

## CHAPTER NINE -- THE NAVY

I knew that at sometime or another I would be required to carry out my first period of training with the Royal Navy Reserve (RNR), so I had to discuss this with the company. It was agreed that I would join the Adventurer in Sunderland, and leave her in Hamburg, where she was to be fitted out. I signed off the Adventurer on 2nd of December 1959, and started RNR Course P-39 about a week later, at the Royal Naval Barracks in Portsmouth. It was a course of five months' duration.

The first part, up until Christmas, was really to teach this dozen or so Merchant Navy officers what the Royal Navy was all about.

We learned such things as how to salute, how to march -- after a fashion -- and the basic administrative procedures of the Navy. We also learned about the Divisional system, which is the heart of the Navy. It is about people, and how to get the best out of them.

It is a system that makes an officer, through his chiefs and petty officers, responsible for the training, discipline, and what is most important, the welfare, of several men in his "Division."

The Divisional system stays with you regardless of rank -- from sub-lieutenant to admiral. You are always responsible for, and to, people. I think that is probably the biggest difference in philosophies between the Merchant and Royal Navies. In a merchant ship you did your own job, under someone's direction, but you never became personally involved in a sailor's business outside his actual work on board, such as his training, or his, or his family's welfare.

Those needs were met by organisations ashore, usually. There was never a close personal involvement, mainly because it's a business, and it's something business cannot afford. But as I said, it's the heart of the Navy.

During the period before Christmas I managed to find a flat for Shirley and me in a lovely old house called Pelham Lodge, at 37 St. Edwards Road, in Southsea. It was owned by an Electrical Commander, who worked in Portsmouth Dockyard. This was the first Christmas that I had spent at home since we were married, so it was to be enjoyed.

Just after the New Year we moved down to Portsmouth, where I started the next part of the course. During the next few months we took courses in gunnery, anti-submarine warfare, communications, navigation, operations and nuclear, bacteriological and chemical defence.

While some subjects on the course were more interesting than others, the one that has been imprinted on my mind, more than any

other over all these years, was parade training. This training took place in HMS EXCELLENT, at Whale Island, the Royal Navy's Gunnery School. Here, we learnt to carry out every form of marching and parade training possible, with and without rifles, and fixed bayonets, to full ceremonial, involving sword drill.

I think the best part of the course for me, was learning to be an officer of the guard. Being guard officer, and being totally confident that you knew the "script," was a marvellous feeling. It took a while to get to that stage, but when you did, you felt good about yourself.

We were all inhibited at first, because we didn't want to appear foolish if you gave the wrong orders, as is so often shown in comedy movies. And of course, you can't whisper the orders, although you would sometimes like to, just in case you have made a mistake. When you make a mistake, the whole parade ground knows about it. But slowly the confidence builds, until you know you have it right. Then comes that magic day, when all the nervousness has gone, and in a very loud clear voice, which you want the surrounding countryside to hear, you hear yourself saying, "Guard and Band -- by the left, quick, march."

The course was mainly run by Chief Petty Officer Gunnery Instructors, who we nicknamed, "Little Polished Men." These Chiefs would yell and scream at us, and tell us how stupid we were, but would always finish off the tirade with the word "Sir." We had one we called the "Screaming Skull," who told us something I will never forget. He told us that when you are marching with a military band you should be marching as though you were ten feet tall. I didn't realize the significance at the time, but later the penny dropped. He was right. There is nothing more inspiring than marching in a military parade, with a good band leading the way. It really does make you feel ten feet tall! Of course, this goes back centuries. It was marching to war with a band that kept morale high. In the Second World War, Lord Lovett always had a piper lead his Commandoes into battle. As I said, it goes back for centuries.

These Chiefs were excellent men. On the parade ground they were actors, who were there for one reason only -- to give their officer students confidence in themselves. If you did something stupid, the standard punishment was, "Once round the parade ground, sir," which meant that you had to double march around the perimeter of the parade ground. Something really stupid, like being caught wearing a watch on parade, was, "Once around the island, sir" -- a distance of nearly a mile. As they knew exactly how long it should take to double around the island, they would time you, to see if you had taken a rest. If you had -- it was round the island again. You normally only tried that trick once.

These Chiefs were carefully selected, because they were dealing with officers, and they had to gauge how far they could go without

being offensive. They taught us a lot more than parade training.

Ever since that course I have always enjoyed the pomp and ceremonial aspects of the military. I like things to be done smartly.

I like the smart exaggerated movements of a military parade. Anything less, always gives me the impression that the people on parade are self conscious about their movements, and that even worse, their leader lacks self confidence. To me, there is nothing smarter than watching the guard and band of the Royal Marines. It makes the hairs on my neck stand on end -- to attention of course!

We really enjoyed living in Pelham Lodge. The owners, Molly and Philip -- we called him, the Commander, were marvellous. After some weeks Shirley found a job with the Admiralty Pay Section in the Dockyard. It was just as well that she did, because we were rather tight for money. We had to pay five pounds a week (ten dollars) for our flat. I was earning about sixty pounds a month ( a hundred and twenty dollars). I can remember a particular time when we tried to figure out how we were going to pay for a battle dress I had to buy for five pounds. We really didn't know how we were going to do it -- but of course, we did.

I was becoming more interested in everything about the Royal Navy. As well as the interest in the workings of the Navy, there was a pleasant social life too. We were often invited to cocktail parties on some of the visiting ships. Once we were invited to a party on a submarine -- HMS/M TRESPASSER -- my first visit to a submarine. We decided that if Harrison's agreed, I would apply to do some more training with the Royal Navy. They were not short of officers at the time, so were happy to let me stay on. Also of course, the Navy was paying me -- not Harrison's.

