangerous job, you left the ship to pick up the mail in the dockyard at 10:00 a.m. and this time just happened to coincide with the opening hour of the Halifax taverns. The Seaway tavern was just a block from the Post Office through the dockyard gate. The temptation was to proceed to the tavern, have a few drafts for an eye-opener, and then when you got back to the ship it was time for the rum issue.

At that time I traded my cigarette issue for another man's rum issue, so I had 5 ounces of rum waiting for me at 12 noon. It was not a good start to the day. After a few indiscretions on my part, I had a conversation with one of the 2 officers aboard and told him I would like a draft to a larger ship about to depart on an assignment. My argument was that I had to make a decision in 5 months about staying in the Navy, and if I stayed on this ship I was definitely getting out. He made a phone call to the drafting chief; I was drafted in a few days, to a newly converted frigate, about to depart on a shake down cruise to the Caribbean. I don't know if he did it out of concern for me, or if he wanted a sober mailman.

HMCS *LAUZON*

In February 1954 I took my kit bag down the jetty and boarded HMCS *Lauzon*, a River Class Frigate built during the Second World War. Twenty-one of these ships were refitted to Prestonian Class Ocean Escort. This class had a crew of 140 men and officers, 3 tier bunks, cafeteria style messing and upright clothing lockers. They were equipped with large squid anti-submarine mortars on the quarterdeck, as well as the normal armament. *Lauzon* had just been re-commissioned, and brought down the St. Lawrence River from a Quebec shipyard. The ships interior including the radio offices was new and constructed of aluminium materials, making the maintenance easier. We normally operated as a squadron with other ships of our class. The destroyer *Algonquin* was usually squadron leader.

Other ships of our class at that time were: *Toronto, Prestonian*, *Outremont*, and *Buckingham*. These ships had better ventilation systems, and were the first preview of what was to come in the new Canadian designed, St Laurent Class, that were to be commissioned in the next 5 years. They had finally departed from the British design standards for the men's living conditions. The layout of the ship was more American style. American Navy ships had been equipped with bunks and cafeterias for decades. The Naval architects were now on the right track. The ships armament and crew was maximized for anti-submarine warfare. The vessels intra and inter-ship

communications was also of American style, and the main radio office had a large switching console where we could switch any transmitter or receiver to numerous locations throughout the ship.

This should have been a happy and efficient ship, we had modern eating and sleeping accommodations, the ship was new, and the upkeep was easier. However this ship had the worst morale of any ship in which I served. In the communication branch we were happy campers, we had a good officer and petty officer, new equipment to work on, and a pleasant environment to work in. The rest of the crew were unhappy, mainly because of an arrogant, incompetent, First Lieutenant (Jimmy). He had no concept of how to handle men, was authoritative, dictatorial, smug, and superior in his attitude. He talked down to you, and believed his authority extended in all matters, in all departments. This officer was a disaster, and the seamen crew despised him. The result was that he could not get the men to work for him; the crew took great pleasure in sabotaging any projects that he started. When you have a situation like this on a ship, the lower deck ratings tend to let off steam by over indulging ashore, and the list of men under punishment reflected this.

In one instance after returning from a month of exercises with our squadron in the Caribbean, we had a surprise inspection on our arrival in Halifax by the CANFLAGLANT (Canadian Flag Officer Atlantic). This admiral was disgusted with the state of the ship; he sent us back to sea the next day for a week, and told us not to come back in until we had the vessel ship shape. This was very unsettling to the married men who had already been away for a month, and the blame fell on the first lieutenant. The ship's upper deck cleanliness and maintenance was his responsibility. The ship returned a week later and passed the admiral's inspection.

The captain was from the old school and kept his distance from the men, using the first lieutenant as a buffer. Our own communication officer was good, he stood up for the branch, was intelligent and knowledgeable. Many years later when I was a petty officer, we shared a pint of scotch together on a Toronto-Montreal train.

The radio staff included a petty officer in charge, a leading seaman (myself) as a day man, and 4 or 5 able seamen as watch keepers. The message center was not in the same office, but located across the flat (hall). This layout greatly improved the working conditions in radio 1. We also were not in the bowels of the ship, but on the upper deck port side, and could step out on the upper deck for a breather. For a short period of time I was also designated as the mailman on this ship. I relinquished this task as soon as possible. The mail run coincided too closely with the rum issue.

We had trouble with another officer on the ship that had been trained in Great Britain and was on loan from South Africa Navy. When ships operate as a squadron, and are at anchor, or, on occasion, when alongside, one ship is delegated as Guard Ship for all communications. This ship is responsible for all incoming and outgoing messages for the squadron for a 24-hour period. Being Guard ship is an important and vital task as you have the responsibility for all the squadron's communication.

One night, when we were guard ship, one able seaman was assigned to copy the broadcast at 25 words per minute, I, as a day man did the transmitting of messages, distress frequency monitoring, and other administrative duties. On this occasion, I was not in radio 1, but in radio 2 transmitting messages by key to Halifax, when this officer entered radio 1 drunk at midnight, he had been drinking in the wardroom all evening. He apparently wanted to send a telegram and immediately started to shout at the radio operator "Get to your feet an officer has entered the room." Although getting to your feet was standard procedure, the radio operator could not do this because he would miss some traffic. He asked the officer to leave the radio office; the officer refused, and continued to berate the rating. The rating was French Canadian, and reverted to his mother tongue and this infuriated the officer even more. There was no way the rating was going to stand up to pay respect to a drunken officer in the middle of a coded message. The next morning the officer attempted to put the man on charge for insubordination and other charges. The communication officer intervened telling the officer he had no business being in the radio office at that time of night. He was not the officer of the watch, and that in future any requests for radio transmissions were to be forwarded to him.

This settled the matter for the time being but when this officer was the officer of the watch in port, he was very critical in the inspection of any communication rating that was proceeding ashore or returning aboard. We always raised the alarm in the mess when he was a duty or shore patrol officer. Fortunately at sea we had nothing to do with him.

One of the problems in the Navy at the time was the majority of the training for junior officers were done in the Royal Navy. Special Branch Officers such as gunnery and communications were sent to the United Kingdom for their training. Officers who had been in the Navy pre-war did their first sea time in the Royal Navy. Later in their naval career they returned to England again to get their big ship time. (Cruisers and battleships). They had their uniforms tailor made in London. They did not want to be viewed as Colonialists, so they adapted to the Royal Navy ways and terminology and then brought these methods home to Canada. The officers were used to working with British seamen, and were trained in the Royal Navy way. They developed a

philosophy that nothing was done right unless it was done the Royal Navy way. Canada had it‘s own Navy since 1910 but we were just an appendix to the Royal Navy, our ships even flew the Royal Navy white ensign.

In the 1950’s this attitude prevailed in the most senior ranks in Navy. All of the senior officers had been trained or transferred from the Royal Navy and they saw no reason for Canada’s Navy to be any different from the Navy in which they had earned their stripes. These officers were influenced by the English class structure, displayed an indifference to the ratings, their living conditions, and also believing in harsh discipline. They returned to Canada with a superiority complex, aristocratic accents, and British mannerisms. They had an attitude of entitlement. The sad fact is that Naval Headquarters in Ottawa agreed with them. The 17 or 18-Year-old Canadian recruit was not used to being considered to be in a lower class, in school, or previous work environments. They found the pseudo Canadian Officers a bit ridiculous, not Canadian. In most cases, they despised them and could not wait to get out of this Canadian/British Navy.

Officers slept in cabins with real sheets, bedspreads and pillows; they ate off white tablecloths, with fine china, had stewards to serve them, do their laundry, make their beds, and both at sea and in harbour had the privileges of the wardroom bar. They most importantly had the privacy of their cabins. On the other hand, the ratings on most ships, slept in a hammock with 2 coarse blankets, this hammock had to be lashed up and stowed in the morning and could not be re-slung until after 9 p.m. at night, further, his mess was out of bounds during working hours. He had to gather the food for the mess in large trays, and had to eat warmed up food out of a hot box. There was inadequate space for their clothing, and they had to do their personal washing in a 5-gallon can with a toilet plunger.

