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NAVY LIFESTYLE ISSUE

Connecting with home
A tradition of giving
Guitars and battleships



National
Defence

Défense
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Canada

Deployed sailors stay connected with home while at sea

HMCS Summerside sails through rough seas while deployed on Operation Caribbe.

By Lieutenant (Navy) Blake Patterson

Few things say separation more perfectly than the image of Canadian sailors on a warship leaving home port as family and friends wave goodbye.

Yet that iconic image of navy life is fast becoming a bit dated.

Today, thanks to the increased availability of satellite phones, cell phones, social media and email, Canadian sailors can now connect regularly, if not daily, with their families thousands of kilometres away.

"The strength and resilience of my sailors depends in large part on the support they receive from their military families at home," said Lieutenant-Commander Paul Smith, the Commanding Officer of Her

HMCS Summerside crew members make contact with friends and family at home during their deployment on Operation Caribbe.



Photos: DND

Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Summerside*.

Summerside recently deployed for more than two months as part of Operation Caribbe, Canada's

contribution to multinational efforts to disrupt illicit drug trafficking on the waters off the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Central America.

During the deployment, *Summerside*



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Cover page: A crew member aboard HMCS *Saskatoon* conducts force protection during Operation Caribbe. Photo: DND

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travelled more than 10,000 nautical miles and spent approximately 60 days at sea, but its sailors were never really far from home.

“Connecting with home while away – even if it’s only for a few minutes every week – makes it easier for our sailors to accept the demands of life at sea,” said LCdr Smith. “Communication with home really has become a pillar of morale.”

It’s a pillar of unquestionable importance, but also one that presents some undeniable challenges in a military environment.

A Canadian warship (like many Canadian military facilities) is divided into emission security zones to limit outside access to sensitive electronic data systems. As such, members of a ship’s company must turn off their wireless devices while at sea, and rely instead on other means of communication such as the occasional use of satellite phones (often called “morale” phones on board) and limited access to the few computers on board that have internet access.

Master Seaman William Kerr, the Chief Boatswain’s Mate in *Summerside*, knows those limitations, but he also knows it’s worth the effort to make use of the communication tools available. He calls home every two or three days and emails most days.

“It’s nice to give yourself a moment to detach,” said MS Kerr. “Calling home lets you separate from the ship for maybe 10 minutes. For me, I can almost feel it charge me back up.”

Today, being able to text, chat, message and email at anytime from anywhere is a common expectation – particularly with younger members of the fleet. They may find it difficult sometimes, but just as sailors did before them, they are finding ways to adapt and overcome (or at least live with) the difficulties they face.

For his part, Leading Seaman Laurent Morin, a Boatswain in *Summerside*, relies on the satellite phone to stay connected, despite the frustrating lag time between words spoken and words received. Easy conversation suddenly becomes a struggle as you try not to speak too soon and risk having your words cut short by the words coming from the

other end.

LS Morin, a naval reservist, has certainly adapted. He calls his mom, dad and sister regularly, and stays in touch with his girlfriend twice a week to “let her know that I’m thinking about her and stuff like that.”

He also emails and occasionally checks Facebook to stay involved in aspects of his civilian life in Calgary where he teaches social studies and math at the Grade 8 and 9 levels.

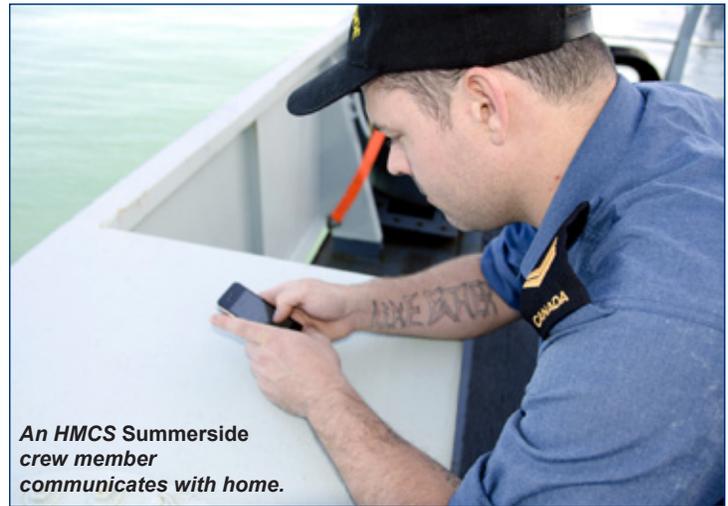
He considers it his responsibility to make every effort to contact home regularly – particularly when it comes to his girlfriend. “It’s on me to put the effort in to contact her since she can’t really contact me,” he said. “If I want to maintain that relationship moving into the future, it’s what I’ve got to do.”

