

CUSTOMS OF THE NAVY

LIEUT A.D. TAYLOR, R.C.N.

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P R E F A C E

There is a wealth of fascinating lore behind many of the routine practices of our naval profession of which many serving officers and men are not aware, or at least do not appreciate. In this small volume are recorded some of the more interesting of the nautical customs and traditions--their origin, development and present form.

It is hoped that this book will in some way help to check the present tendency noted in civilian circles and in the press to condemn our alleged unswerving allegiance to "the traditions of Nelson's day". A custom that has no apparent basis is quite meaningless and therefore might be reluctantly observed. If these pages should serve to enlighten, to make at least some of the naval customs and traditions meaningful, they will amply have served their purpose.

In the Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions is an order that "...every officer...shall...in all respects conform himself to the established customs and practices of Her Majesty's Service at Sea". This is not strange and unreasonable if we realise that the customs and practices referred to are the naval equivalent of the unwritten Common Law of the nation; we are legally bound to conform with the law of the land, of which a large part is not recorded in statute form. The naval enrolment form includes an obligation "to comply with the usages and customs of the Royal Canadian Navy".

The study of naval customs and traditions, like the study of the larger body of history itself, is not an exact science, and much material that has been stated as fact is actually little more than opinion substantiated by some evidence. Although treated dogmatically by some writers, much of what they have recorded is open to question. If this volume should provoke discussion, whether on matters of opinion or on outright errors, its production will have been justified.

A.D.T.

H.M.C.S. Magnificent
at Portsmouth, England.
15 May, 1954.

CHAPTER 1 - SHIPBOARD TERMS

It may be considered tactless to presume that 'old hands' do not know the origin of the names of parts of a ship, but despite the risk of offending a few well-known points are mentioned by way of introduction.

The word ship itself is from the Anglo-Saxon scip or the Gothic skip, both meaning boat. In the navy we draw a distinction between ship and boat, the latter being a smaller vessel, usually without decks, which is carried aboard a ship. Certain exceptions exist: submarines, out of a possible sense of friendly rivalry, are often called boats, and we refer to passenger ships as boats though probably not as a compliment.

From the ancient Greek and Roman eras until long after the Grand Armada of 1588 warships carried soldiers, accustomed to conducting sieges on land, as their offensive strength. The soldier ashore felt secure in his castle, although a castle is essentially defensive, and on going to sea to fight battles required that castles be provided in the ships of war. There were, in fact, two self-contained castles in each ship, one forward and one aft, known as the forecastle and the aftercastle. From these, the soldiers fired the slingshot, longbow, and crossbow. These castles almost disappeared with the advent of muzzle-loading cannon due to the obvious factor of top-weight. The name, forecastle, has remained through the years, though, often contracted in spelling and always abbreviated in pronouncing.

The memory of the aftercastle, later to become the quarterdeck, is recorded only in abbreviations of the parts of ship, FX and AX, "X" in this instance representing castle. The more common abbreviation now for quarterdeck is QD but AX is still marked on part-ship stores belonging to the quarterdeck division because it is easier to carve into deck scrubbers or paint on buckets.

In the course of time the aftercastle became the poop; the development of this word, like many things to follow in this text, is conjectural. The Romans and other ancient seafarers carried with them their gods or idols. These were worshipped in the open rather than between decks, and the forecastle, like the 'sharp end' of any ship at sea, was liable to dampen idols and worshippers alike. The best place would seem to be high up on the aftercastle. As the Latin word for idol is puppis, we derive a poop-deck or poop. We use the expression, "I'm pooped" meaning "I am completely exhausted"; that usage comes from the effect of a following sea breaking over the poop of the ship, in which case it was said that the ship was pooped. Apart from this expression the term survives only in the merchant service where it is used instead of quarterdeck.

A deck which runs unbroken from forward - aft is of course a whole deck; and one which goes approximately half the ship's length, like the forecastle deck of a destroyer, is a half deck. Consequently a quarterdeck was roughly a quarter of the ship's length; it was a small deck forward of, and just below, the poop, between poop and mainmast. When the aftercastle disappeared the quarterdeck came into its own.

The waist, a term still with us in ships where it has not been replaced by the expression boatdeck, was the lowest part of the upperdeck, between the forecastle and the aftercastle, and included the quarterdeck. The word top formerly referred to a mast; the topmen, the hands who worked aloft, were the most agile of the seamen and could be considered the cream

of the seaman complement.

The deck above the holds in the old ships, what would now be called the platform deck, was known as the orlop deck, a contraction of 'overlap', a word of Dutch origin meaning 'that which runs over the hold'. In HMS Victory, this deck is painted red; the wounded were taken there to be tended by the ship's surgeon. On this first deck below the waterline they were safer, and their blood was not so noticeable against the red paint of the deck. This term orlop is still in use in merchant ships.

During the 18th century there was little difference between warships and merchantmen. Ships were usually built for merchant service and were easily converted and armed when required. Most were armed in any case for defence against pirates. The practice of converting merchant ships into armed merchant cruisers was continued to the end of World War II.

Before the invention of the rudder, a ship was steered with a long oar or sweep fitted over the stern on the right or steer board side of the ship. The Norse were the first to use a single oar; Greek and Roman ships had two steering oars, often connected and controlled by a tiller. It is not known why the Vikings had chosen the starboard side; their choice, however, became universal. In the course of time the term steerboard changed to starboard; it has not connection at all with stars.

It was found awkward to put a ship alongside a jetty on the side this oar was shipped. By preference ships were put alongside starboard side outboard. A plank was put across from shore to ship and over it stores were embarked. This plank or board was called the ladeboard or loadboard, later larboard. There was doubtless much confusion over the use of the terms larboard and starboard but after 1580 there was a way out. The French with their high ships' sides devised a shortcut to handling cargo; they cut loading door or porte in the ship's side. To mariners this became the port side.

Another version of the origin of starboard and larboard is by derivation from the Italian (aque)sta borda - this side, and (aquel)la borda - that side, equivalent to the expressions found in the Highway Code of the United Kingdom, near side and off side.

From early times, to avoid collisions, ships underway or at anchor by night carried at least a single lantern showing a white light. There seems to have been no fixed rule about the use of lights until 1824 when two white lights were required to be shown in ships navigating the canals of the Netherlands and Belgium. In 1845 colored lights were authorized for this purpose.

In that same year, HMS Comet carried out experiments at Spithead with red, green and white lights, and in 1847 Admiralty regulations called for all British steamships to be fitted in the approved manner. No such requirement existed for sailing vessels. After 1850 all steamships in the busy fairways of the open seas were required to show colored lights by night. The colors, red and green, had been selected as the least likely to be confused.

The French, in 1863, instituted a practice of making the lights visible on the beam as well as ahead. This led to international agreement on the use of sidelights, visible through definite arcs. About the same time, sailing vessels were first required to show red and green sidelights.

Trinity House, the British pilotage authority, had ruled in 1840 that two steamships steaming toward each other by night, to avoid collision were each to alter course to starboard, thereby keeping the other ship on the port hand. The red light, indicating danger, was assigned to the side to be steered away from.

A series of conferences of the principal maritime nations has produced the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea, in which are embodied directions regarding lights, steering and sailing rules. In the most recent revision (1953) these are greatly clarified, and are made applicable to aircraft taxi-ing or alighting on water in ocean areas.

CHAPTER 2 - RECRUITING AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

"It is seamen, not ships, that constitute a navy."
- Rear-Admiral Sir Charles NAPIER
(1786 - 1860)

Just over a hundred years ago came the first efforts to make possible careers as seamen in the ships of the Royal Navy. Before that time, men signed on for the duration of the commission of the ship in which they had elected to serve; only the captain, his lieutenants and warrant officers were retained in the service after the ship paid off. Conditions of service were hard, and the pay was poor but might be augmented in a fortunate commission by prize money.

Until 1825, pay was held back as a guarantee against desertion. It was the practice to pay off the men at the end of a commission, hence the expression, a ship paying off. Men were paid monthly after 1825; it was not until 1949 that fortnightly payment was instituted in the R.C.N. The practice of making payment in cash on men's hats started during the Commonwealth, at which time it was found wise to treat the men well to keep them loyal.

At the end of a commission each man was given a pay ticket which could be cashed at the Admiralty. But as the men had insufficient funds to go to London, moneylenders came to the home ports and paid as little as 60% of the value of the pay tickets. After 1728, men were paid aboard ship after returning to their home port to decommission.

The method of manning the King's ships, which Lord Nelson termed "an infernal system", was to engage men to serve only during a period of hostilities. When peaceful conditions prevailed those who had survived naval service, returned to their former occupations. Until well after the middle of the 17th century, losses in men were chiefly due to disease.

Rounding the Cape of Good Hope, in 1498, Vasco da Gama lost 100 of a crew of 160, most from scurvy, a disease caused by diet deficiency. Admiral Hawkins appears to be the first to have used lemon juice as a preventative. Captain Cook, on his world voyage of over three years in HMS Resolution, in 1776, lost only one man of 118. In a document to the Admiralty he attributed his good fortune to the use of lemons; this resulted in their adoption for general use in British ships. Lime juice, at present in use, has similar properties.

