

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN -- FIRST COMMAND

I must admit, there is something special about being "piped aboard" for the first time as Captain. Normally, a Commanding Officer is piped aboard when he arrives in the morning, and again when he departs in the evening. Other than that most Commanding Officers dispense with the formality in their own ship. I stress own ship, because I was determined to be piped on board our surface ships, just to make a point. I did it to ensure that although our submarine force was only a small part of the navy, we were to be recognized as equals with our surface colleagues.

Also, I wanted to make sure that the Commanding Officer of RAINBOW was being piped -- even though he was only a Lieutenant. It was to impress on them that it was a Commanding Officer they were piping -- not a Lieutenant -- not Ray Hunt -- and that the situation was the same for all Commanding Officers, regardless of rank. At times, because we were such a small force, there was a tendency to disregard us. I just made a point of reminding them. There was also a certain amount of jealousy, because we were seen as an elite group, because of our training and camaraderie.

The lease on our house did not expire until August, so I found accommodation for myself at the Base. Also, there was little point in Shirley and the girls coming back yet, so they stayed in England until our house was vacant again.

When a ship comes out of refit, it must be worked-up to get the crew back into an operational state again. RAINBOW was going to be in refit until the early summer, which gave me plenty of time to plan for the follow-on Work-ups. This involved various types of shore training, which was required before the ship ever went to sea for the first time after refit. As Canada did not have training facilities unique to submarines, much of this training had to be carried out San Diego and Pearl Harbour. In addition, arrangements had to be made with the United States Navy, specifically the Commander, Submarine Force Pacific, commonly referred to as COMSUBPAC, to carry out our sea Work-ups from Pearl Harbour.

When we carried out our sea trials after refit, we took our insurance policy along with us. By that, I mean that we insisted that the foremen of the shops, whose personnel worked on our refit, came to sea with us on our first deep dive. It's amazing how safe you feel with them along, knowing that some of them had their own people working on the watertight integrity of the submarine!

All the trials were successful, after the normal adjustments and modifications. We were delighted with the refit. After the

fiasco of the original commissioning in Norfolk, and the subsequent passage to Victoria, we almost had a new boat.

Shirley and the girls came back in July, and we moved into our house shortly thereafter. It was nice to get back to living in our own house again, but what was even better, was that we arranged for Shirley to come out to Hawaii when the submarine was there.

I was like a kid with a new toy. This big black tube was all mine. I was responsible for everything that happened in this submarine, whether I did it or not. There was a certain amount of awe at being in command for the first time -- but it was a marvellous feeling. Another aspect of submarine command that one does not think about on Perisher, is that in your cabin a loudspeaker near your bunk is on constantly, night and day. Even when you are asleep the loudspeaker is on. It is on the circuit between the officer-of-the-watch and the sound room, where the sonar watch is closed up. I don't know how it happens, but even when you are dozing -- for some unknown reason, your mind manages to filter out the unimportant information that is being passed back and forth, but is immediately alert if the situation warrants it. There is also a microphone close by your hand, so that you can talk to the control room. A surface ship CO gets a lot more sleep than a submarine CO -- but we don't complain.

In a submarine, your mind and hearing is very alert to changes. There are so many different noises in a submarine that changes are easily detected. A trim pump or ballast pump that stops and starts. A hydraulic pump that suddenly goes quiet. High pressure air being used. Even if you are asleep, your mind notices the changes, and again, for some unknown reason, it alerts you to sounds, or lack of sounds, which tells you something is not quite right.

After a seven-day passage we arrived in Pearl Harbour. My first action after the initial greetings from our host boat, the USS PUFFER, was to call on Admiral Walter Small, COMSUBPAC. The thing that surprised him was that the Captain of this Canadian submarine was only a Lieutenant, whereas his Commanding Officers were all Commanders -- two ranks above me.

This strange phenomenon became the talk of the Submarine Base. It was even more strange in their eyes, because all the officers in RAINBOW were the same rank -- all Lieutenants. In their submarines they would have a Commander as the Captain, a Lieutenant Commander as XO -- then a mixture of other Lieutenant Commanders, Lieutenants (senior and junior grade) and Ensigns. I suppose it was different, but I never thought of it as a problem. The Captain had his job to do, as did everybody else, so the situation never bothered me.

We had a good Work-up. We worked hard and the Americans gave us tremendous support by providing us with many targets, from aircraft

carriers to opposing submarines. Shirley stayed for a week, and we had a marvellous time, being showered with hospitality. We stayed with the friends that I had met, from the days when GRILSE was hosted by REMORA on the way to Japan a couple of years earlier.