MS Sebastian Ferns agrees. He too uses the satellite phone, but prefers email to stay connected to his family in Halifax.

“It allows me to feel like I still have a connection, like I’m still a part of their lives and they’re still a part of mine,” he said. “What I want to know is the minutia of their day-to-day life: ‘What are you watching on TV? What did you have for breakfast?’ It’s the real, mundane, day-to-day stuff that makes you feel like you’re still part of their lives when you’re away.”

One relatively new connection option for far away Canadian sailors is the availability of wifi hotspots on board ships while alongside during foreign port visits. The hotspots are like the wifi modems installed to provide wireless connectivity throughout your house. The ships purchase or rent the modems and arrange for a local internet service provider to connect them as soon as they arrive in port.

Once connected, the hotspot gives the sailors wireless connection in a designated area of the ship. In the case of Kingston-class ships such as



An HMCS Summerside crew member communicates with home.

Summerside, the sweep deck at the stern of the ship becomes a virtual wifi café soon after arrival.

As soon as the lines are on, stores taken on board, garbage landed and the work of coming alongside complete, the sweep deck is awash with sailors talking on cell phones or smiling into iPads and tablets as they enjoy Face Time and Skype with their spouses, children and loved ones at home.

“It really is a fantastic thing,” said MS Ferns.

Not that long ago, sailors and their families had to wait weeks, even months, for mail drops to and from foreign ports, only to receive care packages and letters written weeks and months earlier. Likewise, the only phone privileges available involved lining up at pay phones in foreign ports just to make a five-minute collect call home before the next person in line was tapping you on the shoulder.

Today, thankfully, it’s a bit easier for sailors to keep up-to-date with folks at home while away at sea in places like the Mediterranean or the Caribbean. While recognizing the communications limitations and demands that come with conducting military operations, it’s certainly something the Royal Canadian Navy continues to improve as more and more world-wide connectivity options become available. Few things are better for morale than hearing the voice of a loved one.

“Distance and time will always be a part of navy life,” said LCdr Smith, “but prolonged isolation from family and friends no longer needs to be part of the equation.”

Sailors from HMCS St. John's kick off Run the Rock in Port aux Basques, NL, in 2015.



Photo: Lt(N) Chris Gabriel

Generous sailors reach out to charities

By Darlene Blakeley

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is a professional war-fighting service, but its sailors have a generous side that is well known across the country and manifests itself in the hundreds of thousands of dollars raised each year for charity.

From national health institutions to

the smallest local charity, both military and civilian members of the RCN raise funds in a variety of ways that are limited only by their imaginations. Groups such as the Children's Wish Foundation, Habitat for Humanity and Boomer's Legacy, as well as building projects, support to orphanages abroad, and many other humanitarian organizations benefit from the unqualified support of the RCN.

The end result is a huge sense of personal satisfaction and a strengthening of the bond between naval personnel and their communities.

Run the Rock

In Newfoundland and Labrador for example, 15 crew members from Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *St. John's* run along the TransCanada highway each year from Port Aux Basques to St. John's to raise funds and awareness for the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter. This year marks the 21st anniversary of Run the Rock, and over the years more than \$700,000 has been raised.

"We are actively engaged with the Children's Wish Foundation throughout the year and especially during the run," says Lieutenant (Navy) Chris Gabriel, Logistics Officer in HMCS *St. John's* and organizer of this year's event. "Normally, we are lucky enough to meet several Wish Kids during the run. We also get regular updates from the charity when Wish Kids have been granted wishes."

Lt(N) Gabriel adds that over the past two decades, the event has become a mainstay in Newfoundland



Photo: LS Matt Burton

Nicholas Pike of Portland, NL, a Wish Kid from the Children's Wish Foundation, poses with sailors from HMCS St. John's.

and the residents look forward to seeing crew members every summer. "It's important to the people of Newfoundland because it provides an opportunity for all corners of the island to meet and interact with those who serve aboard HMCS *St. John's*. It is equally important to the Children's Wish Foundation, Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter, because Run the Rock provides support to their cause, which ultimately provides wishes to children who have terminal illnesses. This community outreach serves the RCN, I believe, in a very positive way and, in turn, allows the people of Newfoundland the opportunity to see their navy and meet the amazing people who serve."

This year's Run the Rock will be held from June 15-30, and HMCS *St. John's* is expected to be in its namesake city to welcome the runners when they finish the event.