During the Seven Years' War (1756 - 1763), only 1,512 men died in action whereas 133,718 succumbed to disease, or for reasons other than death in action as the result of

wounds were listed "missing"; these numbers are from a total of 184,893 seamen and marines who served during that war. Considering the conditions and the meagre chances of survival it is not difficult to understand why it was necessary to resort to impressment to man the royal ships.

From Saxon times, press-gangs had functioned in order to provide seamen. Henry VIII, in 1545, fearing an invasion by the French, ordered that Devon fishermen were to be "taken as marryners to serve the King". It was an Admiralty rule that every male British subject was eligible to be pressed into service. But the principal raids by press-gangs were on experienced seafarers, particularly those serving aboard inward-bound merchant vessels. Due to impressment of crews, some of these were unable to reach port unassisted. The merchantmen were always preferred by sailors although service in them was hard too.

In Queen Anne's reign, during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701 - 1714), men entered her ships "like men dragged to execution". It has also been said that in the reign of James I (1603 - 1625) men went to serve "with as great a grudgery as if it were to be slaves in the galleys". There is an engraving in the Picture Post Library of a press-gang at work. This is evidently an early type of political cartoon in which the victim says, "For God's sake, gentlemen, don't drag me like a thief". And his wife, on her knees with clenched hands upraised, pleads, "for goodness sake, dear, your Honor, set him free; he maintains his father, mother, sister and wife". The officer-in-charge replies: "Let them starve and be damned. The King wants men. Haul him on board, you dogs". Presumably his five men have no difficulty as each wields a two-foot club.

Samuel Pepys, secretary to the Admiralty, from 1660 to 1669, notes in his diary, in the year 1666, that he had gone to see the Lord Mayor of London ".....about getting shipped some men that they have these two last nights pressed in the city out of houses; the persons wholly unfit for sea, and many of them people of very good fashion, which is a shame to think of; and carried to Bridewell they are, yet without being impressed with money legally as they out to be." We later read that the Lord Mayor did not, at this time, have the money to pay the men. Pepys somberly notes, "It is a great tyranny".

Elsewhere he writes: "Two men leapt overboard, among others, into the Thames out of the vessel into which they were pressed, and were shot by the soldiers placed there to keep them, two days since; so much people do avoid the King's service!" On the bow of the Victory is a grating called a marine's walk on which an armed sentry paced in harbor to fire at any man seen breaking out of the ship.

It is worthy of note that not all captains were cruel and sadistic men who governed their ships by liberal use of the lash and irons; some had little difficulty finding sufficient volunteers to sail with them. The navy of the United States had considerably less of a problem finding men, and their merchant service was more popular still; both recruited many men who had sailed in British ships and had either deserted or had joined the Americans after their ships paid off. During the Napoleonic Wars (1798 - 1815) many British seamen joined American merchant ships to evade naval service. Many of these were stopped and searched by British warships in the War of 1812. Still others had joined the Dutch naval or merchant services.

An order-in-council was signed by Queen Victoria on 1st

April, 1853, which provided for a ten-year engagement period, from the age of eighteen, with a pension after twenty years' service. At the same time, improvements in conditions of the service were brought about, and it was no longer found necessary to press men into service by the methods mentioned. The Crimean War (1854) was the first without any impressment of seamen.

CHAPTER 3 - UNIFORMS

The universal color of the naval uniform is blue, presumably as a camouflage against the sea itself. For this purpose, the sails of Roman ships, about 55 B.C., were dyed blue so that men dressed in blue standing near the sails would be almost invisible to the enemy archers. Armour was rarely worn at sea, even by soldiers, if only for the reason that steel plate has an obvious disadvantage as a bathing suit.

A more modern version, which does not exclude the first, is that King George II (1683 - 1760) was so attracted by the dark blue riding costume with brass buttons, worn by the Duchess of Bedford, that he ordered the adoption of this color scheme for the officers' uniforms.

Slops, a term referring to naval clothing stores, is derived from the Old English, "sloppe"- a loose-fitting and shapeless garment. Very basic slops were provided in the Royal Navy in 1632, but then as now civilian tradesmen, slopsellers as they were called, were more readily patronized than the naval stores. At that time, to ensure that his men had sufficient clothing to protect them against all weather, a captain could order a man to purchase up to two months' pay in value.

In 1780, other navies having uniforms by this time, officers petitioned the Admiralty for a uniform for their sailors. The unofficial uniform was described as "a little low cocked hat, pea jacket, canvas petticoat trousers, not unlike a kilt, tight stockings and shoes with pinchbeck buckles". The men did not wear cocked hats after 1780, and when worn by officers, they were worn athwartships until 1795, and fore-and-aft from that year, at first for only captains and below. The cocked hat for men was replaced with a shiny black tarpaulin hat with the name of the ship on a broad black ribbon. Straw hats, introduced from the West Indies in 1802, were in use until 1922. The dress regulations of 1847 stated that men's caps were to be like the officers' but without a peak; this is the origin of the present-day cap.

Being unofficial there were numerous variations to the basic uniform described; mention has been made of colored comforters and knitted waistcoats. Captains of ships used to dress their ships' companies, or at least their boats' crews, in the particular rig they fancied.

By 1800, the fashion, still unofficial, was a blue jacket with white stripes or white thread down the seams, a striped or checked shirt, white trousers, either long and bell-bottomed for ease in rolling up or short to show the stockings. Striped jerseys are still worn in the French and Netherlands navies.

In 1814, uniforms had not yet been introduced for the lower deck. The unofficial dress was still the short blue jacket with the addition of two rows of large mother-of-

pearl buttons. This type of button appears to be the fore-runner of the two rows of brass buttons on the fore-and-aft rigged uniforms.

The sailor's uniform, as we know it, was not finally authorized until 1857. At that time, it was established that the collar, formerly in use as a protection from tallow or even tar on the pigtail or queue (the fashion from about 1785 to 1825) was to have three white tapes rather than the former two. This was probably not as a memento of Nelson's victories as is commonly supposed but only to ensure that the unauthorized collars would no longer be used. Pressed men were often lousy and were shorn as a routine; thus the wearing of a pigtail was a mark of service.

Square rig refers to the resemblance between the sailors' collars and the sails of their ships. The other common type of sailing rig is fore-and-aft; this expression is applied for purposes of contrast to officers' and chief and petty officers' uniforms. From this the reader will understand that round rig, and expression current in World War II, really has no place in naval terminology. A doubtful version or the origin of the expression fore-and-aft rig is that it used to take four and a half years to become a petty officer.

The silk did not originate as a sign of mourning for Nelson as has often been suggested since in one form or another it antedated the famous Admiral's birth. It might have been used as a mourning band for Nelson in the manner the crew of HMS Berwick, in 1794, mourned their captain's death, by cutting their silk scarves in half, putting one piece around the cap and the other around an arm. This seems a sufficient precedent for officers to use seamen's silks for mourning bands.

The rag was often worn about the neck, opened at the back like a kerchief, to protect the back of the neck from tar or tallow on the pigtail. It was also used as a sweat band by the guns' crews. Until the uniform was standardized in 1857 the silk was often a colorful article; one writer describes a pattern resembling a mixture of blood and raw eggs! It was, however, normally of black to show dirt the least.

The original use of a lanyard was to hang the seamen's knife in front of his body. It was of such a length that a man aloft could open the knife with one arm outstretched, the other holding onto the rigging. It was and still is worn under the collar for comfort, appearance, and to prevent strangulation should the lanyard be grasped or caught below the running turk's head.

The seaman's knife, for reasons of safety no longer worn except with working dress, is worth brief comment. There are at least four reasons for the shape of the blade; blunt-ended for poor stabbing qualities and so it would cause less damage if dropped from aloft, because it can be used to cut stops without damaging clothes or sails, or can be used as a screwdriver.

The uniform of 1857, in particular the blue serge jumper or blouse as it was then called, with a very few changes is still worn to-day. It is of interest to note the similarity between the British naval uniforms and those of other navies, a tribute to the strength and prestige of the Royal Navy in the 19th century. The new-type R.C.N. uniform of soft blue serge with zippers fitted is a recent change, adopted as a trial in 1949 and issued in the following year. The Royal Navy, after a trial of two-hundred similar zipper-fitted uni-

forms, has now adopted the RCN pattern.

There was no standard uniform for officers until 1748. Prior to that year, officers, and captains of ships in particular, had worn what they pleased. It has been recorded that one captain wore a plain black tailcoat and a white top hat. This type of headgear may seem out of place at sea but was commonly worn until 1850 or later. It enjoys a special use to-day though not in our own service; it is the custom in some ports which are icebound in winter for the mayor to award a black top hat (and often a gold, or silver-headed, cane) to the first merchant captain to enter the port after the winter season. Another captain is said to have worn a coat of such thin material that his red braces showed through. Several RCN officers knowingly perpetuate this custom, if it is one, of wearing red braces.