The Viet Nam war was still in progress at this time, and many of the USN ships based on the west coast were over in the western Pacific. Before they left the United States there was a requirement to work them up to a war state. As part of the quid pro quo for our Work-ups, my Admiral in Victoria, offered our services to the Americans. This meant that we were barely back from Pearl Harbour before we were on our way to San Diego.

On arrival there, my junior rank caused the same amount of interest that it had in Pearl Harbour. I was the only Lieutenant in the Canadian Navy in command of a major warship, and I must admit it was wearing a bit thin. It was now late 1970, and I had been wearing two stripes on my arm for ten years. Admittedly, the first five years were as an Acting Lieutenant, therefore technically I only had five years seniority as a Lieutenant.

Working with the USN was a marvellous experience for all of us. I tried to let as many of my officers as possible carry out attacks on the targets that presented themselves. I was determined that my officers, especially my XO, would get as much experience as possible in carrying out attacks, before they went on Perisher. This was because I had only been "allowed" two attacks before I started Perisher!

One of the crosses that a submarine captain has to bear is his "playful" crew. Submariners are different. There are no two ways about it. There is a tendency to try to "outdo" their colleagues. In my career I experienced it a few times, but I can still remember the first time.

On the way back from Pearl Harbour on one trip, my Executive Officer (who is currently the equivalent of the First Sea Lord, or Chief of Naval Operations -- "Top Man"), carried out his usual evening rounds of the submarine, on the first evening out. Normally, on completion of rounds he reported to the captain that rounds were correct. However, this evening he asked me to come back to the after engine room with him to look at something. He said he felt I might recognize it.

When I saw what it was I felt ill. There, still rolled up because of its large size, was the door mat from outside Admiral Small's headquarters. It was about ten feet by six feet. It was made of heavy rubber, in a lovely shade of blue, surrounding the insignia of the US Submarine Force -- gold dolphins. Some of my "playful" crew decided that they needed a souvenir of Hawaii, and they fancied the Admiral's doormat.

Admiral Small was not noted for his sense of humour, and I was sure that it wouldn't have taken too long for his staff to figure out who had removed his mat. Luckily, I knew that one of his submarines, the USS TANG, was about to visit Victoria shortly after my return. On TANG's arrival I made arrangements with the captain to return Admiral Small's mat, having already written him a letter apologizing for its removal. I also bought a huge British Columbia salmon, and asked TANG's captain to give it to him on his arrival in Pearl.

About a month later I received a letter from Admiral Small saying how much he had enjoyed RAIBOW's visit to Pearl Harbour. He also thanked me for the salmon, without any mention of the returned mat, until the last paragraph. He said that it was very kind of me to send him the lovely mat which matched others in his building, because he had been looking for a new one ever since somebody had removed his! Who said he didn't have a sense of humour?

When we were operating out of Victoria we tried to arrange Family Days about twice a year. We would take out the families for a day at sea, so they could see what their husbands or sons did. It also helped some of the wives, who were a little worried about their husbands being in submarines. We showed them everything, and they also saw how everybody knew exactly what to do in the event of an emergency. This helped them understand that because everybody knew their job, there was no reason to be concerned about the safety of the submarine, or their loved ones.

One particular Family Day proved to be very embarrassing for me. We had brought the families over to Vancouver by bus and ferry -- the idea being that we would then take them back to Victoria in the submarine. I could see that leaving the berth was not going to be easy, because I had a ship close ahead of me and another directly astern. I decided to twist the stern out first -- then without any headway I would twist the bow out. When my bow was clear of the ship ahead, I started to make headway, and applied some rudder to give me more clearance ahead. However, I had misjudged how close my stern was to the jetty, and as my head paid-off, my stern clipped the jetty.

If it hadn't been so embarrassing, with Shirley and other visitors on the bridge, the scene was quite amusing. As my stern hit the first wooden piling on the jetty, knocking it over, I now had enough headway to clear the jetty. However, as I was moving away the scene astern of me was like watching dominoes falling. The first piling hit the next, which also collapsed, hitting the next one, and so on.

Sometime later there was an investigation, resulting in no further action. It was found that the timber in the pilings was rotten, which exacerbated, and added to the carnage that I had left

behind me. Also, there was no damage to the submarine. In my home, I have a table decoration of a propeller sitting in the cuts that my own propeller had made in the original wooden piling. It had been presented to me by my Admiral, who obviously had a sense of humour. Nevertheless, it had been an embarrassing day in full view of the families.