The ratings alcohol issue was 2 ½ ounces of rum mixed with 5 ounces of water or coke (depending on the ship), and he had to draw and drink it at 12 noon. On most ships he had to drink the rum where it was issued (on the quarterdeck), with an officer and petty officer standing guard to ensure that the rum was consumed by the person to whom it was issued. The rum had to be consumed in a certain time frame depending on the whim of the officer. On some ships, the rum was gathered by the senior leading seaman of the mess, already mixed in large jugs, and distributed by him. This method was a saner approach. Later on in the 1950s, one can of beer was issued per man when we were in tropical waters. Petty officers were issued 2 cans. I could, go on and on, but I just wanted to show the officer/rating relationship that existed in the Navy in the early 1950’s.

There were 4 minor mutinies' in the Navy in the 1948-1949 periods. These mutinies resulted in the Mainguy report. The report made recommendations to fix some of the problems listed above (i.e. the junior officers were to be trained in Canada). I was personally able to see some of the changes in my last few years in the Navy. What I find amazing is that in the 11 years I served in the Navy I never heard a word spoken of the 4 mutinies, or the Mainguy report, or the recommendations. This is further puzzling as I later served on 2 of the ships involved. At the time it was unusual to spend more than 24 months on a ship, and usually less than that because of refit, training, and upgrade courses. After the mutinies the men involved were probably discharged, or scattered to different ships. I think the Mainguy Report was a well-kept secret in the Navy because of the senior officer's view of the report.

As the saying goes, and I have found it to be true "the only thing constant in this life is change." As the Canadian society changed so did the Navy's need to change. The changes finally came years later and can be attributed to a new kind of Canadian Naval Officer. This officer was better educated, and served and learned his trade in a Canadian environment with Canadian built ships and Canadian crew.

On the Lauzon we visited many Caribbean ports:
Bridgetown, Barbados.
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.
Willemstad, Curacao. (Dutch Antilles.)
Kingston, Grenadine Islands.
Hamilton, Bermuda.

I recall Kingston in the Grenadines Islands as being very beautiful. The downtown architecture was something out of the last century, and the natives were 95 percent black, and as dark as coal. They must have come from one location in Africa, when they were brought there as slaves. I remember sitting on the outskirts of town, on a small hill, looking out to sea, with the town slightly off to the right, thinking this was indeed paradise, but it was too damn hot. We also spent some time at the large American naval base in Norfolk Virginia.

We found an interesting situation in Willemstad, Curacao. This port, because of the oil in the area, had a large volume of merchant ship traffic. The city decided to move the bar area outside the main town. They converted an abandoned Army camp into a large bar and brothel. It was 15 minutes from the town by cab, surrounded by a wire fence and open for action from 12 noon until midnight. At that hour all seamen were removed from the compound, and the gate locked. The galley and eating area was in the center of the camp, and was converted to a bar. The normal Army living

blocks were converted into very small apartments for the women. There was a bedroom, a small sitting room, a shower and a small set of steps to the individual units. The women mingled with the guests in the bar and took any willing men back to their accommodations. You could buy liquor or beer by the bottle or case at the bar, and take it with you.

Some men stayed with the same women for the 4 days we were in port, others sampled all the delights of the camp. The women sat on the steps outside their units looking for business. The men strolled the camp, window-shopping. You can imagine the scene at this camp at 12 pm. when the men had to vacate the camp. The shore patrol had their hands full. Canadian sailors from 8 ships, mostly of a tender age, had been enjoying the pleasures of the camp for 8 hours or more. They had never experienced anything like this before. It was bedlam. The men had to be stacked in the cabs like cord wood and returned to the ships. By the time the taxi arrived at the ship half of the men were asleep, and the quartermaster had to revive them and help them up the gangway. It was like a scene out of the Hollywood movie "Mister Roberts."

The women were very young, and were not from the Dutch island. They were from adjacent South American countries. I witnessed several arriving from Venezuela in the back of an open stake truck. I suppose you could call the establishment disgusting and degrading to the women. The camp did solve an age-old problem for the city of Willemstad, and provided wages for the women. The Dutch are very pragmatic in issues dealing with sex.

Bermuda was our most common stop. The island is small, only 21 miles long and at its widest only 2 miles in width. The large business establishments were in general not friendly to Canadian service members. On one hand, I cannot blame them, on some weekends there would be as many as 8 Destroyers and Frigates anchored off their shore with 2000 sailors looking for excitement ashore. All the major resorts barred service members; we were restricted to the few local bars in Hamilton and St. Georges. It was very difficult to meet young ladies, with so much competition; also the female tourists were in the large resort hotels, where we were not welcome. The officers were allowed to go ashore in civilian clothes, and had a leg up on us. It was unfair competition.

On one trip a friend and I decided to phone the nurse's residence of the largest hospital in Bermuda. We knew that all the hospitals on the islands employed nurses from Canada and America. We were able to talk 2 young nurses into going out on the town with us. One girl was American from the state of Maine, and the other from Nova Scotia. We decided to go first class, and picked the girls up by cab at the St.

Georges Hospital. The girl from Truro, Nova Scotia immediately captivated me. She was the girl of my dreams. The 4 of us went by cab to the Elbow Beach Hotel. We entered the main lounge and entertainment room to order a drink. We were the only ones in the lounge at that early hour, and the bar staff was ignoring us. Finally a manager came over and told us that unless the young ladies were registered at the hotel they could not serve us. He advised us that under normal conditions the bar was out of bounds to Canadian naval personnel. It was a very embarrassing moment, and we had to leave quietly, with our tail between our legs. We then took our third cab to a bar [It was getting expensive] in downtown Hamilton, which I believe was called the Cave.

After a wonderful evening together I made arrangements to meet the young lady the next 2 nights in Hamilton, we then took the girls home in the fourth cab. I was really impressed with my date; she said she was engaged to be married but was not sure if she wanted to go through with it. I thought it was possible when she returned to Nova Scotia that I could get to know her better. I was getting out of the Navy in a few months and could visit her there. The next day as we were getting ready to go ashore the squadron was ordered to the scene of an air disaster north of us. A Navy Avenger aircraft had crashed flying from Shearwater to Bermuda, we searched 2 or 3 days for survivors, but I believe the crew was lost. We had to proceed to sea fast and the first thing that was disconnected was the telephone line to shore, so we could not advise the girls of our dilemma. We then sailed to Halifax; I did not get back to Bermuda until a year later. I did not know the girls last name and it has always been in the back of my mind. What If?

The local Bermudians treated us kindly, and on one occasion a bar owner in Hamilton invited me and another radio operator to his home to meet his Canadian wife. We had an enjoyable evening with his charming wife, and enjoyed a meal in the quaint pastel coloured cottage in which they lived. The main transportation in Bermuda for visiting tourists, and service men, were 2 wheel mopeds. These small motorcycles were cheap to rent, but if you had been drinking rum earlier, difficult to handle. We had men break arms and legs on most trips to Bermuda, and in some cases had to leave men there in hospital. I believe the tourists had the same problem. On one occasion we lost a seaman, who had fallen into an abandoned cistern, it was only 6 feet deep, but in his intoxicated state he panicked and drowned.

Because of the atmosphere on this ship, when my 5 year enlistment was up I wanted out of the Navy. I cannot remember any other leading seaman on this ship re-enlisting. I was drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* for discharge routine, and returned to

Toronto by rail. At that time there were over 50 Men waiting for discharge. I was now 22 years old, had 1 suit of civilian clothes, and 200 dollars in my pocket.

I stayed out of the Navy for 3 months, 6 weeks of that was leave. The only job I could get was at Phillips Electronics, in the borough of Leaside, putting together TV sets. The job was boring and repetitive. Every time I looked over my shoulder some supervisor was watching me. You needed permission to use the bathroom, and the pay was only $1.20 an hour. My immediate supervisor was a retired Chief Gunner from the Royal Navy. I felt I had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. I quit at noon hour after 4 ½ days, the Chief Gunner went ballistic. I went to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, asking for a change in my job classification. After much scratching of the gray matter they classified me as a "Material Handler," this meant I was qualified to pack boxes. This news was very discouraging, and I knew I had to go back to school or back in the Navy. Fate intervened.