Senior officers are still permitted, unofficially, to modify their dress; for example, Field-Marshal Montgomery with his white turtleneck sweaters, and several wartime five-star American officers. One sees very few modifications of naval uniforms except at sea where we all tend to think of comfort before appearance.

What is known as the executive curl, the ring above an officer's gold lace or braid, is said to date from the Crimean War when it was called 'Elliott's Eye' in commemoration of a Captain Elliott who carried his wounded arm in a sling under heroic circumstances. The Term also refers to an eye in a hemp rope, said to be a memento of the Honorable William Elliott, a member of the Board of Admiralty, 1800 - 1801. It is worthy of note that of almost all the seagoing nations of the world, the French and American are the only navies whose officers do not wear 'Elliott's Eye'.

The curl was originally worn only by executive officers, but in 1915, engineer officers adopted it, followed by officers of the other branches in 1918. Although in the British navies, the curl is now common to all officers, some other navies who copied the custom have restricted its use to their deck officers. While in some navies insignia placed above the braid indicates a special branch, Commonwealth navies used colored cloth between rows of gold lace. From 1879 to 1891, British naval officers wore three brass buttons between the lace, and several navies still do the same.

In 1795, epaulettes (from the French, epaule - shoulder) or shoulder knots, indicating rank, were worn on the officers' tailcoats. The custom was adopted from other navies because British officers abroad were often slighted by not being recognized as officers. After the Crimean War, tailcoats and epaulettes became obsolete except for full-dress uniforms, and even these were placed in abeyance for economy reasons during World War II; some effort has since been made, both in the R.N. and the R.C.N., to reintroduce the full-dress uniform.

Swords were a part of the officer's uniform but gradually slipped into disuse except for ceremonial occasions. Possession of a personal sword is in abeyance, but it is interesting to note that in January, 1954, the United States Navy declared the intention of requiring possession of swords, commencing with admirals and captains, and later including commanders and below.

Aiguillettes have always been a sign of an aide de camp. The insignia developed in the army; the general's A.D.C. carried rope and wooden pegs over his shoulder with which he hobbled the general's horse and his own on arrival in camp.

Since the early 19th century it has been the custom for officers to wear civilian clothes ashore. Before that time uniforms were always worn ashore; in fact until about 1815, naval members of Parliament sat in the British House of Commons in uniform. It is a slackness tolerated in some wardroom messes for officers to remain onboard in plainclothes; this privilege was formerly only permitted if the officer were going ashore immediately or had just returned aboard. In any case it is 'proper routine' to say "Pardon my rig, sir" to the senior uniformed officer present, no matter what his rank or branch.

It has already been mentioned why blue is the universal color for naval uniform; in passing let us comment on uniforms in general. The first British uniform was worn by Henry VIII's bodyguard -- a distinctive dress of gold and silver cloth. A uniform gives prestige to the wearer, and has been shown to add immeasurably to the morale of a military organization. The army now wears khaki, the intention being that it is an inconspicuous color; similar reasoning stands behind Germany's steel grey (later dark green), France's field grey, and the olive drab of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. The reason for khaki in the navy as a summer uniform is that it is cool and yet does not become soiled so easily as the white uniform which used to be worn in the tropics and in summertime. The same properties would, of course, exist with a slight blue summer uniform.

CHAPTER 4 - RANKS

The title, admiral, is derived from the Arabic, emir-el-bahr --lord of the sea! This was adopted by the Spanish during the Moorish conquests in the 8th century as almirante, then in French as amiral, and in English as admiral. The prefix, vice, with admiral means in place of, and therefore subordinate to, an admiral. At one time it was considered most important to protect the head and rear of a fleet of ships in fixed formation, usually with two squadrons known as the vanguard and the rear-guard. The admiral commanding the rear-guard was the admiral of the rear or 'rear-admiral'. The admiral of the van was next in seniority to the admiral-in-chief (later admiral of the fleet) and bore the rank of vice-admiral. Commodore, a much more recent term, is an officer who commands a (detached) squadron of ships. Several merchant shipping lines confer this rank on their senior captains, and in wartime, retired senior naval officers are appointed as commodores of convoys. Yacht squadrons go a stage farther with their ranks of vice-commodore and rear-commodore.

Captain has its root in the Latin, caput, meaning head. As the head was thought to be the controlling part of the body we can see how the idea of a head man developed; this was shown in the Latin word, capitus, for chief or head man. In Spanish it became capitan; in French, Capitaine; in German, Kapitan; and in English, Captain. From the 14th century the term captain referred to the officer commanding the soldiers, whereas the ship was under the command of the master. In the last half of the 17th century, the duties were combined when the soldiers were no longer a separate entity onboard (except as marines); the captain's word was law.

Many nautical words come from Arabic; in particular are

the names of the navigational stars.

In R.N. regulations (QR&AI) provision is made for a "First Captain" or senior captain, i.e. - a commodore first class.

The captain's title became master commanding, and somewhat later master-and-commanding officer, abbreviated in 1794 to the present rank of commander. From this derivation may be seen the reason for the courtesy title, now rarely heard, of captain for a commander.

Although a commander is actually second-in-command (executive officer) of a large ship, in smaller ships he is a commanding officer. The French and some other navies indicate rank by captain of...., a particular type of ship being named; for example, a capitaine de vaisseau in the French navy is equivalent to our captain, and capitan de corbeta in the Spanish and some Latin-American navies ranks with our lieutenant-commander.

Lieutenant is French in origin - (en) lieu tenant - and means holding a place or position for someone else; e.g. - lieutenant-governor, acting for a governor. The American pronunciation, 'loo-tenant' is closest to the French though our obsolescent naval pronunciation 'letenant' is close, whereas the army's 'LEF-tenant' seems a corruption of the worst sort. Lieutenants with over eight years in that rank were considered as a separate rank after 1877, the year the 'half-stripe' was introduced. Before World War I, a lieutenant who held a command was called lieutenant and commander; in 1912, this was officially abbreviated to lieutenant-commander. In most branches promotion to this rank is automatic after eight years as a lieutenant, though regulations now provide for future promotions to that rank to be by selection.

First Lieutenant is an appointment rather than a rank; the officer so appointed will be the senior executive lieutenant in the ship. Similarly, in a large ship, the senior executive lieutenant-commander is usually known as the First Lieutenant-Commander. Some traditionalist insist that no matter what the officer's rank, his appointment should be First Lieutenant; so far as origin of the term is concerned this view must be considered correct.

The rank of sub-lieutenant was instituted by Lord St. Vincent in 1802.

A midshipman was, originally, as the name suggests, one who lived amidships, that is mid-way between the officers who lived aft and the men who lived forward. While training as an officer he worked with the men somewhat like our own cadets. In the U.S. Navy, this original status is more closely maintained, the U.S.N. midshipman, ranking with the RCN cadet. The midshipman used to serve seven years on the lower deck and was roughly equivalent to our present-day petty officer in rank and position.

Midshipmen's patches were in use prior to 1799. It has been suggested that the patch is all that remains of what used to be a white coat collar which went out of use because the 'Young Gentlemen' used to dirty it too quickly. No support can be found for this doubtful theory. The significance of white, however, is of great antiquity; to it our word candidate is related. Candidus, Latin adjective for white, referred to the pure color of the togas worn by those aspiring to high office in the Roman government. The same purity motif

is seen with a bride's wedding dress. The midshipman's white patch and the officer candidate's white cap ribbon probably stem from this Roman origin.

It has already been mentioned that topmen, who worked aloft in the rigging, were the cream of the seaman complement. Carrying this aspect still farther, we can see that the term upper yardmen for officer candidates from the lower deck implies the very best men.

The title of purser is related to burser - a treasurer; it dates from the 14th century, and existed as a naval rank until 1852. Possibly much of the facetious vilification practised in wardrooms against supply officers refers to the purser's predecessors who received no pay but were expected to make a profit by their sharp practises. In the 18th century, a purser paid two sureties, totalling as much as £1200, to the Admiralty, and in addition had to buy a warrant costing about £65. That there was a great demand for the post despite these outlays proves the expectation of making more than a reasonable profit. It has been recorded that most pursers charged slop-sellers a shilling in every pound, i.e. - 5%, but that they made a good deal more on sales to the men. False pay tickets, which they cashed with moneylenders, were almost an expected thing, and brought about by necessity the custom of muster by open list, quarterly and at inspections, when each man stepped before the captain and told his name, ran, and his duties on board.

The rank of gunner dates from the early 16th century. He was a warrant officer, in charge of the ship's armament and the gunroom, not only of the muskets kept there but also of the junior and subordinate officers who used it as a mess. In HMS Victory, at the time of Trafalgar, these were the junior or 6th lieutenant and the purser as well as sub-lieutenants and midshipmen. The old ranks of chief gunner and chief boatswain were the fore-runners of the rank of warrant officer, an officer who held a royal warrant rather than a commission. This rank was abolished in the Commonwealth navies in 1948 to be replaced by the commissioned branch officer.

