

# Scuttlebutt

*Crow's Nest Officers' Club*

April 2008

## Annual General Meeting set for May 28

by Dick Hyslop

The Crow's Nest Annual General Meeting will be held at the Club on May 28, beginning at 7 p.m. The AGM is an opportunity for members to hear the directors report on their respective activities for the year just completed at the end of April.

It is also the time for members in good standing to elect the Club executive (President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary) for the year just started. The procedure as outlined by the Club bylaws is as follows:

1. As Chair of the Nomination Committee I shall present nominations for each of the executive positions which will be posted on the Club bulletin board on April 11, 2008.
2. The Nomination Committee will accept further nominations for members in good standing who have

consented to stand, from April 11 to April 23, 2008. These nominations will be posted on the bulletin board on April 24, 2008.

3. At the AGM the Nomination Committee shall present its report and private ballot elections will be held for contested executive positions. All nominees will be provided an opportunity to address the membership at the meeting.

4. The elected executive directors shall hold a further meeting to choose additional directors, up to a maximum of twelve. Any members wishing to serve as directors can make their interest known at any time to either any current board member or to any new executive director elected at the meeting.

See you at the meeting on May 28, starting at 7 p.m.

## Club Receives *Alberni* Rum Keg

by Gary Green

For almost 300 years the Royal Navy had a tradition of issuing a daily ration, or tot, of rum. When the Royal Canadian Navy was formed in 1910, it adopted many of the RN traditions,

including the daily tot issue. "Up Spirits" on the bosun's call signalled the beginning of an elaborate ceremony for drawing off the correct amount of rum from the pusser rum keg, diluting it with water and

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## Board Approves Student Membership Category

After a number of enquiries, the Board recently struck a committee to examine the issue of a student membership category. This committee recommended the adoption of such a category with the criteria that the applicant:

- is of legal drinking age;
- is enrolled in a full-time program in a post secondary institution; and
- is sponsored by a member in good standing.

Students will pay a reduced annual membership fee (\$40) and will have all membership benefits except voting privileges. Students will be eligible for the new category of membership for a maximum of three years regardless of academic status.

The Board has accepted the recommendations of the committee. Student application forms are now available from the Club or from the website.



# Message from the President

by John Moyes

Magda and I spent Christmas and the New Year in Vancouver with family, but I'm told that our Crow's Nest Christmas dinner and New Year's Eve celebrations were great fun, due in no small part to Red Oak Catering, Andrea, Geraldine and Katherine.

January 'Weepers' was cancelled due to the weather, however, the Club's 66th Anniversary Dinner the next day went ahead and was delicious, with tiger shrimp cocktail, roast duck and birthday cake. The Dogberries, Charley Barfoot on guitar and Jack Daw on bass, who were supposed to play for Weepers, came along to the Anniversary Dinner instead, and added tremendously to the festive occasion, which was very well attended.

The weekend of Feb. 8th-10th was the *Spikenard* weekend, starting with Weepers on the 8th, where we were delighted to welcome four gentlemen from the Halifax corvette *HMCS Sackville*, who came over to celebrate the *Spikenard* Wake with us - Russ Comeau, Bill Graham and two friends. I also extend my thanks to Johnson and Lear on piano and bass who gave us all a wonderful musical evening.

Vice-President Gary Green reminded us of the very successful Corvette's Wake we organized last year for the 65th anniversary of the sinking, and some of the important connections we all made over that long weekend. Personally I will always remember Captain Bert Shadforth's granddaughter, Tahirah Shadforth, whose regal presence and natural poise made a big impression on everyone. Who can forget Tahira's reading of the letter written to her grandmother by a survivor of *HMCS Spikenard*, telling her what a brave captain Bert Shadforth was. Remember the Stage Door Johnnies? In a recent note to us, they sent everyone at the Club their best wishes. They are still performing in Devon and recently went over to Malta for a Veteran's Reunion.

I remember the courageous

Cowie family, the NOAC members and their eloquent president the Very Reverend Ronald Harrison, the RNR that was very ably represented by Vice Admiral Mike Gretton and LCdr. Peter Nicholson, together with all the veterans of the Atlantic convoys and corvette escorts who came from across Canada.

