

MIDDLEMISS, Robert William (Bob) [UNTD DONNACONA '59 U-823] (1938 - 2016) Age: 78



MIDDLEMISS, Robert Robert William Middlemiss, 78, died June 17, 2016, in the presence of his family. Middlemiss was born in Hartlepool, England, educated in Canada, and became a U.S. citizen in 1970. His background includes library administration at York University, Toronto; Adelphi University, N.Y.; and Indiana State University. His interests included elementary, secondary and adult education and literacy. He served on the board of trustees for the Dixie Council of Authors and Journalists; and on the advisory board for the Tennessee Mountain Writers Conference. He published several spy thrillers which were well reviewed by the New York Times, Publishers Weekly, and Booklist. His magnum opus was a fact-based novel, *A Common Glory*. In addition to his own work, Middlemiss has served as editor of numerous fiction and nonfiction works. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth (Dixon) Middlemiss, daughter and son in law, Whitney and Neil Sutherland, grandchildren Marylou, Ellie and Will Sutherland, nephew Ian Presland and niece Carol Presland Smith. A celebration of his life will be held on July 10th at 2pm at Northminster Presbyterian Church 2400 Old Alabama Rd, Roswell, GA 30076. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be sent to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital /ALSAC, 501 Saint Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105. Published in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on July 2, 2016

Bob's time in the Navy was short but he maintained a strong and abiding connection to it throughout his life in the USA and was a long-time UNTDA member.

This is exemplified in two pieces that he wrote a number of years ago, which appeared in both the Newsletter and in UNTiDy Tales.

I'm attaching those stories, below.

They provide a lot of detail on Bob's life and are superbly written, which befits what was to become his profession. Editor Bob Williamson had also provided additional biographical detail on the last page. Remarkably, Bob Middlemiss arrived as a UNTD Cadet having already sailed in RESTIGOUCHE (2nd of 2) DDE 257 before any of her Inaugural Ship's Company.

Beth Middlemiss herself has had a lengthy career on the civilian side of the DND-USA.

Bill C

UNTD CADET INTERVIEW BOARD

Bob Middlemiss, 1959 HMCS Donnacona

Editor' Note

As probationary UNTD cadets we all had to face an Officer Cadet Board interview at some time. It meant reading Time and Newsweek magazines to be up to speed on current events and learning all the names of prominent politicians, senior officers and relevant military events, especially if they involved the navy. In some way we all had to find an opportunity to present our best face as potential officer candidates. All these memories will come flooding back to you as you read this story by Bob Middlemiss.

UNTD Cadet Bob Middlemiss HMCS Donnacona 1959

In 1959 I remember how uneasy I felt as a UNTD Probationary Cadet sitting the Promotion Board for Officer Cadets. As I faced those severe looking senior officers part way through the interview; - I knew I was floundering, but then I saw my chance. Asked why I wished to join the RCNR, I told the board that I came from a seagoing family. Cousin Harry served in *HMS Warspite* and was known as "Dempsey" for his boxing prowess. Cousin Tommy served in the Merchant Marine and lost his plumbing during a convoy strafing. Cousin Alan was also in the Merchant Marine and served as an engineering officer in oil tankers. My uncle, Ernest Abrams, was a LCdr. RNVR. As a frogman he carried out classified operations for the Normandy landings. My father had a merchant ship's clock salvaged by him and displayed it on our living room wall.

I could see that I suddenly had the interest of the board officers. The interview had taken a turn in my favour. Then I played the most powerful and tragic card of my family history. Uncle Ernest Abrams' son, Robbie, a Petty Officer, was lost at sea on board *HMS Hood* during that famous encounter with the German pocket-battleship, Bismarck. To this day I feel the guilt of having traded on the memory of a fine sailor and a fine ship. But I also remember the board's reaction at the mention of *HMS Hood*. The atmosphere changed. Sunlight suddenly came streaming in to brighten the solemnity of the conference room.

When my father died in 1969, the surviving cousins: Harry, Tommy and Alan took the train to my parent's home in the picturesque countryside of Sussex to remember my father and comfort my mother. They hugged her when they arrived and drank a "cuppa" served with extra thick ham sandwiches. They noticed my photograph on the mantelpiece - a smiling young UNTD officer cadet RCNR and beside it the merchant ship's clock salvaged by Robbie's father. The conversation soon turned to the sinking of *HMS Hood* and our lost cousin, Robbie. They talked of the ship's great power and lovely lines - and soberly of the political machinations that denied her the refit that might have changed her role in history. They retold the story of how Robbie had phoned his sister, Mary, before setting sail. Mary cautioned him to take care of himself and he replied, "Don't worry, Luv, I'm on the safest ship in the world".

My daughter grew up on the stories of the loss of *HMS Hood* and my cousin, Petty Officer Robbie Abrams. She told me the other day that she would hand down our family stories to my grandchildren and take care of my officer cadet photo, my navy newsletters, and the salvaged merchant ship's clock inherited from my father. I thanked her and got back to work, but in my head lingered the memory of my cadet board and the voices of my sailor cousins, now stilled, telling family stories of a gallant ship and a lost relative.