

The Bosun's Call

NOVA SCOTIA - NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER



"PASSING THE WORD"



Editor: Doug Thomas 462-4049, doug.thomas@eastlink.ca September/October 2015



Next Social Event

The Trafalgar luncheon is scheduled for the Saraguay on Thursday 22 October, 1130 for 1200. If you plan to attend, please call Bernie Derible at 902-405-1557 or Sherry Richardson at 902-826-2146.



The August Garden Party

The Garden Party at RA Park was, as usual, a huge success thanks to Bernie Derible's usual attention to detail. Once again he had good weather, excellent food, and a great gathering of MS-NAC Members.



Jim Reddy and his wife Pat were each awarded a National Award by the Naval Association: Jim a Gold Medallion for his outstanding performance as CO of HMCS Sackville, and Pat a Silver Medallion for all of the work she does for the broader naval community and

also as one of the hardest-working Naval Memorial Trustees. To my knowledge, it is a rare thing for these two awards to be presented to a married couple in the same year.

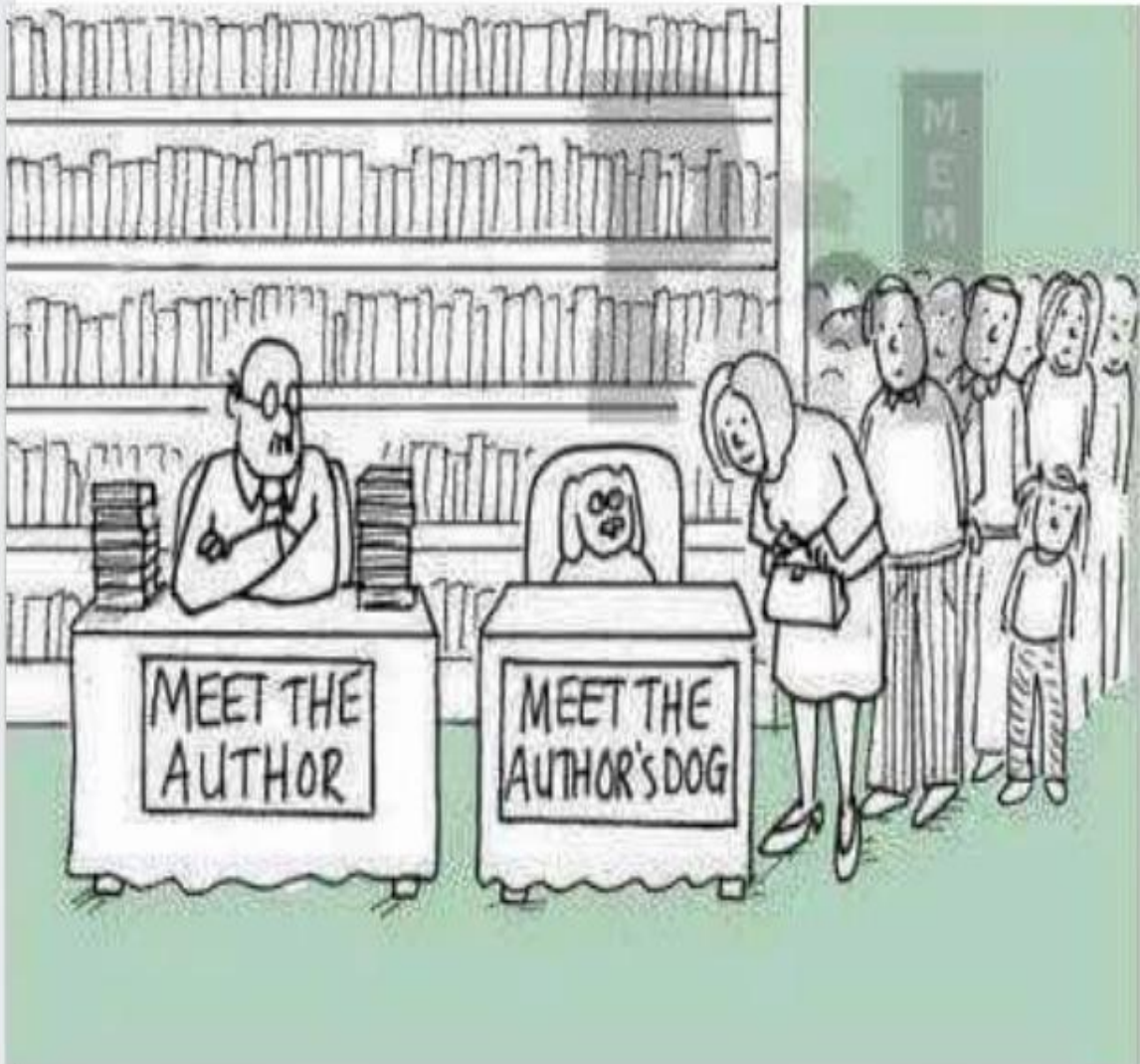
Another highlight of the Garden Party was the presentation of a third cheque to the Legion to pay for trained Service Dogs. Bernie's wife Clarice, who sadly passed away later in August, initiated the idea of our Branch contributing to this important cause. A number of service dogs and their people attended, including our old friends Medric Cousineau and Thai. See the cartoon below:



Medric Cousineau

3 hrs · 🌐

So many of you may not be aware that I am launching my book, *Further Than Yesterday* on the 3rd of November. Our friend sent this and I snorted coffee because it is so true... **Jody Mitic** thought you might appreciate this <3 **Jt Kalnay** preps continue. **Bryan Bailey** Massey Library?





<http://www.lookoutnewspaper.com/stealthy-sleek-chicoutimi-officially-joins-fleet/>

With the bright red and white ensign unfurled and the powerful diesel-electric engines brought to life, Commander Timothy Markusson, Commanding Officer of *Chicoutimi*, declared the submarine commissioned, as dignitaries and guests looked on.

“It is truly unique work we do and it is fortunate that we have a platform as great as the *Chicoutimi* on which to do it,” said CDR Markusson to the crowd.

“This event is certainly the highlight of my career, and I believe is one for the Royal Canadian Navy as well.”

Following his address, he then gave the order for *Chicoutimi*’s executive officer, Lt. Devin Matthews and crew “to man the boat” while the Naden Band of the Royal Canadian Navy played “Heart of Oak.”

Once on board, the submariners removed their peak caps and hollered “hip-hip-hurray”, the customary cheer. Their crew’s ceremonial celebration was followed by applause and cheers from those in attendance as the historic moment drew to a close.

Those overseeing this historic moment included B.C. Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Judith Guichon; Deputy Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, Rear-Admiral Ron Lloyd; Commander of Maritime Force Pacific, RAdm Gilles Couturier; the Mayor of Saguenay, Quebec, Jean Tremblay, and *Chicoutimi* Sponsor Marina Larouche.

“These are among the most complex machines on the planet and operate in an environment which allows very little room for error or tactical defect,” said RAdm Lloyd. “I know *Chicoutimi* is ‘ready-aye-ready’ and is now in capable hands. *Chicoutimi*, welcome to the fleet.”

SALE OF MISTRAL CLASS LPHs TO EGYPT



The Associated Press
Published Wednesday, September 23, 2015
8:00AM EDT

PARIS -- Egypt has agreed to buy two Mistral-class warships from France, the French government said Wednesday, announcing its second military sale to that country this year. The assault ships, which can each carry 16 helicopter gunships, 700 troops and up to 50 armoured vehicles, were originally intended for Russia until the deal finally fell apart because of the Ukrainian crisis.

The Canadian Press reported recently that

Canada's defence minister had been "actively engaged" in sounding out the French about a possible purchase of the Mistral helicopter carriers, including a face-to-face exchange at the most recent NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels last June.

Election sidelines Harper government's back room bid for French helicopter carriers

France to refund Russia \$1B for cancelled sale of 2 warships

Sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Canadian Press that the effort ground to a halt because of Canada's federal election campaign ahead of the Oct. 19 vote.

Russia's deal with France was originally supposed to be its biggest arms purchase ever from a NATO country. France agreed to refund 950 million euros (\$1 billion) already paid by Russia. France didn't say how much Egypt agreed to pay, but denied losing money.

Egypt also purchased 24 advanced fighter jets from France earlier this year for nearly \$6 billion, as it sought international help to bomb Islamic State targets.

The Egyptian government has been battling a long-running insurgency in the northern Sinai region, which escalated after the military ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in July 2013 amid massive protests against his rule and cracked down on Islamic groups. A local Islamic State affiliate has been claiming responsibility for militant attacks in the area.

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3 Members of NSNAC (& CNMT Trustees) International Award Winners



Three of the recipients of 2015 awards of the Historic Naval Ships Association are shown following presentation of the awards aboard HMCS Sackville. From left, Bruce Belliveau, Chair of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust; Wendall Brown, Pat Jessup, Sherry Richardson, CNMT Life Trustee and HNSA Secretary who presented the awards; and Bert Walker. Missing from photo is the fourth recipient, Ted Kelly. (Bill Gard photo)

Four Trustees of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (CNMT), including long-time Nova Scotia Branch of NAC members Ted Kelly, Wendall Brown and Pat Jessup were among the award winners recognized at the 2015 AGM of the Historic Naval Ships Association (HNSA) in San Pedro, California. The fourth CNMT recipient was Bert Walker. Representing CNMT at the HNSA AGM in the retired battleship USS *Iowa* was Life Trustee and former HMCS Sackville commanding officer Sherry Richardson (a previous HNSA award winner and current Secretary).