Occasionally, we would take the press to sea for the day, to show them what life was like in a submarine. You just kept your fingers crossed until you saw the article in the newspaper, hoping that someone hadn't given the press a totally untrue, juicy story, on which the press seemed to thrive.

The crew loved playing jokes on the press, and particularly the occasional psychologist, who came with us to see what made submariners tick. One stunt involved a sailor walking through the submarine trailing a dog's leash, talking to an imaginary dog, telling it to jump over the hatch coamings. It was also not uncommon when these people were on board, to see two sailors walking along hand in hand, or cuddling in a corner. Submariners do it differently!

The press have never been my favourite people. This is mainly because they want a story on which they could put their own slant, or which they could make controversial. The truth did not matter.

Nor did responsibility. Some of their reporting was harmless, but at other times it was embarrassing. On one of our many trips to San Diego, I was asked whether I would be willing to give an interview to the local press. They had found it interesting that a Canadian submarine was working-up USN ships before they went to Viet Nam.

It didn't seem to be controversial, so I agreed to do it. However, I insisted that a USN officer be present at the interview, because I did not wish to embarrass our hosts, by making what they might think was an inappropriate remark.

The reporter was a Robert Dietrich from the San Diego Tribune. He seemed a pleasant man who was interested in what we were doing. I spent about thirty-five minutes talking about the Canadian Navy and the reason why we were now wearing green uniforms, as opposed to the traditional blues.

He wanted to know what we were doing in San Diego this time, and what the difference was between operating in San Diego than at home. I explained that as far as I was concerned it was the variety of targets that we had in the San Diego area. He wanted more details, so I naively told him how we attacked the USS RANGER during this current exercise, pointing out that we did not have any aircraft carriers in Canada, so that this was a new experience for us. We couldn't have spent more than five minutes on that subject.

"Canada Sub Sinks Super Carrier." Those were the words that

appeared on the front page of the next edition of the San Diego Tribune. I could hardly believe my eyes. The story read like a movie script. It even described the "red-bearded steely-eyed captain," who fooled the crew of one of the US Navy's largest aircraft carriers, culminating in its simulated sinking! There was no mention of green uniforms and life in the Canadian Navy. It concentrated on the one subject of this Second World War submarine being able to get inside the protective screen and sinking one of the navy's finest ships. I felt sick and embarrassed. I was down in San Diego, supposedly helping the USN -- yet the article gave the impression that I was saying how easy it was to sink them!

Luckily for me, I had the USN officer who was present at the interview to corroborate my side of the story. The US Admiral was very gracious and could see the funny side of it, and told me not to worry about it. I didn't have the nerve to seek out the Captain of the USS RANGER, to get his views.

Unfortunately, the story wouldn't go away. About a month later, I received a message from our Attache in Moscow, saying that an article had appeared in Pravda, with the caption, "Deeds of glory by Canadian submarine." Apparently its theme was that this "old" submarine could easily sink one of the US Navy's newest ships. A few weeks after that, the "Stars and Stripes," the magazine of the entire United States forces, reprinted the article from Pravda.

I couldn't believe that this thing wouldn't go away. It resurfaced again about a year later, when a Royal Air Force crew was passing through San Diego, after working with RAINBOW, off Victoria. They had an interview with Mr. Dietrich, and must have told him that they had been working with RAINBOW. So in the article on them, it referred to "the Canadian submarine that had been so successful against RANGER." To my relief, the story seemed to die after that.

Just before New Year's day, I received a call at home from my Admiral, informing me that I was to be promoted to Lieutenant Commander on the first of January 1971.

We were still spending a good deal of our time in San Diego and Pearl Harbour, working with the USN. Shirley made a second visit to Hawaii during this period. We hadn't arranged for Shirley to come out, but some of our American friends called her while we were on our way to Pearl, and insisted that she come out.

The first thing I knew about it was when I was invited on board the Royal Australian Navy's submarine ONSLOW for a drink, when we arrived alongside. When I walked into ONSLOW's wardroom, there was Shirley, her hand wrapped round a gin and tonic. It was a lovely surprise. Again, we had a wonderful time in Hawaii.

As I have mentioned, the Viet Nam war was in progress during this period. It was only natural therefore that when we were in Hawaii, we would meet many officers who were either on leave from Viet Nam, or those that were recovering from their wounds.

