

CHAPTER SIXTEEN -- STAFF COLLEGE AND HALIFAX AGAIN

The Staff College in Toronto was a beautiful, ivy covered building, not far from the centre of the city. Because the grounds were so spacious and raised above the road level, you couldn't hear the traffic. It was like living in a lovely old mansion in the country.

There were one hundred and two students at the College. As nearly all of us had been posted in from other parts of Canada, and the fact that we were only going to be there for eleven months, we mostly lived in rented accommodation. Most of us lived in one of three different ghettos, as we called them. We lived in the Thornhill ghetto, just a few miles north of the city limits. For rental housing it was quite good.

Staff College was considered as a place of higher learning for military officers, who had been selected because of their potential to reach a senior rank. It was for army, navy and air force officers, as well as foreign officers of the same three services.

The students were all at the Major/Lieutenant Commander level, whereas the staff were either Lieutenant Colonels or Commanders, or above. We covered many subjects, including Canadian politics, international politics, military strategy, Soviet strategy, world trouble spots and other global issues. There was a great deal of reading to do, because the subjects were normally discussed in syndicates of about a dozen students. We also had some excellent lectures and presentations, including visits to the United Nations in New York. That visit confirmed my impression of the UN !

On a visit to Rapid City, South Dakota, where we had been visiting a Strategic Air Command base, we were snowed-in. We had finished our visit and were due to fly out next morning, but awoke to find about three feet of snow on the ground, and still snowing. The amusing part of this was that the lobby of the Holiday Inn, where we were staying, had about a dozen Sioux Indians lying there.

They were from a place, not far away, called Wounded Knee, which was under siege by United States Marshals. To beat the siege, the Indians put cloth over their horses' hooves so they couldn't be heard.

This allowed them to sneak through the Marshals' lines, to get food from a local store. Unfortunately, on this sortie, because of the weather, they couldn't get any further than the Holiday Inn. They asked a sympathetic night manager if they could stay in the lobby until the snow stopped. This scene and story was a cross between a movie and the nineteenth and twentieth century!

On one of our other visits we went to the Royal Air Force Staff College at Bracknell, just outside London. During this visit I

managed to fly over to Belfast to see my mother -- but just for one day. I haven't managed to get back to Belfast since.

I also saw Thelma for a couple of hours in London, when she came to our hotel the night before we flew back to Canada. She had told me some months before, how the army had sent Ernie home to the UK from Singapore for a heart operation, and that the military doctors had then sent him to the Middlesex Hospital. During the operation something went terribly wrong. She had told us what had happened in general terms, but now she told me the details of this tragic affair.

The operation had left Ernie with severe brain damage, to the extent that he had totally lost his short term memory. This meant that he couldn't even go for a walk by himself, because he couldn't remember how to get back. He had no peripheral vision and was also colour blind. Ernie had been a bright, young, intelligent army officer, when I had last seen him, and he was now out of the army attending a rehabilitation school, because of somebody's negligence.

This sort of thing is a terrible tragedy for anyone, but even worse for this smart officer who could have achieved a high rank in the army. I felt so sorry for both Ernie and Thelma, and their children. To make matters worse, the medical profession closed ranks and refused to accept any liability. Thelma had lost both her parents when she was young, and now her husband was brain damaged and severely disabled. When was she ever going to get some good luck?

The eleven months at the College was the only time in my naval life that I was not responsible for some one, or some thing. If you were going on a visit a student's only responsibility was to arrive at a certain place at a certain time to catch a bus. We even had a corporal to make sure we could get that right!

As I said, there was a lot of reading to do. A good deal of our time was also spent on preparing material for syndicate presentations, but I believe that most of us enjoyed our year there. The naval officers amongst us, in our superior way, let on that it was an unnecessary year out of our lives. It was all right for "jet jockeys and pongos," who had a problem stringing two sentences together, but it was totally unnecessary for a naval officer!

Sometime in April 1973 we received a visit from our Career Managers. I had asked for an exchange posting to the UK or the United States, but I doubted if I would get it. I was correct -- I didn't.

Career Managers must take a special course in acting, because my man told me that it was essential that when the course finished that I drive to Halifax immediately, because the First Canadian Submarine Squadron just couldn't do without me. It made me wonder how they had ever managed without me long before now!

In July 1973 we arrived in Halifax, where I was to be the Submarine Squadron Operations Officer, and Spare Crew Commanding Officer. We were pleasantly surprised by the change that had taken place in the city in the intervening years. It was much cleaner (though not as clean as Victoria). There were some excellent restaurants and some fine hotels. While the down town area had diminished somewhat (there wasn't much to diminish in the first place), there were now many, large, modern shopping centres in various parts of the city. Also, large, modern office buildings were being built all over the place. Things had changed in Halifax in nine years.