In the year 1688, the Board of Admiralty revised the system of rank and seniority, giving all officers seniority of that year, and at the same time published the first Navy list, a list of all serving officers with their ranks and seniority. The Canadian Navy list (restricted) is published quarterly by Naval Headquarters. RCN Regular Force and Reserve officers are also listed with Dominion navies in the R.N. Navy List.

In the lean years of the Soviet Fleet, from 1917 to 1940, officers were chosen by election, until Marshal Stalin reintroduced ranks. It is interesting to note that 'tradition' was provided for the Red Fleet by the simple expedient of re-writing naval history, even to the extent of glorifying several of the Czarist heroes, besides claiming numerous naval inventions as being of Soviet origin.

The rank, or rating as it used to be known, of petty officer (literally: inferior officer) was established in the 18th century, and that of chief petty officer just over 100 years ago. It is of interest that there were petty officers first and second class in the Royal Navy from about 1830 until 1907. The RCN has done nothing new in reintroducing those grades, we have done so to parallel the other two Canadian forces, thereby implementing a tri-service policy to equalize pay rates and promotion tables.

Ranking as petty officers were the master-at-arms (originally the small-arms instructor), the sailmaker, the armourer and the armourer's mate, and the ship's cook. The master-at-arms, or in a large ship, the lieutenant-at-arms (often the junior lieutenant) together with the ship's corporals, had so little to do as small-arms instructors that it became the practice to assign to them what we would now call regulating duties. After a time the original duties disappeared or were taken back by the gunner and his staff. The ship's corporal eventually became the regulating petty officer though part of his duties are now carried out by the corporal of the gangway.

In 1853 was established the rank of leading seaman, described at the time as a "higher class of able seaman". Since in the RCN the ranks have been put back to where they were over a hundred years ago this description again applies.

CHAPTER 5 - SALUTES AND CEREMONIAL

All forms of military salutes are signs of mutual trust and respect between members of armed forces. Unfortunately, as with many of the customs of our service, we tend to find saluting little more than a required, yet meaningless, ritual; we find it so because we forget its origin and background.

In the days of knights in shining armour, it was not only difficult to distinguish friend from foe but it was almost impossible to determine if one's adversary were in a friendly or a fighting mood. It became the custom for a knight wishing to make a gesture of friendliness to remove his helmet while still at a distance, and if the other did the same the two would approach, each at the mercy of the other. Removing the helmet was no easy task and a common and recognised shortcut was to raise only the vizor, thereby leaving at least a part of one's head vulnerable. Even this became a tiresome routine and it became sufficient to raise one's right hand (the left held the shield) showing the flat of the palm, indicating no weapon was concealed therein. This same type of salute has been in use for centuries as a signal of peace among native tribes in many parts of the world. Rules of conduct, particularly for knights, the gentlemen of the court, were strict and it is doubtful if there were many cases of unfair advantage being taken.

An integral part of saluting while passing is the 'eyes right' or 'eyes left'. In feudal times, serfs and slaves were not permitted to look at their master; they were required to stand aside with bare heads bowed, or even to crawl past in the mud and slime of the road-side ditch. The soldiers employed by the lord of the manor enjoyed the privilege of looking their master straight in the eye, and raised their hats or helmets as a mark of respect.

Until about 1800, the normal type of salute was the raising of the cap, originating with the removal of the steel helmet. Merely touching the cap became a recognized alternative. Admiralty regulations of 1882 defined the salute as removing the cap, or at least touching the brim between the index finger and thumb. This is a clear indication of the origin of the naval type of salute, though other more interesting reasons have been offered. One of these is that in the year 1890, Queen Victoria, renowned for her primness and femininity, while inspecting a body of her sailors, turned out in their best uniforms, was horrified at the sight of their tar-stained hands, and ordered that in future the naval salute was to be with the offending palms turned down.

Officers were permitted to salute with the left hand if

the right were engaged, but this privilege was withdrawn in 1923 to standardize the salute.

An old type of salute, removing the cap, is still used in the navy on some occasions: the reading of prayers at divisions, reading of the National Defence Act or the Articles of War (to show respect for the statutes of the nation), for a captain's, or senior officer's, inspection, and for defaulters. A fine custom, now obsolete, was for a signalman, before hoisting or lowering the colors, to lay his cap on the deck. 'Doffing one's bonnet' is generally recognized as a mark of shame, though not intended as such, rather than to show respect for the Commander or the law one has contravened; it has been said that some men remove their caps as infrequently as possible because the act reminds them too much of their appearance as defaulters!

The first movement in saluting with the sword, known as the recover, is said to have religious significance dating from the Crusades (1095-- 1271 A.D.). The sword in earlier forms was in the shape of a cross, and the position of the recover closely resembles the Crusader's act of kissing the cross of his sword before going into battle. It may also have some connection with the oriental custom of shielding the eyes from a superior. The position of the salute itself is a modification of the former practice of thrusting the point of the sword into the ground, from which position it would be more than difficult to strike suddenly at one's opponent. The same principle is true of either the butt salute with a rifle or the present arms.

Our custom of saluting the quarterdeck originates at least in part from the deference shown the pagan idols and shrines to the gods placed there. Also, for centuries, the quarterdeck has been regarded as the seat of authority, though it is saluted even by the captain. Surely the simplest reason is that in harbor and in fair weather at sea, the colors are flown from the quarterdeck. In the United States Navy, officers and men coming onboard face aft and salute their ensign whereas we appear to salute the ship. In harbor, some men salute as they step over the brow to go ashore. An officer does so only to return the courtesy salutes of the officer-of-the-watch and the gangway staff; it is incorrect for men to do likewise.

The principle mentioned of putting oneself at the mercy of a possible adversary as a gesture of intended friendship may also be seen in forms of salutes by armed vessels. When the ship that was to windward had the advantage of speed and position the act of letting-fly her sheets was clearly one of friendly intentions. We employ the same principle in sailing craft, in pulling boats by resting on the oars or tossing oars, and in powerboats by cutting the engine or shifting to neutral. After 1201 A.D., the customary salute by a merchant vessel to a man-of-war was to strike a topsail. Even before steam replaced sail, the practice of dipping the ensign in lieu of a topsail had been introduced. The Second Dutch War started because of repeated failure of Dutch ships to salute British war vessels as agreed in 1673. There are now no written regulations regarding such salutes, even by British and Commonwealth merchant vessels, but flagrant or repeated occurrences of failure to conform with the usual courtesy are to be reported to Naval Headquarters. The Admiralty order regarding salutes by foreign vessels was withdrawn in 1808.

A warship, before entering a foreign port, to signify her friendly intent, would fire all her guns singly, thus leaving the ship temporarily unarmed because of the time required to reload. Usually the charges were blank, but even if shotted, no damage would result since all guns were fired

on the beam outside the port. There is an order that no warship may fire a salute in the Thames River above Gravesend because in the 16th century a ship accidentally fired shotted rounds which caused minor damage to Greenwich Palace in which Queen Elizabeth I was living.

When two warships met each would steer toward the other, firing all guns singly on the beam. Later the practice developed of firing personal gun salutes, a certain number of guns depending on the rank or status of the personage saluted. In the British and American navies, a salute of twenty-one guns -- the royal or national salute -- is the maximum; there is no maximum established internationally. You will perhaps wonder why we always fire an odd number of guns in our salutes. Although nearly all ships of the line and even numbers of guns the reason probably is that odd numbers (thirteen now excepted) have been considered lucky for many centuries. The Roman poet, Virgil, writing about 70 B.C., makes mention of this superstition.

A special gun salute, the firing of a single gun known as the 'Rogue's Salute', is fired at colors on the day a court martial convenes. Formerly this was a signal to the fleet for all hands to muster on deck to witness yardarm execution. A yellow flag was flown in the ship to be watched until execution was carried out; when hauled down, hands could disperse.

Piping the side is a purely nautical honor which originated in the method of arrival onboard of visiting captains, frequently portly gentlemen, who were hoisted onboard while the boatswain passed orders to the men with his boatswain's call. Although the officer-of-the-watch now says, "Pipe" to the side party, the order used to be "Hoist him in". The call itself dates from the era of the Greek and Roman galleys when the stroke of the oars was called with a whistle. It was then and has been ever since both a "whistle of honor" and a "whistle of command". Mention is made that in 1248, during the Crusades, the call was used for passing orders. In 1645, it was carried only by masters, boatswains and coxwains; now it is the badge of office of the quartermasters and boatswain's mates who may wear a boatswain's call and silver chain instead of a lanyard.

The call itself used to be blown three times for a salute. For some reason, this was reduced to two, once as the boat draws alongside, and again as the officer mounts the ladder and steps inboard; the procedure is reversed at his departure. When coming onboard or leaving by brow the side is only piped once.

Members of royalty, their personal representatives, and senior officers of military services are accorded musical salutes, if entitled by regulations. In the original form this type of salute consisted of a number of ruffles on drums -- three for an admiral, two for a vice admiral, and one for a rear admiral. Recently, the traditional British musical salutes were replaced in the RCN by others of distinctive Canadian music.