The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre

All 12 Halifax-class frigates in the RCN are named after Canadian cities. The relationship they forge with their namesake cities is one that is treasured by the ships' companies. Visits are often conducted by crew members, serving to promote the RCN within the community, but more importantly to provide service and



Commander Sylvain Belair, Commanding Officer of HMCS Ottawa, spends time with a resident at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre.

support to various local organizations.

For example, while visiting Ottawa in late 2015, crew members from HMCS *Ottawa* visited the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, volunteered their time at the Ottawa

Mission homeless shelter and Salvation Army Grace Manor, spent time with young Sea Cadets and Scout Troops, gave talks to elementary and high school students, and visited the mayor's office.

"HMCS *Ottawa* and its crew felt it was very important to give back to the community our name represents," says Lt(N) Jeff Benson, Information Management Director in *Ottawa*. "The ship wishes to strengthen the ties and bonds to the people living within these communities, who may not have any exposure to the RCN."

This year, HMCS *Ottawa* will focus its fundraising efforts on the Perley Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation, a natural fit for the warship.

"HMCS *Ottawa* is privileged to honour the brave men and women who have served before us in defence of our great country, by helping to raise funds in support of the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation," says Commander Sylvain Belair, Commanding Officer of the ship and a native of Ottawa. "There truly is no greater



A crew member from HMCS Ottawa speaks with residents at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre.

Photos provided by the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre



sacrifice for one's country than the sacrifice that these outstanding Canadians have endured for the peace and freedom that generations have come to know and enjoy. It's our team's small but respectful way of showing our deepest appreciation and gratitude for their service."

The crew raises money for charity in a wide variety of ways, including poker tournaments, an auction for a night of relaxation watching movies in the Captain's cabin while the ship is at sea, and an auction for using the Executive Officer's prime parking space for a week.

The ship's crew is determined to keep coming up with new and interesting ways to raise money for the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation, and their effort is certainly appreciated.

"The support of HMCS *Ottawa* strengthens the connection between Canadians who continue to serve their country on active duty and the many veterans who call the Perley Rideau home," says Daniel Clapin, Executive Director of the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation. "It's wonderful that Cdr Belair and his crew have chosen to keep this link alive and to support the exceptional quality of care we deliver."

Turkey Fundraiser

On the West Coast, divers from Fleet Diving Unit (Pacific) (FDU(P))

have conducted a Navy Diver Turkey Fundraiser in support of the Westshore Christmas Hamper Fund Society (WSCHFS) for the past five years, and another is planned for this year. This past December, participants covered a combined total of approximately 1,200 kilometres, the distance between Victoria and Edmonton, on stationary gym equipment. Eight divers cycled continuously on stationary bicycles for the duration of the event, while a diver in a bomb suit jogged on a treadmill, and another diver cycled inside a 3,000 gallon dive tank.

So far the unit has raised more than \$100,000 for the WSCHFS.

"Prior to commencing the annual Turkey Fundraiser in 2010, several members of FDU(P) had volunteered their own time delivering hampers for the WSCHFS to support less fortunate families during the Christmas season," explains Lt(N) Greg Oikle, Executive Officer, FDU(P). "It was through this initial involvement that volunteers learned the WSCHFS required additional funds and support to be able to provide families with turkeys for Christmas dinner. As FDU(P) is located in Colwood, B.C., and many of the members of FDU(P) live in Westshore communities, it was decided that the unit would raise funds in support of this great cause with the goal of putting a turkey on every table."

