



THE NEWSLETTER

Of The U.N.T.D. Association of Canada



SPRING EDITION

MARCH 2010

EDITOR Robert Williamson

Volume 3, Number 33

ISSN 1709 -3406

NOOTKA SOUND 1778

Captain Cook arrives
on Vancouver Island
in HMS Resolution
while searching
for the western
entrance to the
Northwest Passage.

By Peter Robinson,,
*Courtesy Vancouver
Maritime Museum*



INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED UNTDy
Peter Robinson, UNTD McGill University 1950
was not only a world famous marine and
landscape artist but was a member of the
1948 Olympic team and drafted by the
Ottawa Roughriders of the CFL

Cover Story Inside

COVER STORY

Peter Robinson 1928-1995, Marine Artist

You would be hard pressed to identify Peter E. Robinson, World-Renowned Canadian Marine and Landscape Artist as a UNTD graduate, unless you looked in the index of the 1950 **White Twist Yearbook**. After thumbing through the book's pages of generally superficial text, you might discover that Peter Robinson was a cadet captain, tabloid sports organizer and award-winning UNTD cadet. Third-person anecdotal reports in **SPINDRIFT, UNTiDy Tales** shows him as instigator of the famous 1949 UNTD Royal Roads Raid, (p41) and creator/editor of the White Twist Yearbook in 1949, (p169). But, like all too many UNTD graduates, those character and career building aspects of university training in the UNTD are passed over in their civilian life story. As famous as Peter Robinson became, nowhere in all his newspaper clippings and personal writings is it recorded that he was a member of the University Naval Training Division at McGill University in Montreal from 1946 - 1950. Yet despite all this, Peter admitted that through his naval service which started with the UNTD, he "**was profoundly affected by the awesome power and beauty of the sea**". He later captured this compelling point of view in his paintings.

He does however, record much of his RCN service from 1952 to 1959 in a series of short stories entitled, **I Never Went To War**. There you will find his accounts of the involvement of HMCS La HULLOISE (1952 -1954) in training cruises for New Entries to Bermuda, the Coronation Spithead Review and operational cruises to Europe with a Carrier Escort Group. In HMCS LAUZON he sailed with CDR. Jette (1954-55), one of a few French Canadian sea-going commanders, then joined HMCS LABRADOR in 1956-57 during construction of the DEW Line in the Canadian Arctic. He completed his naval service in 1958-9 as Staff Officer at HMCS STAR.

Released from the navy, Peter moved to Vancouver where he put his mechanical engineering degree from McGill to use, eventually forming his own company, Robinson Industries, specializing in water treatment for pulp and paper mills in British Columbia. In 1972, seeking a sea change, he moved to a 21-acre farm north of Courtney on Vancouver Island and began painting in earnest. Painting had been a hobby since the age of 14 when he was inspired by a visit to his high school of Canadian Group of Seven artist, Arthur Lismer. During his third and fourth year of Engineering at McGill, Peter was required to choose an elective that was not science oriented. He chose art and was gratified to find that Arthur Lismer was his professor. Peter reported that the lectures were spiced up with juicy tidbits about A.Y. Jackson and J.E.H. MacDonald, but most importantly, he learned a style of colour and composition that was truly Canadian.

His career as an artist was assured in 1978 when the British Columbia government commissioned two paintings depicting Captain Cook's voyage to British Columbia for presentation to the Queen during the Captain Cook Bicentennial. His shipboard experiences in the navy had fostered a tremendous interest in the historical role of ships in Canadian waters and he even undertook a large mural of the Battle of Trafalgar.

In 1983 he had a premiere showing of his collection of maritime paintings titled "The History of the Royal Navy in British Columbia". It spanned the period 1778 - Cook's first visit to British Columbia, to 1910 - the early years of the RCN. The art show took place in the Vancouver Maritime Museum under the patronage of the province's Lieutenant-Governor and sponsorship of Labatt Breweries. Peter published a booklet containing many of the 19 paintings, accompanied with a brief history. This showing launched him into a television career as a regular guest on "**Hunt for History**" and then as the host for "**Painting with Peter**".