A Toronto policeman, a friend of mine from the Navy phoned and informed me he intended to go to HMCS *York*, the Toronto naval reserve base to inquire about going into the Reserve Navy, and requested that I accompany him. The Reserve Navy attends drills 1 night a week. I decided to go with him. On the way down to the base we happened to stop at a few local taverns, to reminisce about old times. The next morning when I awoke, I realized that I had signed on in the regular Navy for an additional 5 years; my friend had not joined anything. A few months later, I was bouncing around on a destroyer on the Atlantic, while my friend was safe at home in the arms of his wife. I can only conclude that re-enlistment was in the back of my mind, and I was not ready to go back to school yet. The next 5 years turned out to be much better than the first hitch, and I do not regret the decision to re-enlist. I was taken back as an able seaman, and promoted to leading seaman the next day. I was a petty officer within a year.

HMCS *WALLACEBURG*

In October 1954 I was back in the Navy, and en-route to HMCS *Stadacona.* I was issued new uniforms and drafted four days later to HMCS *Wallaceburg*, an Algerine Class Convoy Escort /Minesweeper. It was 225 feet long with a crew of 170 men. She had been commissioned in 1943, was a training ship until 1957, when she was transferred to the Belgian Navy.

I only spent 5 weeks on this ship. We had one trip to New York City (Brookland Navy Yard) and Hamilton, Bermuda. Only 2 radio operators were on board; the ship was outfitted with hammocks and a central galley. I was now 22 years old. On our return from Bermuda I was drafted to Stadacona again for the next few months. My main duties were in the Communications Training Center, with shore patrol every fourth night in downtown Halifax. One night I had to arrest a friend from the *Wallaceburg* who was drunk, and creating a disturbance in a restaurant. When I went to phone for the paddy wagon, he became very belligerent, ripping the pay phone off the wall. We restrained him and finally got the wagon to take him to *Stadacona* cells. He was no longer a friend.

On another occasion I was sent to sea for a few days on HMCS *Port St. Jean* an Auxiliary Gate Vessel. These vessels were manned by civilian staff and only required a radio operator under certain operating circumstances. The ship only had one CM11 transmitter/receiver aboard and I spent the day's sun bathing outside the radio shack.

Later I was assigned, with 2 other men, to travel by train to pick up a prisoner in Windsor, Ontario. We picked up our man at the Essex County Jail, and then received further instructions to continue on to Toronto for another prisoner. This second man was lodged in the Army Provost cells on the lakeshore. It was a fun trip; we had an overnight in Windsor and Toronto. We went by bus to Detroit to enjoy the nightlife. We ended up in African American bar; there was a sudden silence when we first entered, but after they saw the shoulder patches, they accepted us.

The prisoners were two 18 year olds who had not returned from leave. When we boarded the train in Montreal, we put them in a sleeping compartment, removed all their clothes and retired to the bar car. It was minus 10 degrees outside and we figured they would not be going anywhere. When we delivered them to the cells in Halifax, they both thanked us. I think after the Windsor city jail and the Army provost cells, the Navy looked pretty good. While in Halifax I had the opportunity of taking a 1-week fire fighting and damage control course. The course taught us basic damage control procedures, and how to fight oil, water and electrical fires on board ship.

HMCS *MICMAC*

In January I received a draft to HMCS *Micmac* a Tribal Class Destroyer. The ship was 356 feet long with a beam of 38 feet. She had a crew of 259 men and Officers. The ship was in the Dartmouth slips, sitting up out of the water for hull repairs. Standard procedure when arriving at a new ship is to report to the officer of the watch. There was no one on the brow of the ship but the quartermaster, so I proceeded to the wardroom flats looking for the officer. He appeared at the door of the wardroom, he was so drunk he had a hard time forming his words. He questioned me at great length why I had not reported aboard earlier in the day. [I had stopped at a pub]. He was a communications officer who had risen through the ranks. I had previous dealings with this officer and respected him, but he had a drinking problem and became very authoritative when under the influence. He said we were going to have a further discussion in the morning. I heard nothing more from him. I did not think it was a good start on my new ship. Luckily he was transferred a few weeks later.

I realized the next day that 80-90 percent of the ships company were on leave or in training waiting for the refit to finish. The communication mess was uninhabitable because of the ongoing repairs. We were accommodated on the main deck in the seaman's mess. I remember only one other signalman and a few seamen in the mess. There was no power or heating on the ship and the galley was not functioning. We were sent by harbour craft over to HMCS *Stadacona* for our meals. We were expected to sling our hammocks and sleep on the *Micmac*. It was January, plates were off the side of the ship, and we had no heat. I would wake up in the morning feeling like a solid block of ice. I tried to stay in the radio office most of the day to keep warm. We got our rum at noon, and were then transported to *Stadacona* for lunch. We did not go as a uniform body so it gave us the opportunity to go to the local pub instead.

In the evening we tried to find alternate sleeping accommodation such as the Sea Gull club. Once I slept for a few nights illegally in a friend's dorm at *Stadacona.* Our duties were very limited on this ship and you basically tried to stay out of the way of the First Lieutenant (Jimmy), he was a prowler, who turned up at the most

inopportune times. One day after one of our pub lunches he found me dozing in the radio shack. He put me on punishment for 2 days chipping paint on the upper deck. It was 10 below zero and very cold and wet. He dropped by every hour to make sure I was still occupied. He was a reserve officer inflated with his new position and itching to exercise his authority. He probably sold insurance or was a bank clerk in the real world. This officer hounded me until I left the ship.

I had suffered from a very bad cold for 3 weeks; I did not want to go to sickbay in *Stadacona*, in case I was hospitalized. I had a friend stationed at Albro Lake who suggested a solution; there was a vacant bed in the upper dorm that was equipped with blankets and linen. He suggested that I spend the weekend at the station sweating out the cold. I arrived on Friday evening with a bottle of rum, sugar, some aspirin, biscuits and a few sandwiches. The strategy was that I would doctor myself with hot toddies and try to get as much sleep as I could until Monday. I would mix a hot toddy, read a bit, and then fall asleep. I only got out of bed for hot water and to use the facilities. There were rounds by the petty officer of the watch, but they assumed I was one of the watch keepers, or a new arrival. I continued this routine for the total 48 hours. I went back to the ship on Monday morning a little weak, but a new man. Some times the old remedies work

We were finally out of the Dartmouth slips and were then moved by tug to the Halifax side of the harbour. Men and officers returned from leave, new draftees arrived, and in no time we doing work-ups in the Caribbean. We had a good communications group; there were a half dozen of us on our second 5-year hitch in the Navy. I was the senior leading seaman, and in charge of the mess. It was my duty to draw the rum in harbour and distribute it to the other ratings. I was also responsible for the general cleanliness of the mess.

I had a few disciplinary problems in the mess, such as one man who would not bath. In the tropics, where we wore sandals, the men were complaining about this man's (size 13) foot odour, I had him report to me every day with his feet washed. Another man always looked scruffy and smelled. You could always tell when he was in the radio shack. I had him muster his entire kit on the radio office deck. I discovered that the kit was all new. The man, in order to avoid washing items, had been wearing the same dungarees and blue uniform for the past 2 years. The kit was rolled up pusser (regulation), and tied with his name showing, exactly the same as when he had left new entry training. He was made to launder his entire kit and to report every second day with clean dungarees.

I mention this because in my experience it was a very unusual situation. Navy men were very aware of their personal hygiene, and the condition of their clothing. Cleanliness and neatness was stressed in new entry training and most men followed the practices learned for the rest of their lives. You had to keep your kit clean and ready for use. For example, you could come from shore in blue uniform, go to sea in dungarees, arrive in the tropics 3 days later, shift to shorts, singlet and sandals and go ashore the next day in full white uniform with the reverse procedure on the way home.