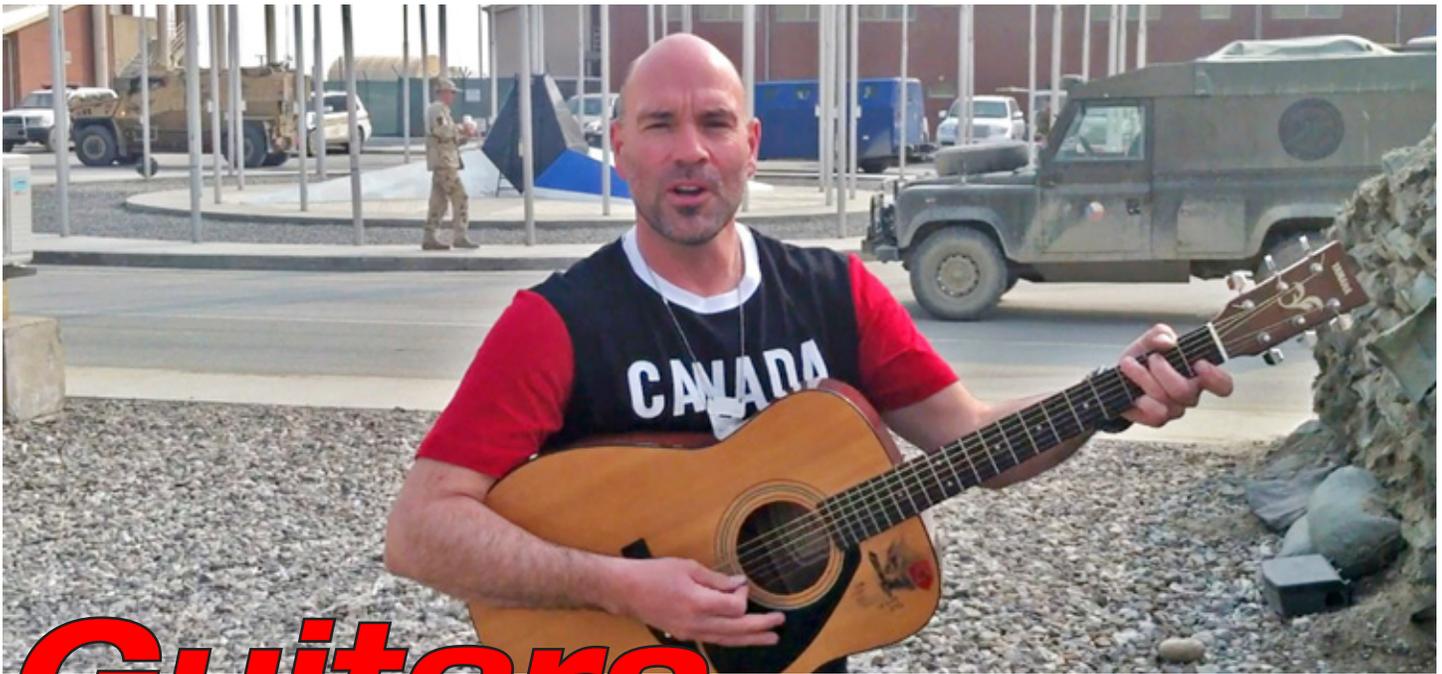
Last year, 650 families who might

not have had one otherwise, received a turkey for their Christmas dinner.

Providing support to the WSCHFS is widely embraced by the members of FDU(P), according to Lt(N) Oickle. "There is a great deal of pride in the support we are able to provide to local families through the WSCHFS."

He says the fundraising campaign takes place throughout the year and involves a great deal of effort to plan, coordinate and carry out each of the different fundraisers. Along with the annual Turkey Fundraiser, events include such things as Dress with a Difference, where members pay a small fee to wear civilian clothing instead of their uniforms to work on designated days, and soup days, where members provide soup or purchase soup during the morning "stand easy" or break time. They also have an ongoing recycling program where members bring in refundable recycling from home throughout the year, along with an annual bottle drive throughout the Westshore communities.

The big hearts and outreach efforts of both military and civilian members of the RCN have greatly enhanced the relationships between the navy and Canadian communities, whether on the coasts or inland. The payback is both personal satisfaction and a sense of teamwork as worthwhile charitable organizations across the country benefit from these strong bonds.



Lieutenant (Navy) Brendan Ryan plays his guitar in Afghanistan.

Guitars and Battleships

By Lieutenant (Navy) Brendan Ryan

Lengthy deployments provide unique challenges to service members and their families. Thankfully, technology has bridged some of the gaps created by the separation of sailors, soldiers, airmen and airwomen from their loved ones by allowing them to communicate virtually in real time. Unfortunately, not all the comforts of home are able to be replicated.

For me, my passion is music. During those increasingly rare moments of actual down time, I enjoy breaking out my guitar and playing a few comforting tunes from down home. During a 2008 Standing Naval Force Mediterranean deployment aboard HMCS *St. John's*, I managed to stow away my mandolin. Likewise, other crew members had managed to bring along their instruments, and we were able to form a band (aptly named Crash on Deck, or COD). Not only was it a sense of pride for the ship to have its own band, but it provided much comfort on an individual level.

I recall another story, relayed to me



Photos provided by Lt(N) Brendan Ryan

Lieutenant (Navy) Brendan Ryan's grandfather Harvey Mouland, right, plays his guitar while at sea aboard HMS Berkeley.

by my grandmother, which also highlights the desire for such comforts in operational and often dangerous environments. My grandfather, Harvey Mouland, enlisted in the Royal Navy from Bonavista, NL, in 1939 and served at sea in various ships as an anti-aircraft gunner until the end of the war. An extremely talented musician, he had purchased a new guitar in

London while on shore leave. Proudly, he brought his guitar aboard HMS *Berkeley* and stored it in his bunk space, eager to play while off watch. Little did he know that this affair with his newfound partner would last but a few days.