With his growing popularity it wasn't long before he became a public figure, running for political office and volunteering with many organizations including the Town of Comox Planning Committee. His special interest was the development of the Comox Airport. A tireless community worker, he was a founding member of the Courtney Rotary Club. Perhaps he was best known for his singular fund raising ability. Thousands of dollars were donated to the Courtney Rotary Club and Child Development Centre through his art auctions. He received the Comox Honoured Citizen Award.

Tragically he died at the early age of 67 in June 1995 after a four-year battle with cancer. And even though confined to a wheelchair, he painted almost to the end. July 22, 1994 was declared "Peter Robinson Day". After he died, the "**Very Last Picture Show**" was held at North Island College where a collection of 40 privately owned Robinson paintings were displayed to raise money for an art scholarship and a sculpture garden called Pete's Place.

Besides the Maritime Museum of the Pacific, some of Pete's paintings can be found in Comox haunts such as the Whistle Stop Pub and Leeward Pub (Anderson's Bistro). The latter contains Robinson's wall mural of the Battle of Trafalgar. Other paintings are in the Wardroom at HMCS Naden and his "Exploring the Arctic" series can be found at the Harbour Radisson Hotel in Toronto.

No matter where you look, you can be sure of one thing, his work will be of enduring value to Canada. Editor

Courtesy Sam Huntington & Comox Valley Record



Peter Robinson working in his studio on a popular marine subject. On the right is one of Robinson's famous landscape works, his beloved "Comox Valley" (photos courtesy Comox Valley Record)



This year's Dine the Ladies Dinner held in the grand club rooms of the Staff College in Toronto was enjoyed by all, including left to right, Newsletter contributor Bill Clearihue, Gil Hutton, President Bill Thomas and Newsletter Editor Bob Williamson. (photo Clearihue)



After the mess dinner, Jette Thomas, (Dundas) Speaker Eric Morse from RCMI, Robert White (North Vancouver), Andy Shaw (TO) and former NOAC Executive Director Bob Nixon (Ottawa), demonstrate that they fully enjoyed the evening. (photo E. Morse)

Come 'Celebrate our Past, Our Future'

Halifax – 'Celebrate Our Past, Our Future' is the theme of the 2010 NOAC National Conference and AGM in Halifax July 1-4 and conference organizers promise there will be much to celebrate.

"The theme is most appropriate with all that will be happening in Canada's famed 'East Coast port,' including Naval Centennial celebrations, the Nova Scotia International Tattoo and Canada Day (July 1) celebrations along the historic waterfront," says Gordon Edwards, Chair of the 2010 Conference planning committee.

The Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel, the conference hotel, is located in the heart of the waterfront area and within walking distance of downtown attractions, including HMCS Sackville, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Pier 21 National Historic Museum and the Metro Centre.

Gordon Edwards, the former Commander Maritime Forces Pacific says his planning committee has put together a program that provides 'a nice balance' between conference activities and time for members and partners to enjoy local events/activities and to socialize. Members of the UNTD Association will also take part in the conference.

The timing of the conference during Naval Centennial activities will highlight NOAC's mission to promote greater awareness of Canada's rich naval heritage and support for the country's maritime forces and in particular the men and women who serve, says John Stuart, president of the NS Naval Officers Association. NSNOA is host for the conference.

The conference will kick off Thursday July 1 with National Executive and Board of Directors meetings in the morning, followed by registration commencing at 1200 and a meet and greet 1700-1900.

The program on Friday July 2 starts with a tour of 12 Wing Shearwater 1000-1200, including a helicopter facility briefing, followed by lunch in the Wardroom. The morning program for partners is a tour of

Fisherman's Cove in Eastern Passage (near Shearwater), a 200 year-old fishing village with a marine interpretation centre and aquarium, shops and boardwalk. (Partners will return to Shearwater for lunch). After lunch, the group will tour the Shearwater Aviation Museum (including highlights of maritime aviation) and then return to the hotel at 1400. The evening program includes the acclaimed Nova Scotia Tattoo and a special tribute to the Canadian Navy. Members and partners are invited to a Tattoo reception at 1800 prior to the Tattoo which will feature hundreds of performers from around the world.

The AGM will be held Saturday morning July 3. The evening program includes the President's Reception at 1800 and Formal Dinner at 1900. The conference winds up Sunday with a Board of Directors meeting, followed by a service, Up Spirits (hosted by the UNTDs) and lunch at HMCS Scotian (1100-1400).