We spent most of the time doing exercises with other destroyers, frigates and the aircraft carrier HMCS *Magnificent*. I do not remember how many times we went south but I know we were in Hamilton and Malabar Bermuda, New York, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. On one of these cruises, I over indulged ashore and missed the ship next morning. The ship was under sailing orders, which made missing it a more serious offence. I woke up at 10 a.m. realizing the ship had sailed at 08:00 a.m. and that I was in more trouble than I had ever been before. I went into old San Juan to get a beer, shave, haircut, and have my white uniform pressed. I knew that I could not be in any more trouble than I was now. Confused about what I should do, I thought the best place to think the situation over was in a bar; the same bar I had been in the previous evening.

The American Shore Patrol, who had been searching for me, picked me up in the bar at 4:00 p.m. that afternoon. They put me in a jeep and returned me to the large American base that is situated there. I was warned that once my ship left Puerto Rico, I was an illegal alien. This meant, if the local authorities in the town picked me up, I would end up in a Spanish jail. I stayed on the base for 5 days waiting for the British Consul to arrange transportation for me back to Canada, or to my ship. I was treated as a celebrity on the base, was billeted in the transient's block [Men waiting to pick-up ships], and was taken to the wet canteen every night. I was issued a set of dungarees and my white uniform was washed and ironed by the base laundry every morning. The chief's mess gave me 25 dollars for spending money. I liked this Navy!

On the fifth or sixth day the American shore patrol put me on a plane to New York City, the 2 patrolmen wished me good luck, and gave me a few dollars to buy a drink on the plane. In New York I had a 6 or 8 hour stop over before the Bermuda plane, and no patrol met me. I resisted the temptation to cash my ticket and go downtown with a young blond ticket agent I met in the lounge. One hour before the plane left, the American shore patrol arrived to escort me onto the plane. They were equipped with belt, gaiters, large Billy clubs and side arms. They had just received a Telex that I had arrived earlier in the day. The plane to Bermuda was full of insurance executives, (and their wives) who had just won a week's vacation for their sales

efforts. They viewed me with suspicion; I sat in silence for the whole flight. I felt like Jack the Ripper.

On arrival in Bermuda there was again no escort to meet me. I finally contacted the Canadian Consulate, and was informed there was one Canadian ship in Bermuda, HMCS *New Liskeard*. I got in touch with the ship and they sent a jeep for me. A few days later this ship sailed and I had to move onto the destroyer HMCS *Haida* that had just arrived in harbour. I was on the *Haida* for 2 days and stayed in the communications mess. The jimmy found me, called me that "Dam Deserter" and put me up the mast, chipping paint on one of the upper radar platforms. He came by every ½ hour to make sure I was busy. Finally the *Micmac* arrived in harbour.

I was the only one on the jetty to take her lines. When the gangway was finally up, I went aboard saluting the quarterdeck. The jimmy came sliding down the ladders from the bridge yelling, "Lock that man up in the tiller flats." The Coxswain took me to his office and kept me there for a few hours till the jimmy went ashore then put me under open arrest. This meant I had to report to his office every couple of hours. There is, a lot more to this story, but I figure I have revealed enough of my indiscretions.

We sailed a few days later on a 30-day NATO exercise in the Mid-Atlantic and the British Channel. I did not get to see the captain till we had been at sea for a couple of weeks. My punishment was 30 days stoppage of leave, a $50 fine, $150 for the air transport, and my assessment dropped from above average to average. My pay at the time was $137 a month. The assessments counted towards your next promotion, for average you received 1 point, above average 3, and 5 for superior. To get a 5 consistently, you had to walk on water, or have your nose a mile up someone's posterior. I got off better than I expected, mostly because we still had 2 weeks at sea and this counted as valid time in my 30-day stoppage. When we arrived in England, the captain gave all "Blacklist Men" (Men under punishment) a 24-hour grace period and I was able to proceed to London for a night on the town. I got back the next morning 5 minutes before my leave expired. I just about did it again!

I must make a comment on this commanding officer. He had transferred from the Royal Navy, was a full 3-ring commander, and was a competent and fair officer. It was evident he was as frustrated with the jimmy as the rest of the crew. I found out later it was the initial intention of the Navy to send me back to Halifax for punishment. If this had been the case, I would probably have lost my rating, if not discharged. I believe that after consultation with the communication officer and my chief, he was instrumental in having me return to the ship.

A few months later in Halifax I missed a ferry from Dartmouth and was an hour over my leave. I was waiting in the coxswain's office for the charges to be written up when I was advised that the captain wanted to see me in his cabin. This was very unusual; I had never been in any captain's cabin before, except to deliver messages. He asked me to sit down and talked to me for a half hour, man to man, He told me, I was well thought of by my chief and officer, and was liked by my mess mates. He had been told I was very good in my chosen profession and had a good career ahead of me. He wanted me to explain to him why I was doing my hardest to screw up my career. I could not tell him, I knew I was drinking too much and I decided to try and do something about it. He did not lay any charges. This officer did me a good service by his candour, sincerity and understanding. His comments gave me a better insight into my actions and myself. For the most part, for the next 5 years I stayed out of trouble.

About 2 weeks later I was drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* for a 6-week trade group 2 course; this course would allow me to become a petty officer. The 10 men on the course were all on their second hitch, a few were known to be superior in their trade. There were 2 or 3 of us living on the base, the rest of the men were married and lived ashore. At first, I took the course to be a lark and just a breather off the ship. I thought the course was mostly book review. I had a relationship ashore, and was doing no homework. Written exams were scheduled at the end of the sixth week. At the end of the fifth week I realized I was in trouble, and would never pass the written exams. I needed a strategy.

The information from the books was classified as either "A, B, or C" knowledge. I decided I would concentrate only on the "A" material. I stayed aboard on the Saturday and Sunday and typed for about 30 hours all the "A" knowledge on to 8 by 14 sheets of paper. On the 3 days left for the exams I stayed aboard in the evenings to memorize all this type "A" material. We wrote the exams on Thursday and Friday and on the following Monday there were 2 rumours. The first was that one man had failed the course; the second rumour was that I was that man. The marks were posted and I tied for first place with another man, who I respected. I was as surprised as any one, but I came to realize that if I put my mind to it, I could compete with the best. Up until this time I had just been coasting along, not putting much effort into anything. Now more than 50 years later and I still remember one of the questions.

> **Question**. What is the purpose of NATO's Allied Communication Publication # 124?

Answer. The procedures defined therein are designed to provide a definite and concise language whereby radiotelephone communications may be carried out accurately and rapidly with maximum security. (It's pretty close anyway.)

After the course I was drafted back to Albro Lake and was the senior leading seaman living aboard the base. Basically in addition to watch keeping I was responsible for the condition and behaviour in the mess. The mess was one large room in the basement of the building and was used to play ping-pong and guzzle beer. We called it the pit. The canteen was a small alcove under the stairs. No work had been done on the area since the base was built. The tables and chairs were torn and broken, the walls were filthy and there were no curtains on the windows. We formed a committee to clean up the area. I was allocated some money from the canteen and more from the base commander. We painted the mess on our own time, and I ordered drapes ashore to put up over the 7 or 8 windows. The commanding officer requisitioned new leather furniture, tables, lamps, ping-pong table, and I believe we did something to the floor. We transformed the mess before requesting permission to hold a dance and to invite the opposite sex. It was a resounding success and thereafter the men took pride in the mess. Previously it was not unusual to find beer bottles smashed against the wall and the floor littered with trash. There was a civilian cleaner on the base; he considered cleaning the mess the biggest job of the day after a night of our frolicking. He was now a happy man.

In February 1956 I was awarded my petty officers rating and was assigned a separate room, next to the operations centre on the main deck. I was the only petty officer living aboard, and found it to be a very lonely existence. I asked to be put out on subsistence allowance. The commanding officer agreed, and luckily for me, there were 3 leading seamen also looking for accommodations ashore. We decided to pool our resources and rent a furnished house, close to the base, where it was easy to catch the truck back and forth. We found a bungalow in Dartmouth with 4 separate sleeping areas. We all were on different watches so there was always 1 man on watch and 3 off watch partying.