On the night of August 18, 1942, *Berkeley* left port as part of the naval escorting force for Operation Jubilee.

On August 19, while supporting the landings on the beaches of Dieppe, *Berkeley* was struck by two bombs from a German aircraft that broke her keel and flooded the engine room, killing 13 sailors. The Captain ordered “abandon ship.” After freeing himself from a fallen ladder and other debris that had pinned him to his gun position, my grandfather waded in the water until being rescued several hours later.

While recovering from his injuries in London, he mourned the loss of several of his comrades, and jokingly, the loss of his brand new guitar. He quickly purchased another, surely to console him in this difficult time. Throughout the war my grandfather was called upon by his comrades to regale them in song. Such comforts were so important during the war that Margot Davies, the Honorary Assistant Secretary of the War Comforts Committee at the Newfoundland Office in London, established a 30-minute bi-weekly BBC radio show titled “Calling to Newfoundland from

Britain.” Here, Ms. Davies endeavoured to provide respite from the stressors of war and to connect fellow Newfoundlanders with their families back home. My grandfather was honoured to have been asked, on at least one occasion, to play some comforting tunes on air during one of these shows, one of which he dedicated to the girl he would later marry in Bonavista while home on shore leave.

Why a common guitar?

While my guitar story pales in comparison to my grandfather’s, I recently had the privilege of presenting a repatriated guitar from Afghanistan to the Crow’s Nest, a private naval officers’ club in St. John’s. With so many possibilities to bring back an assortment of military artifacts from Afghanistan to add to the wonderful collection housed there, why a common guitar, you might ask?

Whenever possible I return to my home province for November 11 and attend Remembrance Day ceremonies at the provincial cenotaph in downtown St. John’s. In 2013, as is customary, I visited the Crow’s Nest after the ceremony to raise a pint to our fallen comrades. Knowing that I would be deploying in December for my second tour, I asked long-time friend and club executive member Lionel Clarke if there was something I could try and bring back to add to the collection. Explaining that the club was quickly running out of space to display artifacts, he jokingly said “maybe a guitar to add to the piano.” (For the story on the piano, see page 9.)

Prior to returning from Kabul, I wrote to club president Margaret Morris to indicate my desire to contribute something to its collection. After she expressed the club’s desire to keep the theme naval and predominantly in commemoration of the club’s origins during the Battle of the Atlantic, I wondered how I could honour the thousands of Newfoundlanders and sailors who served in Afghanistan, Canada’s largest conflict in 50 years. Surely there was some way to pay homage to them in this special place and remind visitors that although great naval battles seem to be a thing of the

past, our sailors continue to play vital roles in operations all over the globe – on land, at sea and in the air.

During my first tour in Kandahar in 2008-2009 I was delighted to see so many morale items sent from Canada to various locations within the Canadian area of operations. Service members of all ranks relied on the generous support and donations from government services and private citizens to help us relax and take a short mental break from the stresses and high tempo of operations. One such item was a guitar that I had played there. Surprisingly, just a few days before leaving Camp Phoenix, Kabul, this guitar reappeared.

Reflecting on Mr. Clarke’s suggestion from a few months earlier, a guitar for the Crow’s Nest made perfect sense. While this guitar, and many like items, had already been transferred to the Morale and Welfare Services of the American Forces remaining there, I asked the American commander for permission to take this back to Canada for donation to the Crow’s Nest. He wholeheartedly agreed.

Oceans of sand

This particular guitar had “been around the buoy” so to speak, in the oceans of sand in southwest Asia. While a fairly common model and plain design, a few painted insignias and battle scars show its pedigree.

This guitar had comforted many servicemen and servicewomen in Afghanistan, bringing pleasant thoughts and reminders of those things so dear, but oceans away. It had entertained troops in Forward Operating Base Masam Gahr, Camp Nathan Smith, and Kandahar Airfield in Kandahar province, as well as at International Security Assistance Force headquarters and Camp Phoenix in Kabul.

My hope is that this guitar will continue to entertain serving and retired members, and conjure up a ditty or two. I encourage all who read this to visit the Crow’s Nest during your next visit to St. John’s, to share your stories with the fine members of the club, and maybe even regale them with a song on this special guitar.



Well-travelled guitar now rests at the Crow’s Nest in St. John’s.