Ted Kelly, Director of the Battle of Atlantic Society received the Casper J. Knight Award for his outstanding work on behalf of the Battle of the Atlantic Place Project. This award is named in honor of one of the founders of the HNSA and is the highest award the Association can bestow. It is awarded to individuals or organizations who have contributed in a major way to the preservation and exhibition of historic naval ships, and to the goals and work of the Association.

Wendall Brown, a former commanding officer of Sackville was recipient of the William J. Diffley Award that honors departing directors of HNSA fleet member organizations who have significantly contributed to the success of their museums/ships.

Pat Jessup, CNMT Director of Public Affairs received the Dr John C. Fakan Communications Award for her work in advancing electronic communication and collaboration between member ships and museums , serving as editor of Action Stations magazine and operating an active Twitter site (2200 followers).

Bert Walker was recipient of the HNSA Educator's Award in recognition of a Fleet staff member who has performed at a superior level in furthering the education program of the organization through developing a guide-book entitled "The Way of the Ship: HMCS Sackville" for interpretive guides and new members and conducting lectures at libraries and other venues.

Sherry Richardson, assisted by Bruce Belliveau, Chair of CNMT, presented the awards to Wendall Brown, Pat Jessup and Bert Walker at a Friday noon gathering aboard Sackville in early October. Ted Kelly, unable to attend, will be presented his award at a later date.

HNSA, with fleet members in 13 countries, advocates the preservation of ships and maritime history around the world. In addition to HMCS Sackville, other Canadian vessels that are HNSA fleet members include HMCS Haida, Hamilton, ON; HMCS Ojibwa, Port Burwell, ON; HMCS Onondaga, Rimouski, QC; RCMP vessel St Roch, Vancouver; RV Ben Franklin, Vancouver and YFL-104 POGO, Gatineau, QC.

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WW II HUMAN TORPEDO DIES

Daily Telegraph

Emilio Bianchi, who has died aged 102, was the last survivor of one of the most audacious coups of the Second World War – the sinking by “human torpedoes” of two British battleships in Alexandria harbour; Winston Churchill described the feat as demonstrating “extraordinary courage and ingenuity” and it won Bianchi Italy’s equivalent of the VC.

On the night of December 18 1941, the Italian submarine *Scirè* came up to periscope depth off the coast of Egypt. It was commanded by the British-educated Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, who a few days earlier had picked up a six-man team of naval commandos on the Greek island of Leros.

While Italy’s armed forces did not always give a good account of themselves during the conflict, there was one sphere of operations in which they led the world – underwater raiding. In 1918 two Italians riding a primitive submersible armed with a limpet mine had made the first successful attack of its kind. The development in the

Mediterranean between the wars of breathing apparatus for spear fishing had subsequently prompted the formation by Italy of an elite frogman unit, the Decima Mas.

Bianchi had joined this as a navy sergeant in 1937. He later recalled that the training regime was gruelling, and that even in the depths of winter he had often spent all night submerged in icy water. Much of the unit's equipment was experimental and unreliable, notably the two-man "chariots" which the commandos used. Essentially no more than electrically driven torpedoes, they were commonly known by the men as maiali or pigs because of their irksome unwieldiness.



Emilio Bianchi

Several attacks with these had already been attempted against the British fleet in Gibraltar before the Italians' focus switched to the Royal Navy's last two battleships in the Mediterranean, the First World War-vintage Queen Elizabeth and Valiant. These lay at anchor in the inner harbour of Alexandria, heavily defended by nets which could not be penetrated by a submarine, but which the Italians thought could be overcome by a small group of swimmers.

Borghese dropped three maiali about a mile and a half out from the port. The mission was commanded by the aristocrat Luigi Durand de la Penne, whose second man aboard his craft was Bianchi. Just before he boarded his chariot, Bianchi learnt that his wife had given birth to their first child, a girl.

The maximum speed of the machines was just 3 knots. Yet after two hours of travelling on the surface of the waves the teams were well ahead of schedule and stopped to revive themselves with figs and cognac. As they approached the main boom, by a stroke of luck it opened to admit three destroyers. At once they followed directly in their wake, with only the head of the man at the prow of the maiale showing above the water. Those seated behind, such as Bianchi, breathed a mix of oxygen and helium.