On Saturday, February 9th, the *Spikenard* Remembrance Dinner was very well attended. Ernie Reid said grace for the company before dinner. Russ Comeau gave a splendid Toast to the Queen, and he made quite an impression with his infectious smile, sense of humour and the very fine blazer crest he has designed for the Club and wore that night. I would certainly like one! Our youngest board

to join us in the bar, where the barrel had been filled by Andrea, ready for everyone to drink a toast to Capt. Shadforth and the ship's company. Up in the bar, rum tots were filled from the barrel, after which I proposed the toast to *Spikenard* and the company responded.

After the toast, I called for a minute's silence and personal reflection on the *Spikenard's* captain and crew, who lost their lives that night 66 years ago, and I congratulate the Crow's Nest that evening for the respect they all gave the occasion.

Later on, Bob Ennis played some favorite tunes on the Mermansk piano, with a resounding chorus from all hands. When we left after 11:30 pm, Bob Ennis was still playing and the



**Russ Comeau of the *Sackville* association prepares to toast the Queen at the Crow's Nest *Spikenard* Remembrance Dinner on February 9th.**

member, Lisa Piercey, gave the traditional Navy toast to 'Wives and Sweethearts'. Bob Ennis and Gareth Cook, in unison, gave the response 'May they never meet'.

After the dinner, Greg Twining set the historical scene of *Spikenard* and her sinking on the evening of Feb. 10th, 1942. He then invited everyone

four musketeers from Nova Scotia were still singing, along with a happy group of members. Magda said it was quite like old times. What a good night it was! Let's make it an annual event.

Saturday, Feb. 23rd saw the first Curry Buffet Dinner I can remember at the Club and, considering the city had been shut down all day because of

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# More Theme Dinners Planned by Gary Green

We have had great success with this year's theme dinners and there are more to come.

## **RMS Titanic (April 12)**

*RMS Titanic* was the largest and most luxurious ship of her day. We will remember this vessel on April 12 with a special dinner. We won't be doing the typical nine course meal served in her grandest restaurant, The Ritz, but it will be an outstanding four course first-class meal. On the other hand, the after dinner entertainment will be pure steerage. Members and their guests can pick their mode of dress for the evening - First Class (white tie, black tie) or Steerage (working class gear like homespun pants and sweaters with salt and pepper caps). The choice is yours! In keeping with the tradition of

a steerage saloon party, bring along an instrument to play and a good set of lungs. Oh, don't forget yer dancin' shoes!

## **Battle of the Atlantic (May 3)**

May 1943, known as Black May by the Nazis, marked the turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic. Each year the first Sunday in May is observed as Battle of the Atlantic Sunday. On the preceding Saturday, the club holds its commemorative dinner. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the turning of the tide. It was largely due to the efforts of the Newfoundland Escort Force led by Crow's Nest members! British Admiral Sir Percy Noble said that the Crow's Nest was the repository of the lore and legends of the men who saved freedom for the

world. Come and pay tribute to those who made it happen.

## **FNFL Mimosa (June 7)**

After the fall of France in 1940, some of the escaped French Navy regrouped as the Free French Naval Force and fought as part of the Newfoundland Escort Force. *Mimosa's* officers were among the first to put their ship's gun shield on the wall. In December of 1941 *Mimosa* took part in the liberation of St. Pierre and Miquelon from Vichy control. She was sunk on June 9, 1942 by U-124. On June 8 we will mark her sinking with a special meal featuring French cuisine. After dinner we will have a brief illustrated presentation on the *Mimosa* and a toast to her gallant crew.

See you at the Nest!

## *Report from the President*

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another heavy snow storm, the wind and snow eased up just enough to let the dinner go ahead. There were only 11 cancellations, and over 30 attended, and what a taste treat it was. I picked up founding member Ruby Dewling, who was determined to attend, and we all had a really good time. I think it was Ann Daniel who first suggested the Curry Buffet, and what a good idea it was.

