



THE NEWSLETTER



Of The UNTD Association of Upper Canada

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EDITOR Robert Williamson

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College Men Take Naval Training



Now in the midst of a three-week course in H.M.C. Navigation Direction School, H.M.C.S. "Stadacona," Halifax, these students from Ontario Agricultural College and Toronto, Queen's and McGill Universities will go to sea later this month to complete their summer training with the Royal Canadian Navy. Shown here studying navigational theory, they are: Front row (L. to R.)—Charles Miller, Watford, Ontario (O.A.C.); Glenn Peister, Toronto (O.A.C.); Weldon Findlay, Essex (O.A.C.); Andrew Hugessen, Montreal (McGill); William Purvis, Toronto (O.A.C.); second row—Marlon Magus, Dunnville (O.A.C.); Jack Coon, Guelph (O.A.C.); Robert Morris, Hamilton (O.A.C.); Augustine Higuchi, Toronto (O.A.C.); Harold Snyder, Waterloo (O.A.C.); Scott Wilkinson, Port Perry (O.A.C.); Third row—Robert Johnston, Toronto (Queen's); Stan Williams, Ottawa (Queen's); Alvin Tate, Millbrook, Ont. (Queen's); John Russell, Toronto (U. of T.); fourth row—Lloyd Pressnall, Windsor (U. of T.); Ken Lendon, Toronto (Queen's); John Wilkinson, Oakwood (Queen's); Gordon Glover, London (U. of T.). (R.C.N. Photo)

THIS 1948 CLASS OF UNTD CADETS IN HALIFAX WERE ABOUT TO DEPART ON A CRUISE OF A LIFE-TIME THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL TO VICTORIA, B.C. WITHIN THREE WEEKS, THAT DREAM CRUISE WOULD BECOME A NIGHTMARE.

cover story inside

DREAM CRUISE BECOMES A NIGHTMARE

Cover Story

When polio broke out on board *HMCS Athabaskan* in June 1948, the ship's company were put in quarantine, including all the UNTD cadets who believed they had been drafted to a summer training dream cruise. This bit of UNTD history is covered in, *Quarantined*, on page 68 of *UNTiDy Tales*. Now, for the first time, we have an account by a cadet who was there. This story and pictures were submitted by Charlie Miller, 175 Talbot St. West, Leamington, ON., N8H 1N5.

Editor

After completing a three-week navigation course at the Navigation Direction School in *HMCS Stadacona*, Charlie Miller from Ontario Agricultural College and other "Untidies" from: University of Toronto, Queen's and McGill Universities, were sent to sea in the tribal class destroyer, *HMCS Athabaskan*, and the British cruiser, *HMS Sheffield*. Both ships were headed for the Caribbean, but the *Athabaskan* would transit the Panama Canal and end up in Victoria. There were 33 UNTD cadets on board *Athabaskan* when she sailed from Halifax on May 19. They made ports of call in: Guantanamo Bay, Jamaica, Panama City and Acapulco Mexico. In the tropics, summer temperatures soared to over 100 degrees fahrenheit every day.

While enjoying a pleasant leave in Los Angeles where the cadets watched the radio shows, "Meet the Mrs." and "The Beulah Show," things began to go wrong. A young naval rating who had not been feeling well, went on leave without reporting to sick bay. By time he got back to the ship it was too late. He and six others had contracted polio while in Mexico. He would die later and be buried at sea off Vancouver Island. Two cadets, Paul Presant of Blenheim, Charlie's roommate at OAC and Bill Purvis of the University of Toronto, came down with polio.

When the ship anchored off Victoria on June 29, 1948, the polio victims were sent to Veteran's Hospital where Paul Presant was to remain for several months. The rest of the UNTDs were put in quarantine at

William Head until July 13. They called the former army barracks, UNTiDy Lodge.



UNTD Cadets in quarantine at William Head B.C., July 1948. The only cadets identified are in front L. to R.: L. Presnell, (U. Of T.); D. Corrigan, (OAC); C. Miller, (OAC).

Bill Purvis recovered more quickly and enrolled in Law School. He became a successful lawyer in Toronto and is now deceased. Paul eventually completed his OAC studies in 1951 and went to work for the 3 M Company. He presently resides in London, Ontario. Charlie Miller went home to pick tobacco in Delhi for the rest of the summer in 1948. He remained in the Naval Reserve until 1957 and served in several ships: *HMCS New Liskeard*, *Brockville*, *Porte St. Jean*, *Raccoon*, *Wallaceburg*, and *Portage*, mostly on the Great Lakes. His daughter was christened on *Portage* in Sarnia, the same year that he received his Watchkeeping Certificate in 1957.

Although he left the RCNR in 1957, Charlie continued his association with the military by teaching communications to Army Cadets at Glencoe District High School. After thirty-five years of teaching, Charlie retired from Kingsville District High School as Vice Principal in 1987. He lives in Leamington.