Having located *Valiant*, de la Penne found it encircled by a net, but Bianchi hauled down on this and they were able to lug their craft – and its heavy warhead – over it. It is at this point that the two men's accounts differ.

According to the official version, the propeller of the maiale became fouled by a cable and cut out, while Bianchi's rebreather failed and he was forced to surface. De la Penne was therefore left to haul the chariot yard by yard until it lay beneath the keel of the warship – a task which took him 45 minutes – before setting the timer on the explosive charge.

In an interview in 2004, after de la Penne's death, Bianchi contested this, pointing out that the former would have found it nearly impossible to move the craft on his own. He said that he remembered feeling his way with

his hands along the bottom of the ship as they both searched for the best place to place the mine. At most, he had surfaced a minute and a half before de la Penne.

What is certain is that when both men came up they were promptly spotted and captured. They were interrogated separately by officers who, Bianchi recalled, “spoke Italian better than us”, this being a time when many Italians’ first language was their regional dialect. There was a pistol on the table and Bianchi was threatened with being shot, but he realised this was merely intimidation and refused to compromise the mission by answering questions.

A manned torpedo with crew members

Knowing that they had probably placed a charge, *Valiant*’s captain Charles Morgan had the pair confined in separate cabins below the waterline in an effort to make them talk. By chance, they were placed directly above the mine. Half an hour before it was due to go off, de la Penne made Morgan aware by gestures that this would happen, in order that he might evacuate the ship’s company. This was done – but Morgan continued to keep the Italians below.

At 6am, the charge exploded. Bianchi recalled that it was “like an earthquake”, but he and de la Penne were largely unscathed and realised as they made their way on deck that the battleship was sinking. They then saw the mines placed by the other squads go up under *Queen Elizabeth* and a tanker, severely damaging a destroyer moored beside her. In one blow, the balance of sea-power in the Mediterranean had been wrested from the Royal Navy.

The ships sank in only a few feet of water on even keels and for many months the British denied any intelligence to the enemy by carrying on as though the ships were still afloat. So sensitive was their loss that it was not until four months later that Churchill, praising the men’s courage, revealed it to Parliament, and then only in a secret session. The Italian exploit also prompted the British to press on with their own development of midget craft, later used against Tirpitz.

Post-war the attack was the subject of an Italian film, *I sette dell’Orsa maggiore* (1953), and an Anglo-Italian production scripted by Keith Waterhouse, *The Valiant* (1961), starring John Mills as Morgan. Morgan had been so impressed by the Italians’ endeavour that he attempted to secure a British decoration for de la Penne, and at a ceremony at Taranto in 1945 he pinned Italy’s supreme medal for valour, the *Medaglia d’Oro*, on him.

Bianchi received the same recognition when he returned from the South African PoW camp in which he was held until the end of the war. He had made two attempts to escape by digging tunnels, and after the armistice with Italy in 1943 had feigned ill health rather than choose whether to fight with the Allies or not. When he did get home, it was the first time he had seen his daughter – who was four by then.

Emilio Bianchi was born on October 22 1912 at Sondalo, a mountain town midway between Trento and the Swiss frontier. His father died when he was young and he was inspired in his choice of career by the seafaring novels of Robert Louis Stevenson. He joined the *Regia Marina* at the age of 19 and quickly specialised as a diver.

In October 1940, he and de la Penne took part in an attack against ships at Gibraltar. Soon after they had got under way, their craft sank to the bottom, far below the supposed 100ft-depth limit of their oxygen equipment. De la Penne abandoned the maiale but Bianchi struggled to restart it, almost blacking out in the process. The pair then had to swim for two-and-a-half hours to the coast of Spain, where they were picked up by waiting Italian agents.

A modest, straightforward man, with what Italians thought an English sense of humour, Bianchi retired from the navy in the equivalent rank of lieutenant-commander after a final posting at the academy at Livorno. Working in a naval shipyard, he settled near Viareggio, and at the age of 68 entered a burning building to save the life of a woman. He published a memoir in 1996.

He is survived by his wife Aurora, whom he married in 1940, and by their two daughters.

Emilio Bianchi, born October 22 1912, died August 15 2015

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SALTY DIPS FOR BOSUN'S Call

Editor: I need your stories or short articles for our newsletter. Here is an example from Peter Hayden, our President:

Fuelling

Fuel oil is the life blood of a warship; taking on fuel is a frequent event in any navy. It's not surprising that the business of fuelling provides some of the best stories of naval life.