Another form of salute which originates in the showing of friendly intent is that of manning ship. All hands appeared on deck or aloft and grasped the rigging -- now only the guardrails; this showed that guns were not manned and no small-arms were carried.

CHAPTER 6 - LAWS OF THE SEA AND PUNISHMENTS

"...the law relating to the Government of the Navy, whereon, under the good Providence of God, the wealth, safety and strength of the Kingdom chiefly depend...."

---Preamble to the Naval Discipline Act of 1866.

All forms of society require rules governing conduct of the members, and this is especially true within the narrow confines of a ship at sea, which its very nature is separate and to some extent independent of other authority. Laws governing the relationship of man to man in service at sea had to be formulated or established by custom, and forms of retribution were necessary in order to enforce these laws. There is, therefore, a very close relationship between laws and punishments, and we must think of both in considering the broad term discipline.

The first written laws of the sea, from which the Naval Discipline Act (governing U.K. and Dominion forces) and the National Defence Act of Canada result, were recorded in the 13th century -- the Laws of Oleron, named for William de Forz of Oleron who commanded a part of the Spanish fleet taking part in the Crusades. Richard I, in sailing his fleet to the Holyland, learned of the Laws of Oleron from the Spanish, and caused them to be written. It has been suggested that these laws originated in the Republic of Rhodes, and had been adopted by Rome and other Mediterranean states.

A development from these laws in the 14th century was the Admiralty Black Book, in which was recorded all law relating to seafaring under the British flag. The Articles of War, a purely naval code of discipline, stem from this source. These were first written in 1661 in the reign of Charles II. The punishments listed were brutal but the principle was remained to present times: "For the good of all, and to prevent unrest and confusion".

The King's Rules and Admiralty Instructions (K.R. & A.I.) (now C.R. & A.I.), which made their first appearance in 1731, contain general regulations, including discipline, governing the naval service. In the R.C.N., similar regulations are embodied in the Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Royal Canadian Navy; short title: QRCN.

The Laws of Oleron

"Know all men that We, with the aid of upright counsels, have laid down these ordinances:

"Whoever shall commit murder aboard ship shall be tied to the corpse and thrown into the sea.

"If a murder be committed on land, the murderer shall be tied to the corpse and buried alive.

"If any man be convicted of drawing a knife for the purpose of stabbing another, or shall have stabbed another so that blood shall flow, he shall lose a hand.

"If a man strike another with his hand, she shall be ducked three times into the sea.

"If any man defame, villify, or swear at his fellow, he shall pay him as many ounces of silver as times he has reviled him.

"If a robber be convicted of theft, boiling pitch shall be poured over his head and a shower of feathers be shaken over to mark him, and he shall be cast ashore at the first land at which the Fleet shall touch."

That these laws were for the good of all is shown by the

fact that the opinion of the crew was required in particular circumstances:

"If a ship is in Haven and stays to await her time, and the time comes for departure, the Master is to take counsel with his companions and say to them - "Sirs, you have this weather." There will be some who will say, "The weather is not good" and some who say the weather is "fine and good". The Master is bound to agree with the greater part of his companions, and if he does otherwise, he is bound to replace the ship and the goods if they are lost, and this is the judgement in this case".

Under the laws of Oleron, the master and crew of a ship which was stranded through negligence of her pilot were authorized, without fear of retribution, to behead the pilot. This seems harsh, but one should realize that pilots were not above working in league with salvagers and wreckers ashore.

These laws further stated that 'all other faults committed at sea shall be punished according to the customs used at sea'.

The punishment listed in the Admiralty Black Book for sleeping on watch, a very serious offence because it endangered the ship, was at first humiliating and for repeated offences brutal. A bucket of sea-water was poured over the head of a first offender. A second time the offender's hands were tied over his head and a bucket of water was poured down each sleeve. For a third offence, the man was tied to the mast with heavy gun chambers secured to his arms, and the captain could order as much additional pain to be inflicted as he wished. The fourth offence was inevitably fatal; the offender was slung in a covered basket hung below the bowsprit. Within this prison he had a loaf of bread, a mug of ale and a sharp knife. An armed sentry ensured that he did not return aboard if he managed to escape from the basket. Two alternatives remained -- starve to death or cut himself adrift to drown in the sea.

The expression Captain's Cloak refers only symbolically to a voluminous garment. It implies that any act could be considered an offence to "the prejudice of good order and discipline". The last paragraph of the quotation from the Laws of Oleron and Section 118 of the National Defence Act are both in this category.

A punishment which was particularly harsh and usually fatal was keel-hauling, awarded for serious offences, and discontinued in the Royal Navy about 1720. It was still practised in the Dutch and French navies until 1750.

A stout line was rove through a block on the lower yard-arm on each side of the ship. One end was secured under the arms and around the chest of the offender whose wrists were secured behind his back. From the other yard, the line went under the ship, as a bottom line, and was secured around the man's ankles. On the word of the captain, the boatswain ordered the man hoisted off the deck and clear of the bulwarks; slack was taken down on the bottom line, as as it was hauled in the line around the man's chest was slacked away. In this way, he was hauled under the ship, and came up on the other side, feet first. With both lines taut, the man was slung in such a way that his stomach, chest and face were dragged across the barnacles on the keel, and in addition he was at least partially drowned.

An incidental feature of this cruel punishment is that the longer the ship was out of port after docking, the less was a man's chance of living through the ordeal of being keel-hauled. As if this treatment were not enough, it was the practice to fire a gun, usually unshotted, above the man as he was hauled up out of the sea, "in order to astonish

and confound him". Perhaps this is the true origin of the Rogue's Salute previously mentioned.

Execution by hanging at the yardarm was the normal punishment for mutiny in the fleet. The last execution was carried out in 1860 (during the second Chinese War) on a marine who attempted to murder his captain. Yardarm execution as carried out in the navy is well described by Nordoff and Hall in Mutiny on the Bounty. As a capital punishment it was by no means instantaneous as is said to be the case with our modern Canadian practice. The prisoner's hands and feet were tied, and with the noose about his neck, a dozen or so men, usually boats' bowmen (the worst scoundrels in the ship) manned the whip and hoisted him to the block of an upper yard, to die there by slow strangulation.

The most common type of punishment, inflicted for almost any crime at the discretion of the captain, was flogging with a cat-o-nine-tails. This was carried out "according to the customs of the service", namely at the gangway. At the time of Trafalgar, a man who was to be flogged was given twenty-four hours in which to hame his own cat. He was kept in leg-irons on the upper deck while awaiting his punishment. When the cat was made the boatswain cut out all but the best nine tails. If the task was not completed in time the punishment was increased.

With heads uncovered to show respect for the law, the ship's company heard read the Article of War the offender had contravened. The prisoner was then brought forward, asked if he had anything to say in mitigation of punishment, then removed his shirt and had his hands secured to the rigging or a grating above his head. At the order "Boatswain mate, do your duty" a sturdy seaman stepped forward with the cat -- a short rope or wooden handle, often red in color, to which was attached nine waxed cords of equal length, each with a small knot in the end. With this the man was lashed on the bare back with a full sweep of the arm. After each dozen lashes, a fresh boatswain's mate stepped forward to continue the punishment. Each blow of the cat tore back the skin and subsequent cuts bit right into the flesh so that after several dozen lashes had been inflicted the man's back resembled raw meat. After each stroke, the cords were drawn through the boatswain's mate's fingers to remove the clotting blood. Left-handed boatswain's mates were especially popular with sadistic captains because they would cross the cuts and so mangle the flesh even more.

After the man was cut down he was taken to the sick berth, there to have salt rubbed into his wounds. This was done not so much to increase the pain as for its antiseptic qualities.

(A sealed pattern of a cat-o-nine-tails may be seen in the Canadian Maritime Museum, Halifax, Nova Scotia)

At one time men were literally flogged to death with a hundred lashes or more. The figure three-hundred has been mentioned in history, and in the time of Czar Nicholas II, a common punishment in Russia was one-thousand lashes; Peter the Great had limited the number in the Russian army to two thousand. As late as the early 17th century a thousand lashes was a punishment for mutiny and other serious offences in the British forces; this was more prolonged than hanging but just as fatal.

From 1750 into the 19th century, twelve lashes were the maximum authorized for any one offence. The famous admirals Jervis (Lord St. Vincent) and Collingwood rarely exceeded this maximum except in the case of a double offence. It is recorded that they punished fewer men than captains who awarded more than the maximum. Nelson usually sentenced men

to less than a dozen lashes, occasionally as many as eighteen, and rarely twenty-four. In ships of the line, with companies of up to 550 men, the more merciful captains punished about sixteen men a year, while some others punished over fifty. Not taken into account in the records were unofficial punishments, which were quite prevalent, and which will be mentioned later in this chapter.