We found an attractive Dutch Colonial house located on the Halifax peninsula, with the interesting address of 2231 Blink Bonnie Terrace. At first I didn't like the house, as all I could see was a house that had been neglected, and needed a great deal of work. However, Shirley could see its potential, and she was quite correct. Between us, we made it into a very pleasant home.

The Squadron Operations Officer, or SOO as he was called, was responsible to the Submarine Squadron Commander for the operations of the three submarines which comprised the First Canadian Submarine Squadron. There was no second squadron. That was planned for the west coast eventually. The submarine Commanding Officers would report, through me, to the Commander. I acted as advisor to the Commander on all aspects of submarine operations. It was an interesting job, and one that I enjoyed.

While I was in that job I took advantage of the time ashore to study for my Surface Ship Command Board. Unlike submariners, surface ship officers wrote a number of examinations on the standard naval subjects. They could either write them at the same time, or over a period of years. Once they had completed them, they could then sit an oral Board. If they passed that, they were qualified and eligible for surface ship command. In a way, it was similar to obtaining your Master's Certificate.

Submariners, if they wanted to have the opportunity to be selected for a surface ship command, in addition to their submarine command, were required to sit the same written examinations and Board that their surface ship colleagues did. During this period I completed all my surface ship command qualifications. This made me the only person that I know of who was qualified to command a merchant vessel, a surface warship and a submarine. I know of people who are qualified to command a merchant ship and a surface warship, or a submarine and a surface warship, but I don't know of anyone with the three qualifications.

The east coast navy deployed to the Puerto Rican operating areas during the winter months. They were normally gone from the beginning

of January until the end of March. Our submarines would also go south at this time. As our boats were operating in USN operating areas, we were required to provide the USN with an officer to act as the Submarine Operating Authority, responsible for all submarines in their areas.

I flew down to the US Navy Operating Base at Roosevelt Roads, about fifty miles from San Juan, to become the Operating Authority. I worked directly for an American Admiral in Roosevelt Roads, but I was also responsible for submarine safety to the Commander, Submarine Forces Atlantic, the senior NATO submarine authority, in Norfolk, Virginia. It was rather amusing that, because I was working for an American admiral, I was responsible for operations of all American nuclear submarines operating in the Caribbean. It was a tough way to spend the winter months -- but somebody had to do it!

On my return from Puerto Rico I was asked by the Squadron Commander if I would like to take command of HMCS OKANAGAN later that year. I couldn't believe it. Would I like to do what?

As I had done my initial submarine training in the United States, and had spent all my time in USN class submarines, except Perisher, I needed to get some experience in the O-Class submarines, before I took command. It was decided that I would ride HMCS ONONDAGA for a few weeks, during her deployment to the UK on an exercise.

When I was on Perisher, I found out very quickly that a great deal of the terminology in the O-Class was different from my USN terminology. The operation of the equipment was similar, and of course, the general operating concept was the same, but frequently the terminology was different. On Perisher, I only had to learn the terminology as it applied to attacking, but now, if I was going in command of an O-Class, I would need to know a lot more.

Also, because of my previous training, I decided that I wanted to know everything about the technical systems of the O-Class. I think it surprised and amused some of the young sailors in ONONDAGA, who were carrying out their own qualification program, to be sharing spaces with a CO when trying to trace an air or hydraulic line through a compartment. We pooled our knowledge in an effort to help all of us. Such was the thinking of submariners.

On the 4th of August 1974 I assumed command of HMCS OKANAGAN. I joined the submarine in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, and immediately went into an exercise off the east coast of Canada for two weeks. OKANAGAN was a much newer submarine than RAINBOW. Twenty years newer, in fact. I had now been in command of the oldest and newest of Canada's submarines.

Being British designed and built, the accommodation was spartan. Accommodation in submarines, is, by the necessity of space limitations, restricted. However, there was no excuse in this day

and age to design accommodation, based on the use of sleeping bags. Six to eight officers lived in the wardroom. This was in a space approximately twelve feet long, and seven or eight feet wide.

During the day it was used as an office, where the officers could do their paper work. It was also where they dined, which meant that approaching meal times, all paperwork had to be off the table so the table could be set for meals. At night the settees were transformed into bunks, where the officers slept in their sleeping bags.

It didn't take much to see why all submariners take a battery of psychological tests before they come into submarines. You have to be the sort of person who doesn't get upset easily. For instance, you have to be fairly easygoing to accept a big foot, fresh (or not so fresh) out of a sweaty sleeping bag, being placed next to your bacon and eggs as you were eating breakfast! The only way out of the sleeping bags and bunks was by standing on the table. Remember -- showers were not part of daily life!

Operationally, the O-Class were far superior to the American Fleet Class -- but as I said, they were twenty years newer. As a CO I enjoyed the superior speed and manoeuvrability that I now had. My only criticism, was that the designers forgot that people had to live there as well.