Removing all unnecessary furniture out of the front room we equipped it with an upright piano and an accompanying electrical musical keyboard, (Clavichord). Luckily 2 of the men played piano. We then took all the furniture out of the dining room and inserted red and green bulbs in the overhead lighting fixture to make it look like a dance hall. We had a continual brew of beer going in the basement. On paydays we all chipped in $10 and $40 worth of groceries was purchased. Each man knew what he could take out of the fridge. For example it could be: 2 pork chops, 2 steaks, 6 wieners, 4 sausages, 10 potatoes, 6 eggs etc. Guests were not allowed to eat these

rations. If food was required for guests it was to be ordered in from the local Chinese restaurant.

We had some basic rules:

(1) All women had to leave the premise by daylight.
(2) The home brew was for guests.
(3) We could not touch each other's personal booze without permission.
(4) Other Navy men were not allowed unless they brought their own booze and women.
(5) The food in the fridge was not for guests.
(6) No married women allowed.
(7) Our individual bedrooms were out of bounds to others.

The location was soon a going concern; at first we would meet women at the local dance or restaurant and invite them and their girlfriends to the house. There were a lot of young women working at Hospitals and Institutions in various capacities. They were usually girls from small towns, who had come to the city for a job, and were housed in dorms at their place of work. Dartmouth was a dry town with one dance on Saturday night. It was a very boring place. These girls were glad to find a place they could drop into when off duty, and bring their friends.

The house became famous with this set, and soon became known as "Club 34" which was its street address. We had no trouble with the neighbours, in fact, at times they joined in, the girls would phone and ask if they could come and bring a few friends. If we got inundated with women we would phone the base and ask for reinforcements from those off duty. They would grab a case of beer from the canteen and come down on the next station truck. In fact we became a little too well known. Once a large dockyard worker forced his way into the house and demanded to know where his wife was. We calmed him down and he had a beer after looking around the house. We were lucky his wife had left a half hour earlier. [Some rules are hard to keep.]

I know the above sounds a bit wild, but remember that Dartmouth had no beer parlours or taverns. It was only our naval training and expertise that allowed us to organize such a "Den of Iniquity" as the club. Good things never last, 5 months later I received a draft to HMCS *Assiniboine* a brand new destroyer. When I left "Club 34" at 4 in the afternoon there was a party in full swing. I was reluctant to leave.

HMCS *ASSINIBOINE*

In August of 1956, I traveled to Sorel, Quebec to pick up a brand new St. Laurent Class, Destroyer Escort. I travelled by train to Montreal, then a bus to Sorel. The crew lived with local families until the ship was ready. The whole crew, including the captain, patronized a local pub; we came to know each other well, before taking possession of the ship. We were able to spend our weekends in Montreal, and congregated in the bars around the Windsor train station. The ship, built by Marine Industries was the second of seven of this class.

The ships were all built in Canada. They were called the "Cadillacs" of the fleet. They had a rounded hull, and were designed to counter nuclear, biological, and chemical conditions. The vessels were equipped with a water spray protecting system to wash away fallout and other contaminants. These were the first ships to have a continuous main deck. The living quarters were part of a citadel, which could be sealed, against contaminants, for the safety of the crew. They had luxurious crew accommodations, were air conditioned, and very comfortable to live on. The ship was 366 feet long 42 feet wide with a draft of 13 feet. It accommodated 250 men and officers. The cost to the Government was 23 million dollars.

One of the most interesting parts of the ship was the main flat (hall). It extended from the forward seamen's mess in the bow, to the after mortar well in the stern. It was one deck below the main deck. The flat was nicknamed the “Burma Road.” Ladders snaked off this road, upward and downwards, to men and officer accommodations. The Burma Road was the main arterial highway to most of the offices, and messes. For example; on this highway were radio 2, ship’s canteen, coxswain’s office, fire control centre, sick bay, galley, cafeteria, mortar well, crew accommodations and washrooms. Main water lines ran through the flat. The walls of the flat were lined with all sorts of firefighting equipment, cans of foam, fire extinguishers, terry pumps, extra hoses, and lumber for damage control. The main radio office was in the citadel above along with the wardroom, captain's cabin, operations room, and the enclosed bridge.

Our accommodations were off this flat and we accessed it through a normal door instead of a hatch. The area could accommodate 25 petty officers second-class. There were 3 tier bunks equipped with sheets, pillows, and light comforters. There was a small seating area with a table and benches.

Assiniboine had the latest in sonar and radar systems. We were well equipped to detect the presence of air, surface, or submarine targets. She had twin 3-inch

mounts, and 40 mm anti-aircraft guns. The anti-submarine weaponry included homing torpedoes, and 2 triple barrel mortars, which could be launched over the ship, or to the sides of the ship. Assiniboine had 4 radio offices and a separate message center. It was equipped with 12 internal phone systems. The radio equipment was similar to other ships I had served on, with 2 major exceptions; we had 8 UHF/VHF transceivers for voice communication within the fleet, and 4 other transceivers for use in the LF/MF/HF frequency range.

The main radio office had a large switching consol, where we were able to switch these 12 transceivers, to remote control units, positioned in about 20 locations within the ship. For example, we could switch a unit to the upper or lower bridge, forward or after steering position, quarterdeck, any one of the 4 radio rooms. There were multiple remote units on the bridge and operation room. This allowed the ship to have separate communication frequencies for ship-to-ship, ship-task force, hunter-killer, and ship-air operations. Radio 3 was adjacent to radio 1, and contained the UHF/VHF transceivers. This arrangement allowed quick changing of frequencies. On most ships, this office was located on another deck or in different parts of the ship. The St. Laurent class of ship, served as the prototype for 11 ships, of 2 classes, that were built, over the next couple of decades. They were the first ships to be completely designed and built in Canada for the specific need of the Canadian Navy. The naval architects and planners did a superb job.

One day, a large circus tent was erected on the jetty and, the ship was officially commissioned. The tent filled to the brim with officials from the Federal, and Provincial governments. Also in attendance were the executives of the various contractors. There were many speeches and a Navy band played. The ship's company, mustered in white uniforms, and marched to the gangway. They went single file up the gangway to take possession of the ship. The ship was immaculate, and freshly painted. All the equipment aboard was brand new. There did not seem to be a scratch on anything. It was like purchasing a new car at a dealership. We were indeed proud owners of our new trust.

On our initial voyage to Halifax, we passed the location of the wreck of the first HMCS *Assiniboine*. This ship, a World War Two destroyer served gallantly in the Navy from 1939-1945. In 1945, while en-route to Baltimore for scrapping, she broke her tow and was wrecked near East Point, Prince Edward Island. We stopped the ship at this location, for a short period, and conducted a ceremony of remembrance. On arrival in Halifax, we tied up beside our sister ship HMCS *St. Laurent*.

In the petty officer's second-class mess all the men had to take their turn being "Rum Bosun." The bosun went at 11:50 a.m. to draw 50 ounces of rum for the 20-man mess. He would take it to the mess and pour 2 ½ ounces of water in to the rum to account for spillage. There was actually little spillage but this addition of water provided the bosun with an extra tot at the end of the issuing. The extra tot was meant to pay him for his labour.

The bosun would dish out 2 ½ ounces to each man into his cup. If the man were saving his rum he would appear with a bottle and a small funnel. This was illegal, but was normal procedure, as many men did not drink at sea. The rum was a form of currency and the men used the rum, to gain favours, or to pay off debts. For example: a man might approach you and say he would give you 2 weeks of his rum ration, if you stood his duty watch, in a certain upcoming foreign port, or the first day back in homeport. A man willing to stand a lot of watches, or shore patrols would always have a lot of rum in his locker The saving of rum was a dangerous practise, if there was ever trouble in the mess, a locker search could ensue.

When you were rum bosun, a friend might say, you could have his tot that day; other men might splash half the tot back into the jug as a gift. Some men did not bother to draw it every day, just when they wanted to drink it. When you were rum bosun, you could end up with a lot of rum. The same was true of the beer issue in the tropics; one member of the mess would draw the issue, 40 cans for 20 men at suppertime. On most occasions, only half the men would want the beer and the man drawing it would end up with a case of beer in his locker. If he wanted to drink it, he had to do it in secrecy.