I had always had this fascination with submarines, ever since I had read Edward Young's book, "One of our Submarines," years before as a cadet in the Dunmore Head. So I decided to apply for submarine training.

When my initial training completed, I lost two of my handles. I was no longer Probationary Temporary. I was now an Acting Lieutenant, and as such I was instructed to report to the Submarine School in HMS DOLPHIN, the home of the Royal Navy's submarines. Here I would undergo six weeks basic training, on completion of which I was to be appointed to HMS SCORCHER in Portland.

My course officer was a Lieutenant Sandy Woodward, who many years later, was to become famous in the Falkland's War as the Task Force Commander. Our paths have crossed occasionally over the intervening years. He is now Admiral Sir John Woodward. Before the actual course started there was a requirement to carry out escape training from the hundred-foot escape tank. Without passing that hurdle, further training could not take place.

After a medical examination you are put in a small compression chamber to see if you can clear your ears as the pressure is increased to the equivalent of a depth of one hundred feet. This is done before you get anywhere near the tank, and is carried out to prevent injuries and holdups in the actual tank. At about fifteen feet I experienced severe pain in both my ears, and despite the tank staff's efforts to reduce pain and raise the pressure a few times to see if I could clear my ears, it was unsuccessful. My submarine career was finished before it was even started.

I was extremely disappointed, but accepted the outcome. What else could I do? I decided that I still wanted to continue my training, but that it would now be with the surface navy. I was appointed to HMS WAKEFUL, a Type-15 destroyer, which carried out navigation training for regular officers at the navigation school.

Luckily it was based in Portsmouth, so we could stay at Pelham Lodge for another seven months.

We enjoyed living in Southsea. Our one regret was that we didn't have a car, because it restricted our movements and ability to tour around as much as we wanted to. At the weekends in the good weather, we would spend a lot of time at the beach. Our favourite spot was a place we called, Dead Man's Gulch -- so named because a man who was sitting in his deckchair nearby, had a heart attack and died right in front of us -- hence the name. Sick isn't it?

There was no doubt that I was becoming increasingly interested in warships, and a possible career in the Royal Navy. Unfortunately, the Royal Navy was not accepting any officers, unless they came in through the normal officer entry from Dartmouth -- and besides, I was now 27 years old. However, I heard that the Royal Canadian Navy was interested in officers who had a Royal Navy watchkeeping ticket, which I hoped to obtain during my time in WAKEFUL.

There were some serious considerations that required examination before making any commitment in that direction. Firstly, did we want to go to Canada? And secondly, was there a career in it for me? I would be 28 years old before we went -- about eight to ten years older than other officers that would have approximately the same seniority. Did I want to stay in the Merchant Navy for another 37 years, mainly spent at sea? We had even discussed the possibility of going to East Africa, where I might become a cargo superintendent. Shirley and I discussed all these issues, and decided that I should at least apply to the RCN, because until you signed your name, there was no commitment.

I went up to London for medicals and interview Boards at Canada House, the eventual outcome of which was an offer of a three year short service commission as a Sub-Lieutenant, with an acting rank of Lieutenant. I felt that I didn't want to go back to the Merchant

Navy. Not because I didn't like it, because I had enjoyed my life there. It was simply because I felt that the Navy was where I belonged, and where I felt absolutely and totally at home. We discussed it, and so I decided to accept their offer.

One anecdote of interest is when Shirley and I were at Canada House, and we were filling in one of the countless number of forms. As Shirley completed her form I noticed that she was grinning. I then discovered why. They wanted to know if you ever had a conviction in court. My criminal past as a demolitions expert (throwing fireworks) had caught up with me!

I told Harrison's about my decision, and I must admit they were very gracious about it. I received a very friendly letter from the Marine Superintendent, Captain Fraser, wishing me the best of luck for my future. I resigned from Harrison's on the 13th February 1961, having spent a very enjoyable twelve years in the Merchant Navy. Now at age 28, I was about to embark on another career, in the Royal Canadian Navy.

We arrived in Quebec City at the beginning of April, after a truly marvellous voyage across the Atlantic as a First Class passenger in the RMS Ivernia, a Cunard liner. Had I joined a few months later we would have flown across the Atlantic, instead of that unique experience for me of being a passenger, and not having to work on the ship. On our way across the Atlantic we passed close to the Adventurer, and received a message from Captain Sharman -- "Best of luck to the west bound adventurers from the east bound Adventurers."

After a long and dreary train ride from Montreal, looking out at the dirty snow and uninspiring clapboard houses, we arrived in Halifax. That night, one of the officers from the ship that I was going to, came to the hotel and took us for a walk, to show us down town. We walked from our hotel to downtown and back in about twenty minutes! It was terrible. What had we let ourselves in for? What didn't help was the cold and the mounds of dirty snow at the side of the roads.

We had left England halfway through their spring, with the daffodils and tulips in full bloom -- and we had moved from that, to the Ice-Age, in more ways than one. It was then that I recalled the words of the Canadian Immigration Officer at Canada House in London, who, on learning that we were coming to Halifax, said, "That's a pity -- it's a hundred years behind the rest of Canada." It also reminds me of what Jacques Cartier wrote in his diary when he was looking for China, but found Labrador. He wrote, "This land must have been allocated to Cain."