Each year we exchanged a submarine with the Royal Navy. They would send a boat over to Canada, which would operate as though it was part of the Canadian Navy. We would do the same with the Royal Navy. It was normally for a period of about three months. It was my luck that OKANAGAN was going to be the exchange boat this year.

Before we left Canada, we were given a copy of our program for our deployment. Part of the joint agreement was that each submarine could choose a place for a recreational port visit during the exchange. I requested a visit to Liverpool, which was immediately approved. I had always wanted to bring my own ship into Liverpool, and it was now about to happen. We arranged that Shirley and the children would fly over while I was there.

It was beautiful weather when we arrived in DOLPHIN in mid spring. This had been my "home" during Perisher, so it was good to be back. It was even nicer, knowing that I didn't have that to go through that torture this time. The main part of our operations was to take place in the Mediterranean, and off the Spanish coast. We would be using Gibraltar as our base, so again I was delighted at the thought of going back there again.

While the submarine was in DOLPHIN I came up to London to meet Shirley. We stayed with Ernie and Thelma for a couple of days. It was good to see them both again. I found it difficult to realize

at times that Ernie had any problems, let alone brain damage. He was so intelligent, that he knew what his limitations were, and therefore was able to counterbalance them. Carrying out a conversation with him now was almost like the old days. But they weren't the old days -- he just knew how to manage.

Arriving in Liverpool from Gosport was a great thrill for me. The last time I had arrived in Liverpool by sea was in the Herdsman in 1959 -- fifteen years earlier. As I approached the Gladstone Locks I thought of all the other times that I had been through them. On my first trip to sea in 1949, as a cadet, we had returned to Liverpool through these locks. In those days I never thought that I would be bringing my own submarine into these locks, so well known to merchant sailors from all over the world. Shirley and the girls were on the locks to meet us. To me, it was a lovely homecoming.

We had a marvellous time in Liverpool. We did so many things in only four days. On the first day, Shirley was interviewed by the press. They could see they had a local human interest story and played it up to the hilt. The caption under a photo of Shirley and the children in the Liverpool Echo read, "Canadian Submarine Visit Like Homecoming." Shirley's mother and father enjoyed everything about that visit. Not only did they have the family with them, but they enjoyed meeting the many people at our reception, including the Lord Mayor of the city that they had lived in for most of their lives. Shirley received a personal tour by the Lord Mayor of the magnificent Liverpool Town Hall.

My old Captain from my days in the Governor, Herbert Jones (he was now eighty-four) and his wife, came to our reception on board. They also took Shirley and me out to dinner one evening. I wondered whether he was still starting the car for Mrs. Jones, as he had done many years before!

My brother's son, Patrick who lived in Peru, was at a boarding school in the Isle of Man. I managed to get permission from the school to allow him to visit me. He was only sixteen, but looked quite a bit older. My officers "adopted" him, and he stayed with them in their hotel. They also took him to see the, "Grandmother Stripper" at some local club! I'm sure his school didn't think he was doing the things he was doing. I have never seen him since. He now runs the family business in Lima.

The highlight of that visit was meeting Jean and Michael Jones again after all those years. We hadn't seen them since we had come to Canada, so I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw them walking into OKANAGAN's Control Room halfway through our reception. Shirley had invited them, and hadn't told me. It was the best part of our visit for me -- and what a lovely surprise.

The day before we left Liverpool I received a phone call from

my XO, telling me that he was going to have to send one of our sailors back to Canada, because he had injured himself. He then went on to tell me what had happened. I could tell that he was enjoying himself as he recounted the story.

The sailor, Leading Seaman "Pig" Lloyd (the name tells a story by itself) had caught his high heels in the hem of his dress as he stepped off his bar stool! When I heard this I thought one of two things. Either the XO was drunk, or I hadn't heard correctly. The XO wasn't drunk -- and I had heard correctly. Apparently, as Lloyd fell, he put his hands out in front of him to break his fall. It broke his fall all right, but it also broke both his wrists.

I never did find out why Lloyd was wearing a dress -- and I don't think I wanted to know. However, it's not too difficult to guess that a certain amount of liquor was involved. Apparently his main concern was to get the lipstick and makeup off his face before he got to the hospital! The reason I mention this incident is because of the outcome.

Our Engineer Officer was flying back to Canada in a day or so, therefore the XO decided that he would be a good escort to get Lloyd back to Canada, with his two broken wrists. When we arrived back in Canada a couple of months later, we were met by a very irate Engineer Officer. He was not impressed with what his escort duties entailed. He had to spend two days with a big hulking sailor, who had both wrists in plaster, and therefore could not use his hands for anything -- for anything Think about it!