I will always remember one major from the Marines that I met at the Officers Club. He had been injured by a mortar, when he was in a dugout in the jungle. He remembered nothing more until he woke up in the ambulance taking him to Tripler Army Hospital, the huge and busy military hospital, just outside Honolulu.

What surprised him was that when he woke up, he was in the same combat clothes, still covered in mud and sand, which he had been wearing when he was hit. He had been airlifted out of the jungle by helicopter and taken to Da Nang. Because there was a medical evacuation flight just about to leave Da Nang, he was then transferred to the C-141 and flown to Hickem Field in Pearl Harbour, and then to hospital. He had been transported from the jungle to a fully staffed hospital, half a world away, in less than eight hours. In the Second World War he would probably have died before they could have got him out of the jungle.

One of the most interesting operations that I was involved in, was on our way up into the Gulf of Alaska to take part in an exercise. I was exercising with three Canadian destroyers, when we received a message that a Soviet Task Group was on its way through the Aleutian chain of islands. Our exercise was terminated, and we all received separate orders. I was told to chop to American control, and shortly after that RAINBOW was ordered to patrol in the area of Unimak Pass, halfway down the Aleutian chain. The aim was to obtain as much intelligence as possible, without being detected.

We spent about two days patrolling the area, with no sonar contacts, except the occasional fisherman. Then one morning about six o'clock, we obtained our first sonar contact, which was classified as a Krupny Class destroyer. On coming to periscope depth I could see that the visibility was restricted -- probably about fifteen hundred yards at a maximum. We continued to close the target on a steady sonar bearing, which would ensure an interception. The target's range was estimated at about sixty miles when we had first gained contact.

I felt quite confident that in this visibility the Krupny would have a problem seeing my periscope, if I kept exposure to a minimum. Just before ten o'clock it was obvious that he was now very close -- and there, out of the fog and gloom I saw this grey hull passing ahead of us at about a thousand yards. What a target! I couldn't have missed! The adrenalin was flowing fast and furious.

We took the required periscope photos, and of course as we had been tracking him on sonar for four hours, we also had made many

audio tapes for analysis. Apparently, the Soviet force had split and transited the Aleutians separately. That is why we only had the one ship. I had been hoping for more!

We were ordered into Kodiak, where all our intelligence information was packaged and flown to Victoria. Because we were under the operational control of an American Admiral the information was then sent on to Hawaii, as we had been operating in part of his waters.

The unfortunate thing about that type of operation is that the Captain is the only one to see the target. Unlike Hollywood movies, the periscope is not kept up, so that every man and his dog can have a look through it. If you don't want to get caught, you only put the periscope up when you need to. It's very difficult to contain yourself when you are telling your team that you are now looking at the Russian lifebuoy sentry, only a thousand yards away, probably daydreaming about his girlfriend in Petropavlosk. For my crew, although they were the same distance away as I was, I could have been fantasising. It was almost like being a Peeping Tom. However, it was amazing to see how everybody was caught up in the excitement.

I still have one of those periscope photos today, above my desk, just to prove I was there.

A month or two later Admiral Aurand, the Admiral to whom I was responsible for the Soviet operation, flew to Victoria to award me with a United States Navy Commendation for my part in the operation.

I prefer to see the Commendation as an award to RAINBOW, because there were many people involved in the operation. For instance, there would have been no operation if the sonarman on watch hadn't picked up the sonar contact that turned out to be the Krupny. He classified it as such -- not me. Without the Plotters we would not have been able to intercept our target. It's not a one man effort.

It's a team effort -- but as Captain, I received the Commendation on their behalf.

Each year the Canadian Navy was represented at the Portland, Oregon, Rose Festival. This was a four-day event that was nonstop entertainment for everybody, from beginning to end. We were berthed right up in the middle of town, alongside a six-lane highway, separated from the harbour by a grassy patch running past the end of our gangway. It was about a five-hour car ride from Victoria, so Shirley would collect some of the wives and drive down. It was always a good visit, and as usual, the hospitality was lavish.

During my time in RAINBOW many strange things happened, but space prevents me from putting all those incidents down on paper.

However, there is one particular event that I think is particularly amusing. It's a different type of fisherman's story, about the one that got away!



On one particular exercise I was ordered to be in a certain location at four o'clock one morning, ready to attack some destroyers as they passed through my area. I had remained on the surface until three o'clock, keeping clear of some Soviet trawlers that we had seen on the horizon. At three o'clock we dived and went deep, with our sonarmen listening for the approach of our destroyers. I lay in my bunk reading, expecting to get a report of a sonar contact at any time.