“Borrowed” piano makes Murmansk Run

By Gary E.H. Green

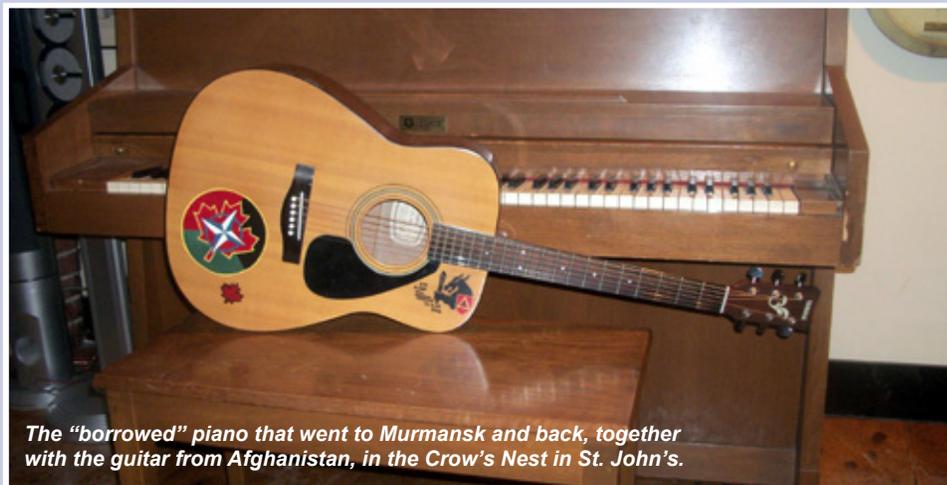
During the Second World War, Russia was in desperate need of supplies for both its civilians and its military operations. In response, the Allies established several supply routes, one of which utilized seagoing convoys to carry goods from North America to the northern Russian ports of Archangel and Murmansk.

Ships in the Arctic convoys, or on the Murmansk Run as the route was commonly called, faced constant danger. After crossing the often stormy and U-boat infested North Atlantic, the ships destined for Russia regrouped initially in Iceland (until September, 1942) and then in Scotland before starting their northern journey up the west coast of Europe.

In 1995, HMCS *Terra Nova*, in company with several other Canadian naval vessels, made a commemorative voyage to mark the 50th anniversary of VE Day and the last Murmansk Run. One port of call was St. John's, the wartime eastern terminus of the Royal Canadian Navy-led Newfoundland Escort Force (later renamed Mid-Ocean Escort Force), which shepherded convoys back and forth across the North Atlantic.

No naval ship's visit to St. John's is complete without a visit to the Crow's Nest Officers' Club, a National Historic Site of Canada commemorating the role of St. John's and the RCN in the Battle of the Atlantic (1939-1945). Like so many wartime officers before them, the officers of *Terra Nova* gathered in the memorabilia-rich club to celebrate their last night ashore and toast their safe return.

During the course of the evening it was noted that *Terra Nova* did not have a piano on board and that the Crow's Nest's piano would make a fine addition to the ship's social life. Plus, being a modern addition to the Crow's Nest, it lacked a story unlike virtually



The “borrowed” piano that went to Murmansk and back, together with the guitar from Afghanistan, in the Crow's Nest in St. John's.

everything else in the club.

It was decided there and then that the piano would make the trip to Murmansk and thus have a story to tell. The officers talked to the only representative of the Crow's Nest's Board of Directors present and convinced him that it would be a great adventure for the piano. While an officer wrote a cheque as security for the piano's safe return, another ordered up a truck. Once the truck arrived, the officers, in true naval fashion of one hand for the ship and one for yourself, hoisted the piano, eased it through the low fire escape door, descended 59 steps, loaded it aboard the truck, drove up Water Street and along the water front (reportedly while someone played a tune), ascended the narrow gangway and deposited it in the wardroom without damage. All in all, a neat piece of work.

The next day the ship and the piano were at sea by the time the members of the Crow's Nest arrived to discover that their piano was gone. Messages to the ship requesting the piano's prompt return were to no avail. To make matters worse, the security cheque proved to be not cashable as it had only one of two required signatures!

Meanwhile aboard *Terra Nova* in the clear light of day, it was realized that there was only one person aboard who could play the piano and he knew just one tune, the theme from the TV soap opera “The Young and the Restless.” The ship's company soon tired of the tune and the piano remained silent for most of the voyage except on those occasions when a visitor from another

ship or port of call tickled the eighty-eights.

When the flotilla arrived in Murmansk, there was much celebrating with both the visiting ships and the Russians hosting parties of one kind or another. Like similar events the world over, there were the usual exchanges of gifts and the swapping of memorabilia among participants. Central to festivities aboard *Terra Nova* was the piano, which received not only good use by visiting musicians, but several mementoes as well. Pins, a medal, vodka, a *Terra Nova* ship's badge and a decorative ship's wheel engraved “Murmansk” were among the items which made up the piano's hoard.