After a wonderful visit to Liverpool we sailed for Gibraltar. En route we made a rendezvous with three other submarines -- two Brits and a Dutchman. For the first time in my life I took part in a sailpast with four submarines on entering Gibraltar. The salute was taken by Admiral Sir Iwan Raikes, Flag Officer Submarines. I had read about him in, "One of our Submarines," when he had been a sub-lieutenant during the war. I never thought that I would meet and work for someone that I had read about in 1952, when I first became interested in submarines.

It was marvellous being back in Gibraltar. This time without the pressures of Perisher to worry about. There was certainly a difference going back there as a CO. We had an excellent exercise working out of Gibraltar, especially working with the other submarines. After about three weeks operations in the Gibraltar area we returned to the UK. Our next assignment was to operate in the English Channel, where we worked for Flag Officer Sea Training, who was working up ships.

All too soon our deployment came to an end, and we returned to Halifax, and some well-earned leave for everyone. Shortly after that trip I returned to my previous position as Squadron Operations

Officer.

One day in that summer of 1975, I was sitting in the garden with my late-afternoon scotch and water by my side, reading the newspaper. I happened to glance at a photo in the newspaper of someone that I thought I recognised. In the split second before I started to read the caption, my mind had gone back about thirty years, because I was looking at a face I last saw in 1947. Sure enough, it was John Pace, who had been a good friend of my brother's at school. Like many of our friends he had spent many hours in our house in Belfast. He, along with many of my brother's friends, had emigrated to Canada in 1947.

According to the newspaper article, he had been transferred from Hamilton to Halifax to run the Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre. I contacted him, and shortly after that we met when he came down to the Submarine Squadron for lunch.

It was marvellous seeing him again and catching up on his news -- twenty-eight years of news! I must admit having subsequently heard that he had come out to Canada on a liberty ship, I was a little perturbed. I thought that I was the one who knew about liberty ships -- only to discover that John had been on one a few years before me. His parents had flown out to join him a few months after his arrival in Canada.

He updated me on where many of my brother's other friends were, which I was then able to pass on to my brother. John had married a Canadian girl, Margaret -- and they had two children, a boy and a girl, approximately the same age as our two girls.

At school, John was my brother's friend, so while I knew him because he spent a lot of time in our house, he was still my brother's friend. The age difference separated us in those days, which it doesn't do as one becomes older. Now of course, John and Margaret are amongst my dearest friends.

John had been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church some years before coming to Halifax, but for his own reasons turned to something else. St. David's Presbyterian Church in Halifax had been without a permanent minister for sometime when John arrived in Halifax. Therefore, it was not very long before John was asked to preach there occasionally. This ultimately led to him being asked to return to the church permanently. On April Fool's Day 1976 John was inducted as the minister at St. David's, where he remains to the present day as the Reverend Doctor Pace.

On his occasional visits to the UK for his study leave, he renewed his acquaintance with my family, whom he had known in Belfast. My mother called him "little John Pace," which showed how long it had been since she had seen him. He has also visited Thelma and her

family.

I remained in the Submarine Squadron until October 1975. I was more than a little upset when I received my posting to the Admiral's staff as Staff Officer Personnel Services. It was ridiculous -- I was a sharpender -- a driver -- so why was I being posted to this nothing position? In the new job I was responsible for such things as reviewing grievances, approving liquor supplies to ships, and writing precis of recommendations for honours and awards for the Admiral to review. However, I realized I shouldn't complain, because I had just finished my second command, whereas most people only get one chance -- and others not even one.

Working for Admiral Boyle was different. He was known as "Fester" Boyle. Another story about him was that he didn't have an ulcer, but that he was a carrier! As one could guess by those comments, Admiral Boyle was a little awkward -- to say the least.

I think he used to eat raw meat for breakfast! However, I got on reasonably well with him. I found that he didn't want you to present him with a problem, without you having some good, logical solutions to it. He felt that you were on his staff to help him, not just to give him problems. As a result, I always made sure I had done my homework before I went to see him.

In November I received a message promoting me to Commander, effective the 1st of January 1976 -- five years to the day from when I had been promoted to Lieutenant Commander. Apparently my Career Manager knew of the future promotion before I left OKANAGAN, so that's why he put me in a holding billet until my promotion date. Now I understood why I had gone to this strange job.

My new appointment was as Senior Staff Officer Training, but still on Admiral Boyle's staff. I was now responsible for the training policy of the officers and men of the Canadian Navy. It was an interesting job, but it wasn't the real thing as far as I was concerned. I wanted to get back to the operational side of the navy -- but so did many others.

Two years after being promoted to Commander I received the news that I had wanted to hear, but that I had hardly dared hope for. It was a message appointing me as the Commander, First Canadian Submarine Squadron, effective the first of January 1978 -- the top position in the Canadian Submarine Force. I had managed to get to that position in spite of my age. I was now almost forty-five, and it had been thirteen years since I first joined submarines.