I believe the issue of rum in the Navy was a curse. Not because of the rum, but the way it was rationed, and issued. In addition, the rum was supposed to be consumed when issued, and at no other time. There were serious punishments for men found with alcohol in their lockers, or if they were caught bringing it aboard. The American Navy did not allow alcohol on their ships, for men or officers, a sensible approach. It caused more disciplinary problems than any other factor in the petty officer and men's mess decks. The Navy finally realized this situation, and adopted a more liberal approach to alcohol consumption. It was not banned, in the Navy earlier, because it was the one way, the officers could justify their wardroom bar. This was a regular cocktail bar. They also had stewards serving. What a contrast!

One day while I was ashore, 2 petty officers from my mess went into my locker and removed a 40-ounce bottle of rum. They consumed the rum and in the process became inebriated. The duty petty officer confined the men to the mess, and the next

day there was an investigation by the senior petty officer of the mess to determine where they had obtained the rum. These men were heavy drinkers and there was no way they would ever have saved any rum themselves. I did not know the rum was missing until they had confessed saying they knew that "Good Old Ron" would not mind. A kangaroo court was held in the mess and the men were made to give me their rum ration for a 3-week period.

These men's actions jeopardized all the men in our mess. If they had been found drunk by the officer of the watch, or had performed some drunken act, the mess and our lockers could have been searched, there might have been a lot more of us, up on serious charges. We tried to keep situations like this within the mess. For the next 3 weeks the 2 men would approach me every noon hour, with sheepish looks, drooling, and begging to get at least a portion of their rum. I stayed the course, not because I wanted their rum, but because, first, they entered my locker without permission, and secondly did not advise me the next day that they had done so.

On another occasion, I was duty petty officer in harbour and had to do a "Rum Pump-Up." The rum was brought aboard in wooden kegs, and stored deep in the bowels of the ship. The supply officer, supply petty officer, and a stores rating usually do the pump-up. On this occasion, the regulars were not available and the chore was assigned to a young midshipman, a stores man, and me. The task was to go down about 5 decks, on long steel vertical ladders to a small compartment in the very bottom of the ship; the room was about 6 feet square and was lined with barrels of rum.

In a pump-up, you pump the rum from barrels, into one-gallon wicker jugs. In this case, we pumped up enough for 5 days consumption. The aroma in this room was unbelievable. You felt you had already consumed a tot, 5 minutes after you arrived. The leading seaman stores man, who was a bit of a reprobate, told the young 19-year-old midshipman that in all fairness, he thought we should test the rum; to be sure it was safe for consumption by the crew. The young officer knew he was being conned, and told the stores man there was no way we could drink it neat. The stores man pulled 2 bottles of coke from under his jacket and said, "He just happened to bring them along." The midshipman then agreed to just one tot, and I thought that was all the stores man consumed. [I had to test it too!] We then had to climb up the 5 ladders carrying the jugs to the main deck where we locked up the rum.

I think the stores man filled the empty coke bottles with rum while we were climbing up the ladder. A supply officer would have known enough to be the last to leave the area. One hour later, I was piped to report to the bridge. When I arrived I

found the midshipman there and an investigation in process. Apparently, the stores man had imbibed more rum, and tried to go ashore improperly dressed and without permission. The stores man was confined to his mess. The jimmy was investigating what happened in the rum storage area. Thank God, I was partially sober, the officer and I both denied that any rum was consumed during the pump-up. We both had rosy cheeks and I was glad the investigation was on the open bridge, where the jimmy could not smell the fumes. The investigation was dropped. The midshipman was a son of a serving admiral so it went no further. Just another example of the demon rum and, how one man's actions, can get others in trouble

I served for 18 months on *Assiniboine*, and we were a busy happy ship. It was the best set of officers and men I served with. During this period, we visited over 25 ports including:

Hamilton, Bermuda.
Roosevelt Roads, Virgin Islands.
Kingston, Jamaica.
San Juan, Puerto Rico.
New Orleans, Mississippi.
Key West, Florida.
Jacksonville, Florida.
Norfolk, Virginia.
Newport, Road Island.
St John, New Brunswick.
Portsmouth, England.
Southampton, England.
Portland. England.
Londonderry, Ireland.
Brest, France.
Lisbon, Portugal.
Helsinki, Finland.
Stockholm, Sweden.
Hamburg, Germany
Copenhagen, Denmark.
Ponta Delgada, Azores.
Oslo, Norway.

These are all the ports I can recall. We made a transit of the Keel Canal in Germany, and had many side trips to London. We also were in some of these ports

more than once. The Baltic cruise was a three-month trip and we had lots of shore time.

In 1957 the *Assiniboine* and HMCS *Ottawa* sailed to Norfolk, Virginia to attend an International Naval Review. There were ships from 17 nations attending. We anchored in the main shipping channel lining up in 2 columns of 25 ships per column. There was one large battleship present. At a certain hour, when the tide and currents were right, the ships were directly in line astern of each other. A large American cruiser, with the Secretary of the United States Navy aboard, sailed down these 2 columns taking the salute. The ship's crews were dressed in white uniforms and lined the ship's sides. After the sail past, the commodore on board the *Ottawa* signalled "Bravo Zulu," for well done. He later signalled, "Splice the Main Brace." The latter signal meant an extra rum issue was to be issued to each man. This was the only time I saw the signal in my naval career.

In Kingston, Jamaica, we decided that our mess would organize a party for our members ashore. After much reconnoitring of the bar areas, we picked our location. We arranged with the owner, a Chinese woman of about 35 years of age, to rent the premises for the evening. She said the bar would be shut to outsiders from 7:00 p.m. to midnight. She agreed to rent the bar and dance floor for the whole evening for a fixed sum. This sum included all the booze we could drink during that period. She also said she would provide a group of women for dancing, or any other activities, that any of us might be interested in. She had rooms at the back of the building. The married men, stayed, tried and true, but a few of the single men were seen, departing to the back rooms. I developed a relationship with the owner. It was a wild party; the men had been living together for a year and for the most part were good friends.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on homosexuality in the Navy. Jokes about homosexuals in the Navy are numerous, but in fact, this was not an issue in the Canadian Navy. In the eleven years I served, I knew of only 4 instances. Three of the men were officers and the fourth was in our mess. After the ship had been in commission for a year, we received a transferee from the British Royal Navy. He was older than most of us, very congenial and well liked. It appears he could not keep his hands off the young ordinary seamen who had been put in his charge. One of these seamen complained to a higher authority. Two days later the offender was flown from the Caribbean to Halifax and discharged.

In Halifax, the captain arranged a ship's company party and dance in a local banquet hall. We were able to meet the wives of our shipmates. We all had a good time. I had not encountered this sort of bonding on any other ship.

We enjoyed our trips to Europe, in particular the old European cities of Helsinki, Hamburg, Copenhagen and Oslo. The architecture was centuries old, and they're drinking and dining customs strange to us. [They were more civilized.] They had no bars as such. If you wanted a drink you had to be in a restaurant and order an open face sandwich, you could then get a glass of beer or schnapps. The restaurants had a nice atmosphere, and in the evening there would be musicians playing the cello accompanied by a violin. It was very easy to meet the local girls in these establishments. Stockholm was more modern but a little staid. Copenhagen was wide open and we mainly drank on Canal Street where there were women galore.

A friend on the ship, who was a naval stores man, had arranged stores with a local ship's chandler for our squadron. The chandler, in appreciation for the large order, asked the stores man to come to his home for dinner, and to bring 2 other men from the mess. When we arrived there were 3 couples present, they all spoke perfect English, and one couple were Professors at the local university. We were wined and dined all night, then for the final surprise, they brought out a bottle of Seagram's whiskey to top off the evening. It was a very pleasant event.