As I was reading I felt the submarine starting to heel over to starboard. I was out of my bunk and into the control room in seconds. We were now heeled to about fifteen degrees, and a report came from the Manoeuvring Room at the after end of the submarine, that a loud scraping sound could be heard passing down the port side. Simultaneously, sonar reported loud all-round hydrophone effect (HE), which meant that whatever was above us, was now threshing its propellers very rapidly.

Just as suddenly as it began, it was all over. The noises aft ceased, the HE disappeared and we were upright again. It didn't take long to realize what had happened. We had been trawled by one of the Soviet trawlers that we had seen on the horizon when we had dived.

Later, after we had made our attack on the destroyers I surfaced to see if any damage had been done. The only evidence of contact was a very polished after casing on the port side, which was obviously where the trawler's steel cables, attached to his trawl, had dragged down our side. We started to imagine some of the comments on the trawler about the huge catch they had that got away. Just like any fisherman who comes back with the story of the one that got away, probably nobody believed the Russians either!

In this instance it was an amusing event, but there have been similar incidents where submarines travelling at high speed dragged the trawler over, with the loss of lives and the ship. In my case I was proceeding very slowly, going round in circles.

I brought RAINBOW into a maintenance period for a period of six weeks in the spring of 1972. As there was no requirement for the Captain to be on board during that period, my Admiral was contacted by an American Admiral friend of his. He wanted to know if I would be available to be on his staff, as submarine operations advisor, for a few weeks. I was delighted of course, so off I flew to San Diego.

I was on the American Admiral's staff for three weeks, and thoroughly enjoyed it, as we were always on the move. He would shift his flag from aircraft carrier, to cruiser and to destroyer, then back again. It was a very busy time. When I was on the carriers I would ensure that RAINBOW's name never came up -- just in case

somebody from RANGER was now on board these carriers.

As I still had a couple of weeks before RAINBOW went to sea I was selected for an anti-submarine course in Nowra, near Sydney, Australia. Unfortunately, Shirley had to go into hospital for a hysterectomy at that time, so I was going to turn the course down.

Shirley would have none of it, and told me to go to Australia. As we were going by a military propeller-driven aircraft with only the one crew, we had to make a couple of stops along the way for crew rest.

It was very good of Shirley not to be upset about my trip, but her reasoning was that it was probably going to be the only opportunity that I would ever have of getting to Australia, and that she would be fine. However, I heard that her views changed significantly when she received a post card from me from Fiji, saying how tired I was after the long flight. She was lying in hospital with all sorts of tubes in her, and didn't appreciate seeing a picture of Latoka, an island paradise in Fiji, with me complaining that I was tired.

Of course, I only heard about it when I returned, but I put her displeasure down to post-operative stress, causing a temporary loss of her sense of humour!

An exercise was being planned by the Australians, in which Canada would be invited to participate. However, my Admiral decided that he did not want to send RAINBOW all the way to Australia. He was happy for us to exercise with the Canadian surface fleet on the way across the Pacific, but we could not go the whole way. I was asked to choose a furthest-on destination -- so after studying the chart for some time I settled on Tahiti. As Papeete was also a French Naval base, I had little problem in convincing the Admiral that it was an acceptable destination.

My Navigator and I spent a great deal of time organising our visit, getting all the necessary diplomatic clearances etc. Even though I had travelled a great deal in different parts of the world, I had never visited the islands of the South Pacific. I was really looking forward to this trip, when one day I received a phone call from my Career Manager informing me that I had been selected for Staff College, a course that was a must if one hoped to be promoted to a senior rank. It was to commence in Toronto, starting 4 September 1972 -- the day we were due to arrive in Tahiti.

There was nothing I could do about it. My posting was just part of the whole posting plot, so there were many others involved.

However, at the same time I was surprised to be selected for Staff College, because you were selected on your potential for higher rank.

The maximum age for selection was forty, so, as I wouldn't be forty until February 1973 I was just eligible.

I had spent just over two years in command, and it had been

a marvellous experience. Every naval officer strives for command, but unfortunately many do not make it, especially in submarines. In the surface navy, it's just that there are not enough ships available, for the number of officers qualified to command them. The whole selection process is very tight. Although I was reluctant to give up my command, I knew that I had no choice. I considered myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to command.

This time we sold our house in Victoria, as we didn't see much chance of returning there. People killed to live in Victoria, and we had been there for seven years, with the exception of Perisher.

So it was off in the car again for another cross-country jaunt, only this time it was a three thousand-mile journey, instead of the usual four thousand.