Until the end of the 18th century the punishment for theft, a hateful crime against one man or many in a ship at sea, was for the thief to run the gauntlet (or gantlope). The offender first received a dozen lashes in the normal manner with a thieves' cat, with knots throughout the length of the cords, and while still stripped to the waist passed through two lines of all the ship's company, to be flogged with short lengths of rope. Lest he move too fast to benefit fully from this ordeal, the master-at-arms marched backwards a pace ahead of him with the point of his outlass against the thief's chest. And to prevent him stopping, a ship's corporal followed him in similar manner. On completion of the course, the thief was given a further dozen lashes.

The usual punishment up to 1735 for attempting to escape or for striking an officer was flogging around the fleet. The offender was secured to an upright timber in a ship's boat, and when it pulled alongside each gangway, a boatswain's mate entered the boat and inflicted a certain number of lashes. For added effect, the boat was accompanied on its rounds of the fleet by other boats, each with a drummer in the bows beating a roll on his drum.

Flogging was abolished in the British forces by the Army Act of 1861, in response to strong public opinion. It was said that flogging "made a bad man worse, and broke a good man's heart".

In the mutinies of 1797-8, Lord St. Vincent (Admiral John Jervis) hanged twelve men. Other fleets and squadrons, after twenty mutinous uprisings had fifty-five executions and many floggings about the fleet; St. Vincent, we are told, intensely disliked the latter punishment.

Until suppressed in 1811, it was a common practice for boatswain's mates to carry and use on their men colts or starters, small whips somewhat like knouts or knotted ropes, which they carried concealed in their hats. The boatswain's mark of authority was the bamboo cane or rattan he always carried, and with which he summarily executed punishment. A punishment awarded by messdeck court martial for cooks who spoiled a meal was to be cobbed and firked, that is beaten with stockings full of sand or bung stays of a cask. This practice was unofficially disallowed after 1811.

Other forms of punishment, in an attempt to make a punishment fit each crime, were usually harsh and often ingenious. In the 19th century, it was ordered that "cruel and unusual punishments are to be avoided". Before that time, in addition to the various punishments mentioned in detail, the following were commonly practised; ducking from the yardarm -- a more dramatic variation of washing in cold brine; the bilboes -- stocks to which painful pressure was applied; and hanging by the arms in the rigging. Discontinued in the 17th century were gagging and scrapping of the tongue for swearing or blasphemy; or boring the tongue with a red-hot iron, presumably for repeated or aggravated offences. Cell punishment was instituted in 1847, and a few years later came the first numbered set of minor punishments. A form of corporal punishment, i.e., "birching or caning on the bare breech" (K.R. & A.I.), remained until recent years as a punishment for boys. Birching was suspended in the service in 1906, but caning is still

administered occasionally in the Royal Navy as a punishment for boys, cadets, and midshipmen.

The term court martial probably dates from the early 14th century, from Edward III's Court of Chivalry. Due to shortages of men, courts martial, in the 17th century, in ordering the punishment of execution, would not only specify that only one or more of group were to die and leave the victims to cast lots or throw dice, but often used to determine which would die although all might be equally guilty.

CHAPTER 7 - MORE CUSTOMS

One of the oldest customs still practised is that relating to the launching of a new ship. The oldest reference to this custom is of an Assyrian tablet, believed to have been carved about 2100 B.C., on which the inscription tells of the building of Noah's Ark, and of the launching that a yoke of oxen was sacrificed. In similar manner the Fiji Islanders and the Samoans made human sacrifice to the sharks, which to them were gods, and washed down their new canoes in the victims' blood. Viking legends tell of young men being crushed in sacrifice under the keels of ships being launched.

A later development, probably about the 14th century, was the custom of toasting the new vessel from silver wine goblets. The goblets were thrown into the sea to prevent further toasts, possibly of bad omen, being drunk. For reasons of economy, a wine bottle was substituted in 1690. It was usual for a prince or other male member of royalty to smash the bottle against the bow, but after 1811, the honor was given to prominent ladies. A free swing was traditional until a spectator was injured and sued the Admiralty, and from that time a lanyard has been secured to the bottle. This is not always the case, at least on this continent; Mrs. Eisenhower, launching the world's first atomic-powered submarine, USS NAUTILUS at Groton, Conn., in January, 1954, used a champagne bottle without a lanyard. Some Canadian shipyards use a form of mechanical cradle containing a champagne bottle.

The custom is partly religious and partly pagan in origin, and it is by no means correct to assume that champagne is the only liquid used; it is currently in fashion, but in the past all alcoholic beverages have been employed, and even pure water has made the occasional appearance, especially in Moslem countries. It is still very much in the nature of a sacrifice to smash a bottle of good liquor or wine.

By act of Parliament in 1760, the cost of pay and victuals of one able seaman per hundred borne was set aside for the relief of poor officers' widows. These imaginary men were known as widows' men. This odd form of charity was abolished in 1823.

The most well-known version of the "call the hands" jingle is this one:

"Out or down there! Out or down there!
All hands rouse out, rouse out, rouse out,
Lash and carry, lash and carry,
Show a leg or else a purser's stocking.
Rouse and shine, rouse and shine.
Lash up and stow, lash up and stow,
It's to-morrow morning and the sun's a-scorching your
(bleeding) eyes out"

To this, a brief weather report was often added so that the men would know how warmly to dress. The question may well be raised why we now pipe the dress of the day with breakfast rather than when the hands are called. Wakey, wakey, is probably

To this a brief weather report was often added so that the men would know how warmly to dress. The question may well be raised why we now pipe the dress of the day with breakfast rather than when the hands are called. Wakey, wakey is probably only a corruption of "awake ye, awake ye". The mention of a purser's stocking refers to the days in harbour when women were allowed on board, and the privilege of lying-in was accorded married couples. From this same practice we have the expression fitting double clews on a hammock, meaning to get married.

The paying-off pendant dates from the 19th century when cleaning rags in a ship decommissioning were knotted together and hoisted as a sign that they would no longer be used. For uniformity (?) the practice is for the pendant to be the length of the ship if she paid off on the proper date, with the addition of 1/24th of the length for each additional month. Some sources say 1/12th, but as foreign commissions in the R.N. until recently have been reckoned as being of two years' duration 1/24th may be correct. Still another version holds the custom more simply as one foot for each month in commission.

At an officer's court martial his sword is used to signify the court's finding - guilty if pointed toward, not guilty if turned away. A similar practice has been carried out in Britain for many centuries; in procession from the court the executioner carried the headsman's axe with the blade toward or away from the prisoner, and for hanging the prisoner's hands were tied or left free.

It has long been the rule that prizes captured in action are the property of the Crown. But King John in 1205 gave a part of the value of each prize to the crews concerned, obviously as an incentive to clear the seas of foreign raiders and privateers, and to improve the meagre pay. During World War I for the first time prize monies were shared throughout the whole navy, and in World War II air force squadrons employed on coastal command duties were included. It is felt by some that the Canadian Government broke with tradition without adequate cause in donating their prize money to the R.C.N. Benevolent Fund; considering the numbers of servicemen involved and the amount itself it would have been impracticable to have done otherwise.

From the 17th to 19th centuries a British fleet consisted of three squadrons, and ships of each wore in the maintop an ensign of a different colour to distinguish them in battle. The squadron commanded by the admiral-in-chief wore red, the vice-admiral's blue, and the rear-admiral's white; the admirals often took the title Admiral of the Red, etc. In 1665 the order of seniority was changed to red, white, and blue. Nelson at Trafalgar ordered all ships to hoist white ensigns. Two reasons might be offered for his actions: first to confuse the enemy who for centuries had been accustomed to the British tactic of having three squadrons so readily identified, and secondly to avoid confusing the red ensign with the Spanish -- red with yellow -- as might be possible at a distance.

The flag officer wore in the foretop a distinguishing flag of the colour of his squadron defaced to show his rank. The flags flown to-day by flag officers are those worn in the fleet commanded by the Admiral of the White.

By order-in-council in 1864 the three-squadron policy was abolished; the white ensign was assigned to the navy as Nelson had wished, the blue to government vessels and those commanded and partly manned by naval reservists, and red to vessels of the merchant fleet. The blue ensign is now assigned also by special warrants to the owners of registered yachts belonging to certain yacht squadrons.

The first recorded instance of the use of a British flag or ensign at sea was in 1297 when Edward I ordered his ships sailing forth against France to wear the British standard. The word jack is said to result from the signature Jacques of King James I in which reign (1603 - 1625) the Union Jack was designed.

Obviously the practice, which is still required by Q.R.C.N. article 62.41(3), of wearing two or more large ensigns in action is to prevent an enemy from assuming a ship has struck her colours in surrender when in fact the ensign has been shot away. Ensigns also aid in identification. It is said that Admiral Sir Richard Grenville (1541 - 1591) signalled in action that his ensigns would never be struck or disappear even if his flagship were sunk. This crafty officer, immortalized in Tennyson's poem "The Revenge", assured himself of that by keeping his ship in shallow water! Similarly a flag officer's flag is kept flying even if he is killed or rendered incapable of continuing in command (Q.R.C.N. article 62.21).