At the February 29th Weepers, Crow's Nest member Dick Haedrich brought along the Avalon Jazz Quartet - he plays trombone. Dick invited a friend to sit in on clarinet, and boy they were all very good! A big crowd turned out to hear them.

I am very pleased that the club is enjoying a very good period of well-attended functions and lunches. Keep it up! Remember, it's your club. Please use it.

**Club President John Moyes and Treasurer LCdr Margaret Morris toast the *Spikenard* and her crew.**



# The Thirty First Minesweeping Flotilla

The following poem was sent to the Club by John Trafford, a Crow's Nest member living in Belleville, ON, who served in *HMCS Mulgrave*, a minesweeper in the 31st Minesweeping Flotilla. The poem was written by LCdr Hugh Campbell, the captain of the Bangor class minesweeper *HMCS Fort William* of that flotilla. On D-Day and for several months after, he was the Second SO (Senior Officer) of the flotilla.

The 31st was composed entirely of Canadian-built RCN ships manned by Canadian crews. The efforts of this flotilla in making the seas safe for the invasion of Normandy is often overlooked.

Great yarns are told of squadrons bold, of actions fought at sea,  
The River Plate, the Scharnhorst's fate, revenge and the Fifty Three.

And I propose to add to those exploits on the bounding billow.  
So lend an ear, and you shall hear of the Thirty First Mine-sweeping Flotilla.

They're a sweeper fleet of Bangors neat and on each funnel band  
An emblem brief - the maple leaf - denotes their native land.  
The SO is met on CARAQUET, Commander Tony Storrs,  
Virile, lean, zealous, keen, skilled in all sweeping chores.

Intimately I know the second SO, FORT WILLIAM's Scottish skipper.

The only food that does Hugh good is haggis, Scotch and kipper.  
The tall "old man" of COWICHAN is Kenneth William Hall.

At work or play, by night or day, he's always "on the ball".

The MULGRAVE's next and she is fixed to dan the laps or sweep,  
And I have heard Ralph keeps his beard in curlers while asleep.  
Astern is seen John Henry Green, WASAGA's lucky Captain.  
He'll shoot a seven and then eleven, and fade you in a crap game.

The next to know is BLAIRMORE's Joe, collected and cool and calm.

While Ed Macquire is full of fire, He's MILLTOWN's fine "old man".

The cheek to cheek we find MALPEQUE with INAS in a parley.  
For Don and James oft change their names to that of "Tail End Charlie".

Now to complete this potent fleet, three danners make it square.  
The BAYFIELD first, and how Stan has cursed the winch that put him there.

The other twain are right as rain, the GUNNER and GREEN HOWARD.

Norwegians both, who gave their oath, to fight the Quisling coward.

They had their chance, for off to France, the whole Flotilla sailed.  
One day in June, before the moon, against morning light had failed.

And far behind came every kind of craft that man could build,  
To take the ranks, the guns, the tanks and every craft was filled.

For now at last, all waiting passed, this was the great occasion,  
And the Thirty First has been entrusted to spearhead the invasion.  
That day and through the night they swept the channel clear,  
And with the dawn, they still swept on, the Norman Coast was near.

They cleared the front, kept up the hunt for mines right to the beach,  
Ignoring shells that often fell with their easy reach.  
And as the group of ships with troops were landing on the shores,  
They paused to greet that gallant fleet, and carried on their chores.

And week by week they hunt and seek those horned globes of hate.

With little rest they give their best to keep an open gate.  
And every time they sink a mine, another victory's won.  
The Nazi grace, the Nazi race is that much nearer run.

So Thirty First come slake your thirst, and drink a happy toast,  
For all we've done, and for all the fun, we've had off this French coast.

And let us pray there dawn a day when Nazi might is dead,  
The port lookout will raise a shout "there's Sambro right ahead!"



*HMCS Mulgrave*

## *Alberni* Rum Keg Donated

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measuring it out to the ship's company. This practice continued in the Canadian Navy until March 30, 1972, now known as "Black Tot Day". (Incidentally, purser is naval slang for purser, and anything purser is "regulation" or "proper").