Gordon Edwards sums up by saying 'Slackers' (Halifax) will be an exciting place to be in 2010 and "we are looking forward to greeting members from the various Branches and other guests on this significant occasion."

For additional Conference information and registration form, check out: www.noac-national.ca or www.nsnoa.ca or contact Gordon Edwards: Tel: 902-444-4559; 902-412-3116 (cell)

Submitted by: Len Canfield, Tel: 902-443-1726; e-mail: len.canfield@ns.sympatico.ca

MCMMASTER REUNION

All UNTDs Invited

The 1960 McMaster UNTD graduates are planning a 50th anniversary celebration in conjunction with the annual Alumni Reunion. Plans are for a gathering to take place at HMCS Star and a visit to HMCS Haida alongside the naval reserve on Sunday June 6, 2010. For more information contact Fred Lee at (905) 527-2775 ext 24 or email <killick@interlynx.net>. All UNTDs are welcome to join the party.

HOMECOMING STATUE PROJECT



The Executive of the UNTD Association of Canada has approved a donation of \$1,000.00 for a Naval Centennial project entitled “THE HOMECOMING” in Victoria’s high profile inner harbour. The attractive site beside the harbour will have a lot of tourist traffic.

There has been an excellent response to fund raising from both the civic and military communities. Already sufficient funds have been raised to pay for the statue itself. Support is still needed to pay for the pedestal, memorial rocks and landscaping.

Individuals may purchase memorial bricks with names inscribed. There are two engraved rock monument memorials. The Rock of Honour has a 100th Anniversary Naval Message on one face while the other face acknowledges the civilian sponsors. The Rock of Service has a bronze anchor inset on one face and the other contains the crests of supporting military organizations.

The project organizers are using the charitable status of the NOAC to provide tax receipts. For further information check the project website <www.homecomingstatue.com>

It is only fitting that the UNTD crest be on the Rock of Service since the UNTD has been instrumental in making the Navy what it is today.

ROYAL ROADS RUSTLERS - 50 Years Later

A story in **The Journal Pioneer** was brought to my attention recently. It reported that Mike Denny and other UNTD naval cadets led a bull up the back stairs to the third floor of Royal Road's Nixon Block 50 years ago. They left the beast outside the door of an unpopular duty officer - and knocked. The story is included as one of the adventures in this newsletter editor's anecdotal history entitled, **UNTidy Tales of Officer Cadets** pp. 163-66.

Denny related the story in Summerside PEI where he and his navy buddies, Bernie McCabe, Bill Wheeler, Thane Drummond and their wives were enjoying a reunion. Denny and Wheeler, originally from Halifax got to know Islanders, McCabe and Drummond in 1959 while training with the University Naval Training Division at Royal Roads. "You start to cherish your old friends at our age because you begin to lose some", explained Drummond.

They are 70ish grandfathers now, but back then they were young men seeking adventure with the navy. "We learned a lot of things, especially how to drink beer", gulps Drummond dryly. Denny was the only one of the four that was involved in the bull incident and his entire Division lost leave privileges. The rustler's timing was particularly unfortunate (Fred Lee, myself and a few others were due for a three day long weekend). However, no one ratted on the rustlers. On the other hand, Wheeler, who was not in Denny's division, got full use of the Nash Rambler they shared.

The four became fast friends when they drove that Nash Rambler back home from British Columbia to their respective Maritime universities - taking the scenic route down the west coast, through the southwest and up the eastern seaboard. Not being flush with funds, they slept in the car or in sleeping bags outside, at military bases or sometimes the YMCA.

Outside Los Vegas they ran into a little trouble. Their car **resembled one involved in a casino robbery and they woke** up in the desert under the spotlights of police cruisers. The car was searched, but all the police found was a bread knife. They were released and advised to stop sleeping on the ground in the desert where scorpions could make unwelcome bed mates.

Some other memorable experiences were: the nightmare of the Los Angeles road system, the shock of segregated washrooms and buses in New Orleans and playing ball hockey around the Washington Monument.

Their reunions give them the chance to relive their experiences, continue touring, socialize, play bridge and spend time with their wives. "That's why we're still friends", Denny's wife chimes in. "We all get along so well". As for the Nash Rambler - it's still on the road after 50 years. Their next reunion is planned for September 2010 in Ottawa.