The custom of half-masting colours during a funeral or period of mourning dates from earliest times. We read in the Old Testament of men putting on sackcloth and ashes to appear downcast and slovenly. In the 17th century ships gandalized their yards and allowed their sails to hang in slovenly fashion. For this reason we abhor the careless practice of failing to keep an ensign or jack close-up or of permitting it to foul its staff. When we actually are in mourning we carry out the gesture of half-masting our colours.

Lord St. Vincent was responsible for instituting a guard and band for colours in 1797, after the Nore Mutinies. At first the guard and band were paraded at sunrise, but as the time varies daily the routine was established in 1844 as 0800 in summer (and the tropics) and 0900 in winter.

A ship's commissioning or masthead pendant is said to have originated from Blake's Whip, in commemoration of his driving the Dutch from the seas in 1653. Though it is not doubted that Blake hoisted a whip to his masthead on that occasion, the masthead pendant originated much earlier, probably in the 14th century when ensigns and pendants were first authorized in the Royal Navy. Blake had done this in defiance of the Dutch Admiral Tromp who had the previous year hoisted a broom to his masthead, signifying that he had swept the British from the seas. Nowadays a broom hoisted in a merchant ship indicates change of ownership, i.e. "a new broom sweeps clean", while in the navy it is used more as Tromp did, as a sign of victory over other ships of a flotilla in all events of general drills or a regatta.

Evening quarters was the taking up of stations in preparation for night action, and came to mean merely the formal end of the day's work.

In port is used to be the practice to fire a morning gun at sunrise and an evening gun at sunset or 2100. At the time of firing the evening gun sentries were to discharge their muskets in a volley to show that their powder was dry and the muskets were in good working order. This practice is seen now only as part of the ceremony of Beating the Retreat and Sunset. The retreat is actually an army custom. In the garrison towns in England it was the custom, and very colourful it must have been, for the drum major to muster his drummers after sunset and parade into the town. The marching manoeuvres of the drummers are symbolic of the parade through the narrow twisting streets of an English town in search for their soldiers. On completing the rounds a bugler would sound the first post and the soldiers were expected to follow the parade back to their barracks. Shortly after the drummers returned the bugler sounded the last post and the garrison gates were closed for the night. Undoubtedly the same ceremony took place nightly in Canada when the gates of the forts were closed against attack by Indians. The two parts of the original ceremony are now reversed, probably only to build up to the climax of the stirring sunset ceremony.

The Blue Peter, the flag "P" of the international code -- a blue flag pierced with a rectangular white centre, is the universal signal for a ship about to sail, though no longer used in the navy in that sense. The term is believed to be a corruption of the French partir - to leave, and the complete expression is attributed to Admiral Cornwallis who used

to hoist the Blue Peter on anchoring to indicate that his fleet would sail again very shortly and no leave would be granted. For his pains he was nicknamed 'Billy Blue' by his sailors who failed to appreciate his keenness for action.

Until very recently victuals and provisions in warships were not only of poor quality but were low in quantity. Fresh food was used as long as it lasted and was restocked whenever possible, but by and large dried provisions such as salt pork and beef and dried fish had to be used. An interesting feature of Nelson's flagship VICTORY, now preserved in a graving dock in Portsmouth dockyard, is the manger, right forward on the lower gundeck, in which were kept several pigs and sheep plus a flock of chickens. Despite the obvious undesirability of having this livestock in an already over-crowded messdeck their presence meant the occasional morsel of fresh meat. Just a few feet abaft the manger is the galley, such as it is -- a combined barbecue, oven and boiler for vegetables. The latter were cooked in salt water and the steam was cooled in a copper condenser fitted on top of the boiler. This yielded about a gallon of distilled water per day on which the surgeon had first call for mixing his medicines.

If provisions were lacking liquor certainly was not. Fresh water, even in casks, would not keep for long and in an early century wine or beer was substituted. The usual ration was a gallon per day per man. Sir Martin Frobisher (1535 - 1594) of North-West Passage fame, is quoted as saying "We'll sail as long as the beer lasts". As there was nothing else to drink except rain-water or melted snow the remark seems an obvious one.

Shortage of stowage space, a problem even in modern warships, caused the introduction of rum in the 18th century. This was issued twice a day, at lunch and at supper; the daily ration was a pint for a man and half a pint for a boy. In 1824 when the use of tea became common in the navy the suppertime ration was cancelled.

Admiral Vernon in 1740, while commander-in-chief of the West Indies squadron, ordered his captains and surgeons to make recommendations regarding the rum issue. The result was the addition of two parts of water to one part of rum. This mixture is called grog after the nickname of the admiral, 'Old Grog', in deference to his cloak of program material. In 1850 the ration was reduced again to the present half-gill.

Brandy was in use from 1650 to 1687, to be replaced by rum after the capture of Jamaica. It seems possible that rum may give way to beer if the stowage problem can be solved; it is already an authorized issue for R.C.N. ships when operating in the tropics. At the time of writing (1955) the R.N. is studying recent experiments at producing a dehydrated beer for use in ships. Expense of dehydration seems to be the chief disadvantage of this method.

The inscription in brass letters on the grog tub "The Queen, God Bless Her" originates from the custom, regrettably no longer observed, of toasting the sovereign with the first sip of a tot. When all hands had worked in repairing the mainbrace, the heaviest piece of rigging in the ship -- an evolution not often carried out -- it was usual to issue an extra tot of rum. Thus developed the custom of Splice the Mainbrace.

The custom of using a ship's bell to mark the passage of time probably dates from the 13th century when it was used in conjunction with a half-hour glass; a bell was sounded each time the glass was turned and the number of bells was progressive throughout a watch. These glasses did not disappear from the navy until 1857. Of course bells were not sounded between pipe down and call the hands, hence the expression silent hours. Warming the bell at one time meant to strike it before the correct time, but now it means to do anything early.

Prior to 1797 bells were sounded normally, one to eight, throughout the dog watches; it is said that the signal for the Nore Mutiny to

commence on the 13th of May of that year was to be "five bells in the dog watches", i.e. 1830, but that an officer who heard of this intention had only one bell sounded. It is a matter of historic fact that his action had no effect on the commencement of the mutiny; however the custom remains.

The seaman's practice of wearing earrings probably comes from an ancient eastern custom of wearing amulets as charms and insignia of rank. More recently they appear to date from the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558 - 1603), not so much in loyalty to the queen as to satisfy a fisherman's old superstition that pierced ears would improve their eyesight and make them more lively. The latter notion possibly has its origin in the old practice of biting the ear of a fallen prize-fighter to bring him to consciousness. The occasional earring, of plain yellow gold, is still seen in the navy, worn usually on the left ear lobe only.

Beards have long been popular with seamen as a sign of manhood. The ancient Hebrews, and also Greeks and Romans, associated beards with wisdom. In some navies moustaches alone are permitted. Beards are nowadays officially discouraged for reasons of self-preservation in modern naval warfare.

Tattooing of seamen began among Roman Catholic sailors, usually in the form of a crucifix, as a means of identification for their bodies so they would be assured of the sacred rites and burial. The idea was taken from the natives of some regions of the South Pacific. Nowadays tattooing parlours abound in all seaport towns. One particular design which is considered a charm is that of a pig; it used to be on the foot but now normally appears just above the kneecap. Among Orientals and seamen the principal idea of tattooing now seems to be decoration.

Burial at sea, a simple yet most impressive and dignified ceremony, is the most natural means of disposing of a body from a ship at sea. It is still the custom to sew the body into a hammock or other piece of canvas with heavy weights, formerly several cannonballs, at the feet to compensate the tendency of a partly decomposed body (as would be the case in the tropics) to float. To satisfy superstition, or to ensure that the body is actually dead, the last stitch of the sailmaker's needle is through the nose.

As late as 1866 the normal launching method for the whitehead torpedo was by underwater discharge. The first above-water discharge was carried out in the torpedo trials ship ACTEON about 1880 by tilting a mess table toward an open gun port — an idea obviously taken from the method of burial at sea.

A funeral on shore with full naval honours means a procession commanded by a lieutenant, a band with drums muffled in black cloth, the body borne on a field-gun carriage and limber manned by thirty-two men on drag ropes, a funeral firing party of at least twelve men, a mourning party of relatives, shipmates and friends, and an escort of at least twenty men. The constitution of the parties is based on the rank of the deceased; the figures and ranks quoted are the minimum. In addition a guard is paraded for a deceased officer above the rank of lieutenant. The cocked hat and sword of a deceased senior officer are carried on top of the coffin on the gun carriage, and his decorations and medals are borne in the procession on a blue velvet cushion.

The whole procession slow-marches to the cemetery or ship's side where the funeral firing party opens out to form a lane; they turn inwards and rest on their arms reversed as the procession passes through the ranks. Over the grave, or after the body has been committed to the deep the funeral firing party fires three volleys of blank cartridges. In the case of a senior officer the same gun salute he was entitled to when living is fired in minute guns.

A naval funeral is without a doubt a most impressive and dignified ceremony. Ensigns of ships and establishments in the port area

are of course half-masted during a funeral.