Since 1972, items associated with the Tot Ceremony have become harder and harder to find. Recently John Trafford presented the Club with a purser rum keg from the famous corvette *HMCS Alberni*. We are delighted to have this important artefact in our collection, not only because of its connection to the tot but because, to the best of my knowledge, it is the only *Alberni* artefact we have. Thank you John for your generosity.

By the way, if you get this issue before March 30, be sure to mark the date on your calendar and raise a glass to the memory of "The Black Tot."

# CNMAA Documentation Progressing

by Gary Green

Jacquey Ryan continues to work on our history and artefacts projects and should have them finished up before her period with us ends.

Now that a significant number of the three dimensional artefacts are documented, we are turning our attention to our many pictures. The task is greater than one would think as some are framed while others are in photo albums. In general, they are poorly mounted and in some cases showing signs of damage.

One of the first tasks will be to make digital copies. The other will be to identify the people, places and

accompanying picture taken from the publication shows the First Anniversary Party.

We recently received a new *HMS Newfoundland* badge from Ron Windebanke of the *HMS Newfoundland* Association. The old badge by the fireplace is a rare off-white WWII version with the caribou facing the wrong way. The new badge is a brightly coloured post-war version. We'll find just the right spot for it. Ron also sent us some ship's pins for our collection.

Thank you as well to Herb Roberts, who kindly donated a CD

containing his memoirs and wartime photos. You will see a photo of Herb elsewhere in this issue.

Earlier in the year we were presented with a Royal Canadian Navy pusser rum keg from the corvette *HMCS Alberni* by John Trafford of Belleville, ON. The keg was originally owned by First Lt. Freeman Borrows who went on to become skipper of *HMCS Agassiz*. It is a great addition to our collection and we are very thankful to have it. Further information on the keg is contained in a separate article in this issue.



events. Any club members, especially those who have been around for a few years, who are willing to assist in the identification task should contact Gary Green by phone at 895-2005 or by email - Gary.Green@mi.mun.ca.

Recent research in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies has uncovered a copy of the club's Fifteenth Anniversary Booklet in the rare book collection. We were aware of three later versions but this is a new discovery for the Artefacts Association. The

Scuttlebutt



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# Club Member and Senator Bill Rompkey Previews Book on St. John's and WWII

by Gary Green

On March 1 Club member Senator Bill Rompkey, author of a forthcoming book on wartime St. John's, was the after-dinner speaker at *HMCS Cabot's* Wardroom Mess Dinner. Senator Rompkey's illustrated presentation, a preview of the book, focussed on WWII's effect on St. John's and St. John's effect on the war.

According to Senator Rompkey, the city's economy boomed under the wartime pressures for construction, ranging from single unit housing to whole military bases and the provision of all kinds of services needed to keep the war machine moving. St. John's moved from a merchant truck economy to a cash economy. Wages were higher and there was prosperity like never before.

Night life changed. Numerous church, civic, and commercial clubs hosted dances every night. Entertainers from Canada and the United States put on shows in various theatres and the



Senator and Mrs. Rompkey at the *HMCS Cabot* Mess Dinner on March 1.

## Corrections to Photos in Last Issue

Our last Scuttlebutt was put together in time for Christmas, but through no fault of the editor, some errors were made. The cover photo should have identified Quita & Daniel Mainguy as the son & daughter of Crow's Nest co-founder Admiral Rollo Mainguy.

Also, on page 6 we carried the wrong photo. It was Herb Roberts who shared the story of *Matapedia* and *Burlington* with Vice President Gary Green. The correct photo of Mr. Roberts is shown at right



newly built USO building. Country and western music became popular as did that uniquely southern music - jazz. St. John's had never heard the like before and it was hopping!

Service men courted local women and more than one of them became a war bride. The girls were also the source of a confrontation or two as the CFAs (French, British, American, Canadian) and locals competed for a girl's attention.