The revelation was Hamburg, Germany. This is the second largest German city and one of the largest ports in Europe. Hamburg is 10 miles from the sea and its harbour is always full of merchant vessels loading and unloading cargo. In the famous bar area, called the "Reeperbahn," the bars were open 24 hours a day on the weekend, and until 4 in the morning on weekdays. The main action was from midnight to 6 in the morning. People were shoulder to shoulder on the street at four in the morning. The bars all had female servers. In some of the bars, the girls wore transparent nightgowns, and in others, they were bare breasted. Off the Reeperbahn, there were other streets blocked by 8 foot interlacing walls from the main thorough way. These streets could not be seen from the Reeperbahn, but if you went behind the barriers, you found a real circus. The women sat in windows displaying their wares, and could talk to you through a small sliding glass window. We did not have to use these premises: the bars were full of accommodating women, wanting to meet Canadian sailors and party. On visiting day we were able to make contacts as dozens of these women came aboard the ship to tour. In Hamburg, we usually returned on board around 7 in the morning, with little sleep, and still partially inebriated. The 2 words I remember from Germany are "Liebhaber" (Lover) and "Liebling" (Darling or Honey).

We were glad when we finally went to sea and could have some rest and recuperation, all the same this did not always solve the problem. The Baltic is a small

area and in some cases, we only sailed overnight to the next port. At every new port, there would be girls on the jetty from the last port, waiting for us. We were having a ball.

In Oslo, Norway, we had a large church parade; we marched through the core of the city, to the church. A service was held in remembrance of Canadian servicemen lost during the Second World War. The night before the parade, the 2 young women we had been with stole our hats for a souvenir, and we returned to the ship bareheaded. During the parade, we saw the 2 girls on the sidelines wearing our hats, they waved and blew a kiss, but we could not break ranks to retrieve them. We sailed that evening. The *Assiniboine* was the highlight of my career. The ship converted to a Destroyer Helicopter Carrier in 1963 continued to serve until 1988. She was scrapped in 1995

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HMCS *CARLETON*

In January 1958 after 18 months aboard HMCS *Assiniboine* I received a surprise draft to HMCS *Carleton*, a reserve Navy base on Dows Lake in Ottawa, Ontario. This base along with 20 other divisions served as training bases for Reserve Naval Personnel and as a transient base for new recruits.

There were approximately 12 regular Navy personnel on the base, and 300 reserves who attended classes 1 or 2 evenings a week. Our duties were to attend training nights to assist, and work in the message centre during the daylight hours. Most of us had some hand in running the various bars and wet canteens around the base. For some unknown reason there were 2 other petty officer signal men attached to the base, so my duties were very light. I ran the officer's bar every second week and received extra remuneration.

Ottawa was naval headquarters and there was a large contingent of reserve naval officers attached to the base. The officers had the use of the wardroom bar on drill nights, or on special occasions. They also could book the wardrooms facilities for any club or association to which they might be a member. The naval officer’s community in Ottawa used the base for special mess dinners, and to host dignitaries. On one occasion we had Lord Louis Mountbatten visit the mess. He had an aide get his drinks so I did not get the opportunity to speak with him. I usually served as member of the Side Party (piping the officers aboard), on the quarter deck during the

mess dinners, and was surprised at the number of officers that I had served with who were now stationed in Ottawa. They were also surprised to see me there.

I thought I had died and gone to heaven; I was now 26 years old, had been in the Navy for 9 years, was making a petty officer's wage and was back home, with my family. Ottawa was also known for its' over abundance of females, and I was available. The Navy paid me to live ashore on subsistence allowance ($78 month). This allowance along with the bar wages gave me more discretionary income and I was a happy man. There was a large contingent of reserve WRENS on the base and I became romantically involved with a few of these girls. I was also romantically involved with a girl in the reserve Navy from London, Ontario. During this period I received a temporary draft to HMCS *Patriot* in Hamilton for a few weeks to train WRENS. Need I say more?

HMCS *GLOUCESTER*

The honeymoon did not last long and in December of 1958 I received another draft to HMCS *Gloucester* a training base 20 miles outside Ottawa. This base was established to train radio supplementary ratings. These men were trained exclusively in "Electronic Warfare and Surveillance Techniques." Most of their work assignments were in the Arctic monitoring stations. The base was modeled on *Cornwallis* with all the same discipline, rules and regulations. I had to move to the base, and was for most of the time the only petty officer living in the dorms. The dorms were 30 feet along the hall from the bar and dining room. All other chief and petty officers lived in married quarters. There were divisions and prayers most weekdays, route marches, duty watches, and physical training. The base was in the country outside Ottawa, there were no local buses, and the military ones only departed at specific times. The last bus left from downtown at 11:30 p.m. and I had no car. I was the only regular radio operator on the base, and I don't think they knew what to do with me. At first I was assigned general duties such as block petty officer, in a large men's accommodation block (250 men), or assistant to the buffer, who was a Chief Gunner. The buffers duties entailed supervising work parties around the base. One of my jobs was flooding the skating rink with a large fire hose late at night. I was also put in charge of a guard detail for a security conference in "A" building in downtown Ottawa for a week. Later in the year I received the top security clearance required, and was assigned to do classroom training. I continued on for 10 months as sort of a jack-of-all-trades, but never had a chance to practice my profession. My experiences at this base greatly contributed to my decision a few months later, to request a discharge from the Navy.

When I left *Gloucester*, I was drafted to HMCS *Cornwallis* in Digby, Nova Scotia for a 6-week Petty Officer's Leadership Course. I went from one strict training base to another very strict base.

The Leadership course was the most positive experience in my Navy career. I came off the course rejuvenated feeling like a completely different person. There were 24 men from different trades on the course. The school was a separate entity on the base and we were housed in our own accommodation block. The instructors involved us in public, military, and current affairs. We had to prepare presentations and be ready to debate various subjects, either individually or as a group. We had Oxford style debates, and received lectures on leadership, tact and other management skills. The course was similar to others I would attend later in life in the business world. The course instilled in me a sense that I was capable of much more than what I had been doing in the last 10 years. I found I was able to compete with the other men on the course, and in fact, received the second highest marks. The marks were a surprise to me. My divisional officer was also very supportive.

One of my assignments was to prepare a half hour lecture on "Africa Continent of the Future," then present it to the class, and commanding officer of the school. The only guidelines given me were that I had to state my subject, aim, scope, motivation, and final conclusion in a precise and logical manner. The assignment was difficult for a grade 10 dropout, who had been out of school for 12 years. I had a week to prepare the speech, and I spent most of the time in the base library. My knowledge of Africa was very limited, and the library was my home from 6 p. m. to midnight for the next week. I found I was enjoying the process, and I had a knack for researching, organizing, and putting the bits together. I did well and my course officer took me aside, and complimented me on my effort. Little did he know that the assignment had scared me, I did not think I was capable of preparing this type of presentation. He said he was surprised at my vocabulary and why was I not using it in my day-to-day conversations. I had always been an avid reader but never really had an opportunity to put into play anything that I might have learned through my reading. Years later I realized that one's reading vocabulary are different from one's speaking vocabulary. The local beer parlour or bar was not the place to practice your vocabulary. His comments gave me a bit of a lift but I did not tell him that a lot of the material was plagiarized, and although I understood the meaning of a lot of the content, I would not think of using it in conversation with my messmates.

We had a lot of parade ground work, and on several occasions at morning divisions I was assigned as the guard petty officer for a 90 man armed guard. I also had to become knowledgeable on nuclear arms, as one of my assignments was to be

able to argue for nuclear disarmament. The leadership school had its own parade and divisions. At any time there could be up to 5 or 6 leadership courses, some for petty officers and others for officers. A signalman from my mess on the *Athabaskan* had been awarded a commission and was on one of the officer's courses. I realized then I did not have to stay in the lower ranks if I did not want to.

The leadership school had its' our own march past each morning and our commanding officer took the salute from the dais. Individual students had to be prepared to take charge of the whole parade if called to the dais. You had to know all the orders, and when to give them, I was lucky, not being called upon to command the parade. I remember one petty officer broke down standing in front of the parade, froze, and started to cry. There was tremendous pressure to perform; it was an embarrassing moment when the whole parade turned the wrong way, bumping into each other, because of your incorrect orders. It was a frightening experience for those of us who had not been trained in this discipline. We had to memorize all the sets of exercises used for physical training; I was called upon to take the class through a set of these exercises. The drill had to be conducted by numbers in a disciplined and seamanship manner, The Leadership Course started me thinking of getting out of the service, and trying a different life style.