Charles Miller

CAPTAIN LITTLER REPLIES

Many thanks for your kind remarks about my book, *Sea Fever*, in your March 1997 Newsletter. I would be delighted if you used bits from the book in your UNTD publications. The UNTD were very much a part of my training commander's job and I enjoyed every minute of it.

At Esquimalt I somehow convinced Admiral de Wolf that we could move two frigates from the reserve fleet using only one crew and the UNTD would make up the missing numbers. I got buoys placed in Bedwell Harbour and we were at last with our own little fleet; one fairmile and two frigates. I also got the dockyard barracks and our own parade ground as well as Naden's band once a week. In order to keep our young officers in good health, I started early morning runs. Later I received letters from parents saying that the physical and mental alertness of their sons had improved greatly. I did all this planning without referring to Ottawa. I was distinctly empire building and it was most rewarding. Harry de Wolf was my "backer" with Commodore "Duchy" Edwards approving every move.

It was in Esquimalt that the UNTD cadets produced an excellent magazine called the *White Twist*. I regret that I no longer have a copy.

When I commanded *HMCS Crescent* and the training flotilla in the Atlantic, I got Admiral Bidwell to approve cruises to Europe and the Mediterranean. This resulted in one of the most emotional moments in my life when we visited Dieppe on Bastille Day. We were overwhelmed with the gratitude of the Dieppois. A cadet playing "Flowers in the Forest" on his bagpipes as I laid a wreath had everyone crying. I took a cadet guard of honour to Paris where we stopped the traffic while I laid a wreath for Canada on the Unknown Soldier's Grave.

My memoirs were never intended as a naval history but I should have mentioned Herbie Little in *Sea Fever* for he was the post-war father of the UNTD. We worked together quite well and I am glad that I was able to take him with me to Europe on that special trip to Dieppe.

When I was Chief of Staff to the Atlantic Command 1952 - 1955, I had a large yacht which required a crew. Alexis Troubetskoy, a UNTD cadet in Stadacona organized a permanent crew and we sailed most weekends. It was a very happy arrangement. I taught them seamanship in sail, fed them very well, and I relaxed from what was probably the toughest job in my navy career. Alexis left the navy as a lieutenant in 1958 to become headmaster of several fine private schools. He is now in Russia as head of the Tolstoy Foundation.



Captain J. C. Littler, RCN, shown here in 1958 was in command of HMCS Ontario at the time. He took the cruiser on her last cruise before she ended up in a Japanese scrap yard.
Sea Fever

In retirement I sailed the Pacific in another yacht, *Wanderer V*, until I was 80. Now at 86, I am being treated for leukaemia, which involves hospitals and doctors, so I am no longer free to roam, but I am in good heart, living on broad acres of our own land and woods; no complaints, just lots of happy memories.

Editor's Note: UNTD excerpts from *Sea Fever*, will appear in future editions of this newsletters.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Editor's Note. It is planned to make this a regular feature of the newsletter. This is the second such personal article to appear. Your comments are invited.

Roger Elmes UNTD McMaster 1962, reached the rank of lieutenant and served at HMCS Star for several years. He is now Dean of Social Sciences at Kwantlen University College in Surrey, B.C., just a stone throw from the U.S. border.

Roger Elmes on the right, UNTD McMaster 1962, with Newsletter Editor Bob Williamson (centre), UNTD McMaster 1957, and Ross Bennett (left), UNTD McMaster 1948, enjoy an evening cruise on Vancouver Harbour in Roger's 65 foot ocean racer. June 1997.



Although education is his profession, what he really likes to do is sail. His letterhead is titled, **Sailing Now** to promote his business of cruising and overnight charters. He owns a 65 foot ultra-light ocean racer which he has sailed to Hawaii and back in 1992. He also participates in many local ocean races whenever he can. He parks his boat in the marina beside *HMCS Discovery*. Roger can be reached at: 12279 - 24th Avenue, Surrey, B.C. V4A 2E2, (604) 535-0211.

NEWS ABOUT GIL'S CONDITION

In case you haven't heard, our Chairman of the Board, Gil Hutton, is on the casualty list these days. Ever since he returned from the NOAC Conference in Newfoundland, he has been wearing a neck brace. That is because he fractured his neck in an automobile accident on the Trans-Canada Highway while driving to L'Anse aux Meadows.

The brace consists of a metal frame that holds his head stationary and makes it almost impossible to sleep. Each time that I have visited him at Central Park Lodge, he can hardly talk for yawning. None of this has curtailed his mobility; he is constantly on the move. Ph 905 522-2471.

SPINDRIFT UNTiDy TALES

Have you got your copy yet? Don't wait too long; this is a collector's item or a wonderful gift - a must for every UNTD alumni. Reserve your copy by sending \$15.00 + \$2.50 mailing, payable to the Editor of the UNTD Newsletter. (See below)

UNTD NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is published twice a year by the UNTD Association of Upper Canada. Letters, anecdotes, suggestions and biographies are welcome.

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