After a fond farewell, the ships headed for their respective home ports. En route to Halifax, *Terra Nova* made arrangements to clear customs at St. John's rather than at her designated port of Sydney, N.S. Upon arrival, the officers hired a moving company to carry the piano up the 59 steps to the Crow's Nest and then hosted a party at the club to present the souvenirs, a commemorative brass plaque listing the names of the officers responsible for the caper, and a picture of the piano with the ship's mascot, Lieutenant-Commander P. Penguin, in Murmansk.

Needless to say, there was much rejoicing at the piano's safe return and boy, did it have a story to tell! In fact, CBC covered the event. When CBC personnel asked to have someone play the piano for the news clip, the “musical” officer stepped forward and with all the poise he could muster began to play “The Young and the Restless” theme before all hands broke out in laughter.

Does the navy sail on its stomach?

By Darlene Blakeley

Nearly everyone has heard Napoleon's expression that "an army marches on its stomach", but what about the navy?

Well, after standing watch in -20C temperatures in the North Atlantic in February, a little hot food can go a long way to improving morale!

Ordinary Seaman David Lescombe knows all about that. Keeping his shipmates well fed with nutritious meals was his main objective when working as a cook aboard Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *St. John's*.

"While being deployed or sailing, every member understands how important the cooks are, and you will never be treated poorly," he says with humour. "The sense of satisfaction of being a part of the bigger picture is what cooking is all about. We don't feed the crew for money or a pay cheque, but because one of our buddies is starving or needs a bowl of warm soup after sitting in the cold all day."

That keen sense of teamwork was a big part of OS Lescombe's decision to join the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) in 2013 as a cook. He already had some experience in that career field as he completed a one-year culinary arts apprenticeship program at Fleming College in Peterborough, Ont. He also studied business administration and marketing at Durham College in Oshawa, Ont., and then worked for a time in the food industry before deciding that the navy would be a good career choice.

"Being fourth generation military, it seemed like a path worth choosing," he explains. "After talking to some of my childhood friends in the service as well, it was an easy decision."

OS Lescombe says his career in the RCN so far has been "short, but amazing." He first worked in the kitchens at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Borden, Ont., and from there

was posted to Halifax in February 2015. In September he joined the crew of HMCS *St. John's* and was at sea for most of the time until December.

Cooking while at sea was a new experience for OS Lescombe, but he thrived on it. "While on ship you are the morale of the team. Being appreciated is an amazing feeling day in and day out, as well as being counted on, but food speaks."

He says he's been an avid watcher of the Food Network since he was

seven years old and sees daily the way food connects and speaks to people, no matter their language. "Having four or five ingredients and being able to transform them into something people can't stop talking about is amazing."

People tell him that Beef Wellington is one of his best dishes. "I was fortunate enough to cook it twice while in *St. John's*," he says. "I was picked to do a mess dinner for the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Later on we had a group of dignitaries on



board for a week seeing how life was at sea, and I was hand selected to recreate that dinner as well. Both times I served it with a red-wine demi-glace and duchess potatoes.”

But those were special meals; normally working in the galley of a warship presents its own set of unique challenges. There are usually eight people working in the galley in shifts. OS Lescombe explains that day staff are in charge of salads, as well as producing the day’s meals, while night staff consists of a baker and a preparation person.

Since the crew of *St. John’s* numbers well over 200 people, feeding them can be “interesting”, according to OS Lescombe. “Being able to meet timings while feeding that many people is a challenge. Aboard ship everything works like clockwork and having meals out on time is critical to the ship’s daily schedule. Although the prep work is a lot more extensive and it takes longer to make a meal for 200, the quality is the same as if we were cooking for one member.”

There are some limitations on what can be cooked. For the most part, the kitchen staff follow a three-week cycle menu to help ensure the nutritional

needs of the crew members are being met. Along with main courses, a variety of salads are always available, two vegetable options, and fruit at every meal.

“At sea it is extremely important to ensure proper nutrition,” OS Lescombe stresses. “Members are working extra hard during the day, using more energy. Proper health within the ship is vital, because if one member becomes sick it can spread like wildfire, affecting everyone.”

The ship has fresh food wherever possible, stocking up as necessary both at home and when deployed. “We need more food than is imaginable,” he says. “We feed so many people who come back for seconds. Being at sea constantly working creates a big appetite!”