In Spring 1966, the RCN carried out one of the largest deployments in its history. The Atlantic Fleet accompanied by frigates and the submarine, Grilse, from the West Coast went to South America. Initially, the fuelling was done at ports in the Caribbean and from the carrier, Bonaventure, once we headed south. Managing fuel was a major problem. When one ship got down to nearly 10 percent remaining, the staff decision was to send her into Recife to fuel.

It was going to take many hours to complete fuelling, not just because she needed a lot but the Bunker "C" oil wasn't of the best quality; some stokers swore that it was full of sand and dead rats. So, some of the crew were given shore leave.



As sailors do, they soon found a friendly bar with live entertainment; the problem was the owner refused to take Canadian money, but was convinced that Canadian Tire money was good stuff. One of the younger sailors was quickly sent back to the ship to get as much Canadian Tire money as possible. And the party continued until it was time to sail.

After a couple days later and Back at sea with the fleet with everyone settling back into the daily routine, the Chief Yeoman brought the overnight message traffic to the CO on the Bridge.

About halfway down the message stack was a fat envelope. The message next to it came from the Canadian Embassy in Rio stating that a complaint had been received from a very respectable restaurant owner claiming that the sailors of that ship owed him some \$500.00 for "beverages and services".

The CO was about to explode when the Chief Yeoman quietly suggested he check the envelope first. He did. Inside was the exact amount the "respectable restaurant owner" claimed was owing plus a generous percent tip.

What the CO didn't know, until much later, was that the night watch in the Radio Room intercepted the message and quickly got the entire crew to chip in \$3-4 each. By morning more than enough was collected to pay the bill. The Chief Yeoman, who might have been one of those in the "respectable restaurant", had the job of explaining as little or as much of the situation to keep the CO happy. He also just happened to have a draft message back to the Embassy saying that he, the CO, had the money and would hand it over in Rio, the next port. The message was sent as drafted, the money was handed over and no more was heard. Curiously, shore leave was never granted again during a fuelling stop.

Fuelling in the Azores

In the early summer of 1966, after the ships came back from South America, Restigouche and Skeena sailed for Europe to join the NATO "Matchmaker II" Squadron. This was the precursor to the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic.

To save time, the two ships were to proceed at high speed to the Azores, arriving with no less than ten percent fuel remaining; a good problem for the navigators to work out. We arrived, asked for a rapid fuelling so that the ships could get underway as soon as possible and head for Den Helder to meet up with the other ships in the new Squadron.

All went well until the people ashore started to re-fuel Skeena. The ship's very recent conversion to distillate from Bunker "C" black oil caused some problems for the Ponta Delgada fuel people: they didn't have heavy-duty hoses for distillate and so started to fill up Skeena's tanks with a garden hose.

After an appropriate amount of high-level hair had been torn out, the reality of the situation was grudgingly accepted -- it was going to take at least 24 hours to refuel. The brilliant plan to save time crossing the Atlantic was a failure.

Restigouche went on ahead and Skeena sailed a day late.

No harm was done, but for some reason Skeena always carried some extra re-fuelling hoses after that trip.

News Flash from Vancouver.....

The Navy intercepted a boatload of people off the coast of BC today. This placed the Navy in an awkward position, as the boat was not heading to, but away from Canada, towards Asia.



Another surprise finding was that they were loaded with white Canadians who were all seniors of pensionable age. Their claim was that they were trying to get to Asia so as to be able to return to Canada as illegal immigrants, and therefore be entitled to far more benefits than they were receiving as legitimate Canadian pensioners.

The Navy is believed to have given them food and

water and assisted them on their journey.

We are booking on the next boat out. Let me know if you want to come. **Remember you have to be over 65!**

ELECTION TIME!

While walking down the street one day a "Member of Parliament" is tragically hit by a truck and dies.

His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

'Welcome to heaven,' says St. Peter. 'Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you.'

'No problem, just let me in,' says the man.

'Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from higher up. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity.'

'Really, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven,' says the MP.

'I'm sorry, but we have our rules.'

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people.

They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly & nice guy who has a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are having such a good time that before he realizes it, it is time to go.

Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises....

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens on heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him.

'Now it's time to visit heaven.'

So, 24 hours pass with the MP joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

'Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity.'

The MP reflects for a minute, then he answers: 'Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell.'

So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell.

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage.

He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above.

The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulder. 'I don't understand,' stammers the MP. 'Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?'

The devil looks at him, smiles and says, 'Yesterday we were campaigning.....'

Today you voted.

MYSTERY SHIPS



What, Where, When?

(Hint – she is one of three...or is she?)



**Three iconic ships
pictured here at a Naval
Review in the late 1930s.
Name the one in the
foreground and the one
in the background.**

**Answers to your Editor,
who will buy the first
successful respondent a
beer at our Branch
Christmas Party.**