Bill Wheeler and his wife Lola live in Thornhill, ON. As a mechanical engineer he worked with Union Carbide and his own company, Simcoe Plastics Ltd. What did he learn from the UNTD? - to be flexible and cooperative.

Thane Drummond and his wife Ann live in Virginia. His career was as an electrical engineer with General Electric. The UNTD gave him an opportunity to break out of his sheltered country life in PEI and see the world.

Bernie McCabe and his wife Connie live in Summerside PEI where he became a lawyer. The UNTD taught him leadership and discipline.

Mike Denny and his wife Carol live in Ottawa. He spent 36 years in the reserve and regular forces. The UNTD taught him to be tolerant and self disciplined. ~

Robert Williamson, Editor



Shown at a recent reunion in Summerside, PEI are L-R Thane Drummond, Bill Wheeler, Mike Denny and Bernie McCabe.

A Meditative UNTD Musing

by Bob Middlemiss, U-823

Captured in our reverie, their names live on: Her Majesty's Canadian Ships Buckingham, Cap de la Madeleine, La Hullose, Lauzon and Swansea. Born in world conflict they sailed into the dark embrace of sea warfare, joining others of their kind, frigates forging a record of service both documented and distinguished. One can find them on the Internet: dazzle painted in those days; or battle grey, battered by gale and crashing wave, witnesses to too much, participants in too much.

I knew these ships in calmer times, training as a UNTD cadet on Cruise Charlie, Summer 1960. I came to know La Hullose well, and every detail of her rides my memory as she moves into gentle swells, a rising sun staining pink her bridge glass and gun mounts. And I knew her sisters from our training exercises in the North Atlantic. Over time, in calm and heavy weather, each frigate asserted her own personality, becoming part of the whole. If one is observant the breeding of these ships is readily seen in unexpected and always fresh ways: the RCN Ensign displayed in a quiet corner of Stadacona's chapel, burnt and ragged, a testament to those battle days. And CPOs on Sunday morning parade, their Battle of the Atlantic ribbons bright in the sun, jingling in time with the march of polished boots.

I remember...Cadets chipping paint, the frigate rolling, at first revealing a beautiful turquoise sea, then lifting her hull, hiding the swells, as if playfully by some sleight of hand. Then revealing them again.

Icebergs. Our training frigates moved in line astern, firing our main armament at a pristine, glistening presence, leaving brown, smutty smudges on its vast bulk. Unharmed, it continued south on the Gulf Stream, a dazzling, glittering show of Nature's force. I think La Hullose won that shoot.

There was heavy weather. In La Hullose seasick cadets were issued buckets and half loaves of bread. One cadet manning the wheel trapped his bucket between his boots, chewed occasionally, then threw up. But his grip on the wheel never faltered, and La Hullose held her course.

And nights..... one time, standing watch on the bridge as a lookout for growlers, those chunks of ice

weighing tons that could punch a hole in our hull, I turned the binoculars to the heavens, and watched breathless as a thousand stars kaleidoscoped into the big lenses. La Hullose's masthead light scribed a gentle arc across nature's canopy. From far away came the quiet thump of our engine.

Each of us can summon these ships from our UNTD cruises. They gave us memories without fanfare. In their new paint and new assignment, free of war and its tumult, they passed on RCN traditions and ideals for us to live up to. And now they are gone, succumbing to newer techniques and designs.

Eventually all ships go missing. But they live on for a time in collective memories of sailors who knew them, sailed in them, fought them, or simply trained in them as I did. God bless these noble ships, and all hands who manned them.

100th Anniversary Calendar



The 100th Anniversary Calendar is a [fund raiser for the Metro Vancouver Navy 2010 Commemorative Society](#) to provide funds in support of the centennial projects being planned. Long standing NOABC member John Horton has very kindly provided prints of thirteen wonderful paintings of the Canadian Navy for the calendar at no cost to the society.