Another important part of the cooks’ job is to ensure they can accommodate people with special requests. “We offer a vegetarian option at every meal, as well as a variety of items during each meal. Food allergies are becoming so common that cooks are used to one or two crewmates who have special requests. While cooking my second dinner I was requested to create a vegan meal. Although everyone was

having Beef Wellington, we accommodated the request and created a tofu Wellington.”

As if his galley life wasn’t busy enough, like most members of the crew he has a secondary duty. In his case, it’s casualty clearing in the event of an emergency. He is part of the first aid team that responds if someone is in need of assistance, working alongside the ship’s doctors.

Although 16 hours of work a day can take a toll on the body and the work can be stressful, OS Lescombe is happy with his work and would recommend it to anyone considering a cook’s job in the navy.

“Although there are long days and the hours are especially long at sea, there is no better feeling than being part of the team,” he says.

OS Lescombe is now working ashore at CFB Halifax, cooking for military members who live on the base or choose to eat at the mess. As a secondary duty he is a member of the Base Auxiliary Security Force. While it’s not quite the same as cooking at sea, it does give him the benefit of being at home more often, where he can spend time with his wife and newborn son Noah.



Ordinary Seaman David Lescombe joined the crew of HMCS St. John's as a cook, a new experience for him.

Fitness on the high seas



Sailors work out aboard HMCS Fredericton.

Photo: DND

By Lieutenant (Navy) Tim Woodworth

Fitness on the high seas is not always as easy as tying up a pair of sneakers and going for a jog. The motion of the sea, compressed work schedules and confined spaces are just a few of the obstacles that would make it much easier to crawl into a bunk rather than exercise during down time.

However, sailors are overcoming these challenges and excelling in becoming physically fit while deployed overseas aboard HMCS *Fredericton*.

The fitness culture on the ship attracts people from many different backgrounds. There are those who are trying to get back into a healthy lifestyle and establish lasting habits, those who are trying to maintain their fitness and mental well-being, and athletes who enjoy running, cross-country skiing, biking and hiking when they are home and want to achieve a higher level of fitness.

One exercise participant who has had back problems for a long time credits a combination of his on-ship training and the physiotherapy he did for a year prior to leaving Halifax with better health, stating “my back hasn’t been this good in years.”

Individuals can gauge results from their exercise regimes in a number of different ways. For some, they have not weighed or measured themselves since leaving Halifax, but they’ve noticed that they feel sore for shorter periods of time after a workout, have improved sleeping and more energy.

One of the participants mentioned being excited to wear a size 36 waist pants again.

When asked about other fitness goals, some participants said they want to strengthen their legs and lose some weight in order to be able to participate in a marathon relay, while others want to work on their core and overall muscle strength.

Over the last three years, one sailor has been training for triathlons, so training while deployed on ship is a departure from his normal training regime. CrossFit and climbing were part of his pre-deployment routine. At sea, he strives to work out every day and every second day while in port.

A new approach for some, circuit training has increased the flexibility of people who would normally have only jumped on a treadmill as a workout. There are many benefits of exercising, including allowing people to function better as sailors, improved communications, and better sleep at night.

One of the obstacles facing sailors at sea is to find creative ways to manage their time and still get their work done, connect with home, maintain their fitness and sleep. This can include switching or extending shifts to attend scheduled fitness classes which are offered three times a day to allow everyone a chance to work out at least once a day.

As for equipment, most of the workouts require very little. Running on the flight deck in the fresh air, a few mats and pull-up bars allow sailors to work out at their own pace.

Other creative fitness solutions include working out during the quiet periods on watch with goals such as the “Bridge Push-up Challenge.” One sailor chooses to use all of his time off duty to exercise, combining Personnel Support Program classes with jogging on a treadmill. These fitness routines result in an energetic crew who are fit for the task at hand.

After a good workout, the majority of sailors also incorporate a stretching routine, which can include yoga positions, to aid in body recovery. Flexibility and agility is increased as sailors take advantage of a few extra minutes in the sun on the flight deck. “I’ll usually do some extra stretches and then run down to my mess to shower and change,” said one sailor. “I’ll grab a quick lunch, several glasses of water and a piece of fruit when available,” said another.

As any good fitness professional will tell you, working out is only half the battle. Nutrition goes hand in hand with fitness and the cooks in HMCS *Fredericton* do a great job of supporting a healthy lifestyle by offering a selection of fruits and vegetables at every meal. While no one program is right for everyone, people are able to take charge of their diets and choose healthy eating.

With mutual support and fitness education readily available, the crew members of HMCS *Fredericton* are pushing each other into working a little harder than they had planned on, and ultimately achieving their goals.