HMCS *CRESCENT*

Upon completion of the course, I was drafted back to Halifax to HMCS *Crescent*, a "C" Class Destroyer. The ship was in refit, being equipped with a new technology called Variable Depth Sonar, and we were tied alongside for about 6 months. There is nothing more boring than being on a partially manned ship sitting in refit, in Halifax dockyard. I had the mess to myself on evenings and weekends, and all the married petty officers, were trying to get me to stand their duty watches in harbour. On my previous drafts I had never developed any permanent social contacts in Halifax. To search out social contacts and companionship, I went to the military mess, and Saturday night dances.

You were not allowed to wear your civilian clothes ashore. In order to store our civilian clothes and allow us to get away from the ship's routine on the weekends, myself and another petty office rented a room in the seagull club. My pay at the time was $224 a month. (Married men received another $90 a month.) This extra pay was called marriage and separated family allowance. I liked being aboard a ship in active commission, when the ship was on the move with a full crew. I especially enjoyed it

when I was practising my trade and visiting exotic ports of call. On this ship I was bored and tired of my lifestyle. I knew something had to change: I was losing my interest in the Navy.

The promotions were also at a standstill in my branch, although I had been a petty officer for 5 years, I had not yet received my trade group 3 course. I could not advance to petty officer first class until I took this course. The normal wait for promotion during this era of the Navy was 3 to 4 years. My assessments had been good and I did not understand the delay. I contacted the drafting officer in naval headquarters and asked what my situation was. He advised me that with the current planning it would be another 6 years before I would get a course. They had recently transferred 6 petty officers from the Royal Navy into the radio branch and these men were ahead of me on the roster. I kept bumping into men in other branches, who had joined with me, and who were all now trade group 3 or 4 or petty officer first class and in some cases chiefs,

I could not see myself staying in the same rating for a further 6 years. I also knew that there was no one to turn to: that the Navy was a large bureaucracy over whom I had no control. The Navy at this time in its evolution had no strategy for keeping men in the force after their enlistment expired. They would train a man for 10 or 15 years until he was an asset to the service. When the men became unsatisfied there was no counselling, incentives offered, or persuasion to keep the rating in. The most common comment from most officers was you will be sorry, and that you would probably be back. There was a mindset in the Navy that this was a secure job, and that they would have a hard time getting established in the outside world. The pension after 25 years kept most men in.

My main worry was my lifestyle and my drinking. My world seemed to revolve around the mess and alcohol. I decided to get out, get an education and pursue a more normal lifestyle. The decision in retrospect was a good one; I used my pension money ($2000) to return to school at the Radio College of Canada. I took a 10-month course and wrote the exams for Department Of Transport “Second Class Proficiency in Radio.” This certificate was accepted internationally, allowing you to take any nation’s merchant ship to sea. It also was a gateway opener into the electronic and telecommunication industries in Canada. As I describe later in this document, within 4 years, I had a good job, was married with a child and was living a sober normal life.

When I first requested a discharge, I had 4 years remaining on my current 5-year contract. My divisional officer on the ship rejected my request and said that the

Navy could not afford to lose me. I then developed a strategy that would circumvent him. I approached our sick bay petty officer and requested that he arrange an interview with a Medical officer on the main shore base in Halifax. [HMCS *Stadacona.*]

I told the medical officer that I did not take the Navy seriously anymore, was depressed most of the time, and was drinking too much. I wanted to exit the Navy gracefully as a petty officer, but if I were required to stay they would soon be glad to get rid of me, probably discharging me as an able seaman. I would not desert the Navy as I wanted a Honourable Discharge In other words if my request was again denied, I would resort to misconduct. He referred me first to the Personnel Selection Officer who put me through 3 days of tests, visual puzzles and oral exams. I was deceptive and did not answer the questions honestly trying to show a negative and depressed state. This officer was a young pompous ass. He was condescending, and seemed to be amused by me, and my problems.

At one interview, while seated in the interview chair, I looked up at the 12-foot ceiling of the room. The officer had nailed a shrunken head in the ceiling, directly above the interviewee's chair. I assume he considered himself a head shrink. [A term used in the Navy for a psychiatrist.] I was then sent off to see a civilian psychiatrist who was more down to earth; I was honest with him explaining my true dilemma. He agreed that I should get out of the service and start a new life. I was drafted off the ship a day before she left on a 6-week exercise in the Caribbean.

It was the first time I tried to manipulate a bureaucratic system. Before I had considered myself simply a pawn, in fact in the Navy the saying was "You do not have a name just an official number." I felt a little guilty about my deception at the time, but later realized that it was mostly the truth. The main lesson for me was that to accomplish anything you have to develop a strategy or plan. Even when you are ridiculed by your peers and so called superiors.

Some of my experiences related above may have left some readers with a negative impression of the Canadian Navy. That was not my intention. Overall I found the Navy to be a very professional service and I was proud to serve in it. The dedication of most officers and men made it a highly trained and efficient Navy. In my civilian jobs I have always compared the Navy way to the civilian methods of training and management. The Navy's ways were always the most effective. The backbone of any military service is the professional long serving officer or chief and petty officer; The Canadian Navy had an abundance

of these 30-35 year men. Their dedication to duty and professionalism made the Navy what it is today.

The period in which I served (1949-1960) was a difficult time for the Navy. They had just downsized from a wartime footing and scrapped hundreds of World War 2 vintage ships. They had lost 80 percent of their personnel, and were trying to establish a new Navy with a modern fleet. The senior officers were continually fighting politicians and bureaucrats for the necessary funding to equip, modernize, and train the Navy. They were attempting to maintain a fleet air arm and establish a submarine service. During this time they had a requirement to keep rotating three destroyers in the Far East for the Korean conflict. This lasted for three years. They had a Cold War in process and also many NATO commitments. They were shortly going to have to man 14 planned St Laurent class Escorts and 21 world War 2 River class frigates which were being modernized as the Prestonian class. Also the new aircraft carrier Bonaventure was being completed. They were operating their fleet on two coasts thousands of miles apart. The personnel retention rate was less than 50% and naval technology was changing at a rapid rate. They were also trying to make the Navy more Canadian and train their officers in Canada. During all this activity it is no wonder that changes that would enhance life on the lower deck were slow in coming.

I was impressed during my Korean service in 1951 how the ships company came together and we were able to operate in a war theatre in a myriad of different naval operations. Later in 1958 serving on the new destroyer Assiniboine the changes in equipment and armament were very evident and the crew well trained and proud of their ship and the service. The Canadian Navy is still struggling for ships and funding 50 years later, but they are still able to operate modern frigates with the American battle fleet thousands of miles from home in the Persian Gulf and their dedication and professionalism is still evident today as it was in the past.

WORKING YEARS

I arrived in Toronto by rail on 15 July 1960 after having served in the Navy for 11 years, from 20 August 1949 till 12 July 1960. My financial situation was not too bad. I had about 3 months pay ($600), 2 suits of clothes and no debts. In addition I was entitled to a $750 school grant from Veterans Affairs for my Korean service, and I would be getting back about $2200 in pension money from the Federal pension plan.

I had earlier phoned my parents telling them of my plans, and told them I would probably be staying in a boarding house with the other students in downtown Toronto. They informed me they could use the money I was giving the boarding house, and it was finally resolved that I would be better off at home. I would pay $60 a month for room and board. I knew this would restrict my freedom a bit, but I had been living in cramped quarters with other men for 10 years and looked forward to my mothers cooking.

I was 28 years old and back in the bosom of my parents. I did not look for a job, I was resolved that the only way I would survive was to get a trade or profession. I already had 11 years experience in the radio and telecommunication field. The RCC (Radio College of Canada's) 10-month course for an International Radio Operator's Licence seemed the obvious choice. I started school in September with 30 other students. The majority of the students were much younger than me, but there were 3 men about my age who had also abandoned 10-year careers, and we became friends.