

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN -- EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Executive Officer goes by a number of names -- XO, First Lieutenant, Number One, Jimmy the One, The Jim -- and those are the polite ones! In the Royal Canadian Navy, the term normally used was "XO."

The XO is responsible to the Captain for the general running of the ship or submarine. All the department heads report through him, including the Engineering Department. This is different from the Merchant Navy, where the engineering department is totally separate from what one would call the seamen or deck department. He is also the second-in-command.

During the previous three years I had rotated through the various departments in the submarine, such as operations, communications electrical and engineering -- in addition to the first job I had as Supply Officer. This is one of the advantages that submarine officers have over their surface ship colleagues. By rotating through all these positions, you get a good knowledge of what each job entails. Therefore, by the time you become XO you have an appreciation of every department in the submarine.

Shortly after becoming XO, we were told that we would be making a deployment to Japan. It's a country I had never been to, so this was going to be new for me. On the way across the Pacific we stopped at Pearl Harbour, where we were hosted by two submarines -- the USS GREENFISH and the USS REMORA. The hospitality was intense, from luaus to receptions, to house parties and formal dinners. The Americans had ganged up on us. We were required to attend everything, whereas, because there were two of them, they were only involved every other day. We were glad to get back to sea, so that we could get some rest!

When we arrived back in Victoria from Japan, the submarine was bulging at the seams with "goodies." Things were very cheap in Japan in those days, so we had bought just about everything that one could get. There were stereos, tape-recorders, bicycles (broken down to the smallest part that would fit down the submarine hatch), jewellery and material. We had been away for just under two months.

Until this time Shirley and I had always lived in rental housing. It was Shirley who took the initiative in buying a house. She felt that we should not be giving money to somebody else, when we could be investing in our own home.

We bought a brand new house on Thornhill Crescent. Naturally, like so many other things, we couldn't afford it, but of course we

found the money. Shirley was the financial manager. She was excellent at it, and it was to her credit that we bought that house.

I think she learnt from her mother, who was also an excellent money manager. If it had been left to me I don't think I would have done it, because I would have been worried about how we were going to manage.

Living on the West Coast gave us the chance to see the western states. We camped in the Glacier National Park in Montana. We saw the rugged majesty of the Grand Teton mountains in Wyoming -- and of course we had to "do" Hollywood, California. The scenery in the western states was so different from that of the eastern states. I can't decide, even now, which one I prefer.

One trip, when we were in Escondido, just outside San Diego, we had our room burgled while we were in it -- asleep! We woke up to find that Shirley's purse and my wallet had disappeared. We were 1500 miles from home with no identification, money, travellers cheques or credit cards.

I reported it to the motel manager, and then went for a walk, on the off-chance that he may have discarded the things he didn't want. Sure enough, I found the bag and wallet, with their contents scattered all over the ground by the swimming pool.

Luckily, all that had been taken was our American money -- about thirty dollars in all. Our credit cards, travellers cheques and Canadian money had not been touched. The police told us that it had probably been a drug addict, who needed money right away for a fix, and that's why he wasn't interested in the cheques etc. That night we went to bed with my wallet and Shirley's purse underneath the bed clothes, by our feet!

In 1968 the United States Navy was paying off many of their diesel submarines. Every time another nuclear attack submarine was commissioned, they paid off the next oldest diesel submarine. GRILSE had first gone to sea in 1944, and was a very tired, noisy submarine.

Her electronic equipment was state-of-the-art 1944, and while we nursed her along with tender loving care, her days were numbered.

Meanwhile, negotiations were under way between Ottawa and Washington over the acquisition of a newer submarine from the USN surplus inventory. Finally, the word came that we were going to buy the USS ARGONAUT, which was two years younger than GRILSE.

I took three senior Chief Petty Officers with me, and flew to Norfolk, Virginia, to be the advance guard of the Canadian crew that was going to commission the "new" submarine. When we arrived at the submarine pier in Norfolk there were numerous boats tied up three abreast. I was looking for one that had the number "475" on its

fin. Of all the submarines there -- and there must have been fifteen, only one had a bent jackstaff (forward flagstaff), and a flag that was torn. It had a number 475 on its fin!

Space and time does not permit me to give a full description of that sorry excuse for a submarine. I could write a book -- and perhaps I should, about that boat when we took her over from the USN. I will permit myself just two or three brief accounts of events that occurred, concerning the commissioning of HMCS RAINBOW.

Our full ship's company was flown from Victoria to Norfolk, but before we took responsibility for her, we insisted on taking the submarine to sea to make a dive to test depth, with a combined Canadian/USN crew. When we got to test depth without incident, which of course should have been a normal evolution, there was a distinct sigh of relief that went through the USN crew. We thought it strange, but in light of later developments, we shouldn't have done.