St. John's was on the front line of battle and offered support for the sailors who arrived weary from their ordeal at sea. They were particularly kind to those who had been rescued from a sinking ship. Senator Rompkey, a young boy during the war, can remember his mother, like many others, making cloth ditty bags to fill with supplies for the seamen. He also remembers selling small bags of nuts to raise funds to buy cigarettes to put in the bags. **cont'd on p. 7**

# Club Treasurer's Report by LCdr Margaret Morris

Our 2007/08 financial year is almost over and it has been both busy and successful. The good news is that, barring some unforeseen expense, we should finish the year with a modest surplus. The bad news is that it is billing time again! I hope to have your invoices in the mail by early May.

We use a software program now to maintain our books. However, mistakes can still happen. Sometimes too quick a move with the mouse and the humourless computer will attach the wrong bill to a name. If there are any questions when you receive your invoice, don't hesitate to contact me.

Write the Club, leave a voice mail, send an email, track me down (it's easy, the bar staff always know my whereabouts!), and I will correct the error.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM!

## *Welcome Aboard to New Members*

### In Town Members:

John Clarke  
Ches Crosbie  
Jean-Pierre Andrieux  
Matt Hickman  
Egbert Walters  
David Bazeley  
Judy Byrne  
Doug Moores

### Out of Town Members

Luis Santos, Ancaster, ON  
CPO2 (Ret'd) Terry Chatham,  
Dartmouth, NS  
Craig Squires, Bedford, NS  
Sam Peet, Dartmouth, NS

## Members' Activities

Congratulations to **Captain Chris Hearn** in his new appointment as Director of the Centre for Marine Simulation at the Marine Institute.

Also, congratulations to **LCdr Pat Jessup** on becoming a member of the Order of Military Merit.

## Senator Rompkey Previews Book

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After the talk, Senator Rompkey opened a ditty bag which had been presented to him recently. It contained modern versions of the items placed in wartime bags - socks, playing cards, chocolate, disposable razors, and a few other items. It was just like opening a Christmas stocking! The sailors must have gotten great pleasure from these bags.

The Artefacts Association is cooperating with Senator Romkey to give him access to material from our archives. The book is due out in time for the 2010 Navy celebrations. Personally, I can't wait for my copy.

## *Update from the Property Committee*

by *Gary Walsh*

The Crow's Nest is about to enter a new era of fire protection. In response to the recent upgrading requirements set by the City of St. John's and the St. John's Regional Fire Department, a contract has been awarded to H & F Electrical Ltd. for:

1. replacement of the thirty-five year old fire alarm panel, and
2. the installation of two magnetic door openers, one on the entry door to the upper deck at top of the stairwell and the other to the dining room. This work shall be completed by March 31, 2008. Additionally, all fire extinguishers have been replaced to meet the new regulations.

## Corvettes Canada: New Edition

We have been notified by Mac Johnston of Ottawa that a second edition of **Corvettes Canada** from John Wiley & Sons should reach bookstores in late March.

Some new material has been added, particularly in the *Spikenard* chapter, and the manuscript has been updated, but most noticeable is the visual impact — the number of photos has been doubled. Most will be larger and the new format allows many to be placed with the relevant text.

Crow's Nest board member Lisa Piercey supplied a number of photos for the new edition

# Don't Forget the Annual General Meeting on May 28

# Club Dinner Schedule May - August 2008

## **Saturday May 3rd, 2008 - Battle of the Atlantic Dinner**

Tiger Shrimp Cocktail  
Carved Roast Beef  
Pear Strudel

## **Sunday May 11th, 2008 - Mothers Day Brunch**

Bring the family. Children under 12 are half price.  
\$24.95

## **Friday May 30th, 2008**

Weepers with Complimentary Hor's D'oeuvres

## **Saturday June 7th, 2008 - Last Dinner for 07/08 Season**

Potato Bacon Soup  
Lobster Dinner  
New York Style Cheese Cake

Friday lunches will continue through the summer as will monthly Weepers but without music.

## **Friday June 27th, 2008**

Weepers with Complimentary Hor's D'oeuvres

## **Friday July 25th, 2008**

Weepers with Complimentary Hor's D'oeuvres

## **Friday August 29th, 2008**

Weepers with Complimentary Hor's D'oeuvres

Movie Nights: currently scheduled for 23 April and 21 May. Movie selections will be announced via email a few days before these dates. There is no charge but you have to bring your own popcorn!