The calendars, which will make excellent gifts and provide a great memento for Canada's Naval Centennial, [will be on sale at NOABC functions and in the messes at a cost of \\$20 each.](#)

[Email Orders <king.wan@vancouver.ca>](mailto:king.wan@vancouver.ca)

IN MEMORIAM

Time is catching up with the UNTD

Lt.(E) Real J.A. Arsenault RCN(R), Ret'd. - age 81 in Montreal 21/05/08. **Jn'd UNTD Donnacona** 1950. Served in *Swansea, Crescent, Naden, Stadacona, Quebec, Cayuga, HMS Eraham and Relentless*. Ret'd List 1957 and career with Hydro Quebec.

LCdr. Paul J. Collins, CD*, RCN ret'd - age 78 in Victoria 26/04/08. **Jn'd UNTD** 01/1950 and to RCN 09/51. Promoted LCdr. 06/62. Srv'd. *Star, Ontario, Cornwallis, Algonquin, Bonaventure* and CC5. Ret'd 1973.

SLt(S) Robert C. Douglas, RCN(R) Ret'd. - age 74 in Halifax 19/11/08. **Jn'd UNTD Scotian** 1954. Ret'd 1959.

Surg. Cdr. James G. Holland, OSTJ, CD**, RCN(R) Ret'd. - age 71 in Halifax 02/09. **Jn'd UNTD Scotian** as Surg. Cdt 05/59 and served until retirement in 1989 as Surg. Cdr.

LCdr. (C) Donald A. MacDonald, CD* RCN(R) Ret'd. - age 82 in Winnipeg 11/12/08. **Jn'd UNTD Chippawa** 1943. Promoted to LCdr in 1963 and ret'd as XO *Chippawa*. Civ. career as a Pharmacist.

Cdt. George MacDonald, RCN(R) - age 74 in Dartmouth, NS, 17/05/09. **Jn'd UNTD in Scotian** 1953. Rls'd 1956.

Ord Capt. John Walter Regan, CD*, RCN Ret'd. - age 83 in Ottawa 06/04/09. **Jn'd UNTD** 1948. Srv'd in *Naden, Assiniboine, Niobe and Bytown*. Rt'd 1980.

LCdr. Harold Barry Russell, RCN Ret'd. - age 75 in Halifax 12/03/08. **Jn'd UNTD Prevost** 1952. Transferred to RCN as Lt. 1958 and srv'd in *Swansea, Stadacona Restigouche, XO Quinte* and XO *Victoriaville*. Promoted to LCdr. 01/65, ret'd. 1966. Career - Investment Broker.

Cdt. William Edward Taylor, RCN(R) - age 74 in California 18/04/09. **UNTD Scotian** 1952 - 55.

LCdr. Connla Thomas Wood, CD, RCN(R) Ret'd. - age 77 in Victoria 24/09/07. **Jn'd UNTD Discovery** in 1949. Transferred *Carleton* 1957. Promoted LCdr. 01/09/62.

NAVAL NOTES

Fraser McKee who writes for the NOAC Newsletter, STARSHELL, has uncovered some interesting naval heritage notes, - as he says, - "on passing".

The last survivor of the Fleet Air Arm's Taranto raid on the Italian fleet in 1940, Captain A. W. Sutton, RN passed away on November 6, 2008. Sutton was a Lt(O) in a Swordfish piloted by Lt. Torrens-Spence that torpedoed the battleship *Littorio*.

The last of only three survivors out of a crew of 1,421 lost in the sinking of HMS *Hood*, Ordinary Signalman (later Lt., MBE) E. "Ted" Briggs, RN has passed away. The battlecruiser, HMS *Hood* was sunk by the German battleship *Bismark* during the Battle of the Denmark Strait on May 24, 1941.

UNTD PINS



To mark the Centennial or wear in Halifax

Send a \$5.00 cheque payable to Wm. C. Thomas and a stamped pre-addressed envelope, to:

UNTD Pin, 7 Hilltop Place, Dundas, ON, L9H 3Y5

**The UNTD Association of
Canada publishes this
Newsletter twice a year.
Send letters, anecdotes, or
suggestions to Newsletter Editor:
Robert Williamson, 1 Clonmore
Ave., Hamilton, ON. L9A 4R2;
Ph (905) 383-6084 or e-mail
williamson@mountaincable.net**

Visit the UNTD web site
[HTTP:WWW.UNTD.ORG](http://WWW.UNTD.ORG)

Printed by **STIRLING PRINT SOLUTIONS**, Hamilton, ON.
Newsletter back issues are available from the Editor