On the passage between Norfolk and Victoria we were unable to dive, even if we had wanted to. The air compressors wouldn't work, and as you needed high pressure air to surface the submarine we couldn't dive. There were so many fresh water leaks in the main engines that the engine room watchkeepers had to wear wet-weather gear. When we arrived back alongside in Victoria we daren't stop our diesels until we were absolutely sure they would not be required again -- because we had no compressed air left to start them. As I said, the RAINBOW commissioning was a story in itself.

We arrived back in Victoria on 23 December 1968. We could have taken GRILSE to sea at any time, because we had literally walked off GRILSE and on to RAINBOW. However, politics came into play, in that it would have looked bad for someone if, after acquiring RAINBOW, we immediately walked back on board GRILSE and took her to sea. As a result we remained alongside in Victoria until April, while repairs were carried out to RAINBOW.

That summer I was told that I was to go to the UK to take the six week Attack Coordinators (AC) Course, which is supposed to prepare one to become an XO. I had already been XO for over a year, but I was certainly not going to object to a trip to the UK.

About a month or two before I was due to depart for my six weeks in the UK, I received word that in addition to taking the AC Course, I had been selected for the Royal Navy's Submarine Commanding Officers Qualification Course (COQC), commonly referred to as "Perisher." (See the Picture Gallery) The name Perisher was derived from the course's original name of the Periscope Course. However, it later became known by that name because of the large number of officers that failed, or perished, on the course.

The pass rate for Perisher was about fifty percent. Of course this meant that you could have three or four passes, followed by

the same number of failures one after another. In a small submarine force like ours (we now had four boats), a string of failures could be disastrous, in that there may not be enough Captains available for the submarines. That, in fact, was what had happened in my case. I was going on Perisher due to somebody's misfortune.

I had been in submarines for less than five years, and I was now on my way to Perisher, having bypassed other officers with more seniority than I had. Normally, one would spend from eight to ten years in submarines before being selected for Perisher. The course was due to start in December 1969.

Besides being sent on Perisher I was to be posted to Halifax. As these changes had taken place at short notice, we had many things to do before we left Victoria. We had to decide what we were going to do with the house. Should we sell it, or rent it? We had only lived in it for a short time, so we decided to rent it, after we found a professor who was coming to the University of Victoria from the States.

We decided that Shirley and the children should come to the UK with me. As the Perisher would take me to many locations, we felt it best for them to stay with Shirley's mother and father in Liverpool. The girls would go to Shirley's old elementary school, and I would use Liverpool as my base, much the same as I had done many years ago when I was in the Merchant Navy.

While we were getting ready to leave Victoria, Shirley's parents arrived for a holiday which had been planned for some time. It was the latter part of the summer, and the weather was beautiful. They so enjoyed their visit, particularly Shirley's mother. I can still see her lying on a chaise-longue on our sundeck in pure ecstasy, absorbing the sun. The pleasure that they were obviously getting from this holiday also gave us pleasure. We enjoyed having them.

It was particularly good that they could spend some time with their grandchildren. This was one of the problems of us living on two different continents. I know that Shirley felt very concerned about this. Unlike my mother, who had two of her grandchildren in the UK with her, Shirley was an only child, therefore our girls were Shirley's parents only grandchildren. It was a problem that was never resolved, although they saw more of the girls as they got older. However, they never saw them "growing up."

Within a couple of weeks of Shirley's parents leaving, we were on our way ourselves. We decided that this time we would drive across the country on a different route to the one we had taken on our way out to Victoria from Connecticut.

Kerry was now two years old, and still very active. In addition, she had taken to telling her mother what she thought of the many

toilets that she visited. That wasn't too bad normally, but she did it in people's houses too. Whenever Kerry used a toilet in a friend's house, we would be on pins and needles waiting for the report, which was usually delivered in a loud voice. I think our friends made a special point of cleaning their toilet, if they knew that we would be visiting with Kerry!

On the trip across country, one way to make sure that Kerry would not run away when we stopped at the side of the road for a pit stop, was to say, "Kerry, would you let us know if you find a snake." That seemed to work.

We stopped in Connecticut to see our friends, Betty and Bill Ingalls. The girls had a great time in their swimming pool, and Shirley and I were just happy to see them again, although they had visited us in Victoria a year or two earlier. By the time we arrived in Halifax we had been through a total of twenty-six states on this, and other trips. We felt that there were so many options by crossing the country through the United States. In Canada your route was limited, mainly by the Trans Canada Highway.

After doing an in-routine at the First Canadian Submarine Squadron Headquarters in Halifax, I was free to go over to the UK. As we were not looking for a house until we came back from the UK, we had arranged to put our furniture in storage in Halifax.

We arrived in Liverpool about the end of October 1969. Once Shirley and the girls were established at home, I made my way south to join COQC 1/70, at HMS DOLPHIN in Gosport. This was the same establishment that I had left nine years earlier after failing the escape tank training -- thinking that my career in submarines was over before it had started. Here I was, at the same place, about to take the ultimate course in submarines -- the Submarine Commanding Officers Course. It was a strange old world.