It is the custom of the service for the coxswain or master-at-arms to auction a deceased man's kit to his shipmates, all proceeds being applied to the man's estate. Many articles sell for several times their original cost, only to be returned to the auctioneer for resale.

An interesting naval practice, indulged in chiefly by senior and commanding officers, is that of using biblical references for signalling and message purposes. A few examples will serve to illustrate: to compliment a ship on her gunnery prowess another might signal, "Exodus 15 verse 8" — "And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea". Or, in flattery to the senior officer of a formation: "Exodus 25 Verse 39" — "Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels". For a promotion to lieutenant; "Exodus 37 verse 3" — "And he cast for it four rings of gold, to be set by the four corners of it; even two rings upon the one side of it, and two rings upon the other side of it". Such use of references out of the context is not only quite permissible in this form of repartee but is indicative of imagination and skill. There is an indexed book available for reference; this of course makes the custom somewhat prosaic.

The saying of prayers in the navy and in ships at sea is very old indeed. In the 17th century hymns and psalms were sung on changing watches, and in the 17th and 18th centuries prayers were said before going into action. Naval regulations are still quite explicit about the responsibilities of the captain for holding divine service.

The practice of receiving officers at the gangway of a ship is very old and used to be attended by much pomp and ceremony. Some captains used to require that all officers be on deck to receive them no matter what hour of the day or night they returned.

Until quite recently the sailors' Christmas celebrations were in no way interfered with by the officers. This was wise as men and women were often killed in the festivities. Through the years these orgies reverted to innocuous pranks and colourful parading; part of this was the ancient Roman custom of exchanging clothes and duties, now followed in the R.C.N. in its present form, that of the captain and the youngest man onboard changing places for the day, and the officers serving Christmas dinner to the men.

Without a doubt the most entertaining of naval customs is that of the ceremony of Crossing the Line, a practice which had its origin in the pagan initiation rites of the Vikings. The next recorded instance, somewhat obscure in detail, is that a variation of these rites was performed by ships' companies on crossing the 36th parallel of north latitude and entering the Straits of Gibraltar. Some centuries later the ceremony became one for crossing the equator. A summary of the events of the present-day ceremony as practised aboard R.C.N. ships may be of interest.

The night before the ship is due to cross 'The Line' a quaint ceremony takes place on the forecastle in which the Bears, as agents of the Secretary of State of King Neptune's Watery Realm, board the ship, in theory via the hawsepipes; with a little ingenuity this can be very effectively staged with curtains of spray illuminated by coloured lights. The Bears should be received onboard by a member of the ship's company who has previously been granted the Freedom of the Seas, and by him conducted to the captain on the bridge, there to deliver a Royal Proclamation regarding the ship's entry into Neptune's Kingdom, and the holding of the Royal Court on the morrow to initiate all Novices into the Mystic Rites. The Bears may then make their exit by the way they came.

For the next day, that on which the ship crosses the equator, a canvas bath of suitable size should be rigged, and above one side of the bath rig a ducking stool and thrones for the King and Queen Amphitrite.

To commence the ceremony the Royal Bugler sounds Clear the lower deck and Officers' Call to the vicinity of the bath -- dress of the day; bathing trunks -- and then the Royal Procession makes their Stately Progress from the Royal Robing Room to the Royal Bath. This is always a high point in the ceremony as the members of the Court will have gone to considerable pains concerning their costumes and appearance. Extreme latitude in this matter is customary, though it is usual for the king to have a bushy grey or black beard, a crown of course, and a trident.

The actual ceremony will usually commence with the investiture of some such decoration to the captain as The Insignia of the Most Exalted Order of the Old Sea Dog; for the executive officer and such other shipboard personalities as have already crossed the line the Equatorial Star or the Equinoctial Cross might be in order. Engineers' workshops often will produce suitable decorations.

At this point, in regal and flowery language, His Majesty King Neptune I (By the Grace of Mythology Lord of the Waters, Sovereign of all Oceans, Governor and Lord High Admiral of the Bath, to give him his traditional titles) will address the Novices as to their impending fate, warning them that none shall be overlooked, and that all "shall be initiated into the Mystic Rites of the Freedom of the Seas, according to the Ancient Customs of Our Watery Kingdom".

The Judge's Clerk will then call each candidate in order, to be presented by the Judge to Their Aquatic Majesties, and to be examined and prepared for the Rites of Initiation by the King's Most Eminent Physician (note: formal medical training is NO qualification for holding this appointment in the Royal Court). The treatment normally consists of an enormous pill concocted in the chief petty officers' mess with the willing co-operation of the galley and sick bay staffs. About all that can be said about the pill is that it will not be toxic but almost certainly laxative. As if this were not enough a tonic, similarly of doubtful content, will be administered by the Doctor's Assistant; a large galley syringe, as used for icing cakes, proves most effective for this purpose. The Doctor may also use a wooden mallet to sound the back, chest, and probably head of the victim who is then certified fit for the ordeal and is passed on to the Royal Barber and his nefarious Assistant. These will lather his face, and probably more, and then shave him with a large wooden straight razor. During this he will be pushed over backwards into the canvas bath, there to be ducked several times by the Bears.

From time to time, should the Secret Police report that some Novices are in hiding, the King may interrupt the proceedings to make public announcement of the offence and order his Police to arrest the offenders and bring them before Him.

When the greenhorns have all been dealt with according to custom it is usual for the shellbacks to apply to re-qualify, following which formalities are relaxed and the whole Court will probably take a plunge into the bath. It is needless to say that the ceremony is one of great amusement and much good-natured skylarking. We normally commemorate the occasion by awarding a Crossing the Line certificate specially produced for that ship and that cruise.

Chapter 8 - A FEW EXPRESSIONS

For ease of arrangement the expressions given in this chapter are listed alphabetically. In compiling such a chapter it is difficult to decide what to include and what to omit; these are considered to be the most common of naval expressions that require explanation.

Andrew Miller or The Andrew - either means the Royal Navy. The antecedent was a press-gang officer who was so efficient, ruthless and zealous in recruiting seamen that it was alleged he owned the navy.

Banyan party. Until about 1880 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays were meatless days. This practice probably resulted in part from the fasts of an eastern religious sect of ancient times, but more likely was carried out as a food conservation measure. It was of course prudent to save food from the day previous to a fast day. In times when food at sea became plentiful and wholesome banyan days were occasions of feasting. The term still relates to feasting in the sense of a picnic or beach party. Bloody is said to be a contraction of 'By Our Lady' (the Virgin Mary) but more than likely is just a seaman's colourful epithet having the same force and origin as flaming.

Bottle - equivalent to a blast. An abbreviation of a dose from the fore-topmen's bottle - supposedly a cure-all.

Bum-boat - the small craft used by local tradesmen in ports throughout the world. Probably the original term was boom-boat, i.e. permitted by the executive officer to secure to the ship's lower boom in order to conduct business. It has never been considered advisable to allow civilian tradesmen onboard.

Capstan drill. A former custom was for older hands to take the boys and young ordinary seamen to this form of drill, to deepen their high-pitched voices by jumping off the barrel of a capstan while keeping their legs straight.

Clear one's yardarm. In communications parlance this means no signals, i.e. flaghoists, remain unexecuted. In normal usage it suggests that more than reasonable steps have been taken to avoid embarrassing mistakes or omissions.

Cook of the walk - used in naval and civilian circles alike, though in the navy with the special connotation of winner, as in a regatta, sports meet, or combination of these events. The expression cook of the barracks is more commonly used in shore establishments. The winning ship hoists at her yardarm a large, brightly painted galvanized iron silhouette of a "male domestic fowl" (Oxford Dictionary). It is a common practice, if the winning ship has won every single event as well, to hoist a broom at her masthead commemorating a clean sweep of the seas in the manner of the Dutch admiral Tromp (see chapter 7).

Crushers - regulating petty officer, the descendants of the ships' corporals. Presumably the word refers to their alleged ability to detect rather than prevent offences.

Dead marine. In the R.C.N. we are not troubled with the animosity that appears to exist between the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines; the latter are variously known as the Royals, leathernecks, turkeys or pongos. A further example of the lack of friendship is the expression dead marine for an empty bottle. The R.N. seaman says that like an empty bottle a marine is of no use to anyone, and if dropped over the side in the position of attention would float upright because of the size of his boots. The marine's retort is that like an empty bottle he is always ready for duty again.

Dog watch. There are various ideas about this common term: a corruption of docked or dodge, or in reference to dog days of summer in the autumn, what we in Canada call Indian Summer. Scarcely worthy of mention is the punster's comment that it is a watch sur-tailed.

Dutch courage - the uninhibited courage shown by a man who has had one too many'. This refers to the old Dutch custom of issuing tots of schuipje before battle. The Dutch had every right to base similar sardonic remarks on the British rum issue.

Dutchman's pendant and Irish pendant. These two are included only to differentiate, as many seamen use them synonymously. While the former refers to a gash rope's end not secured in a seamanlike manner - a dig at the Dutch - the latter refers to the frays and tatters of burting

that develop in the fly of an ensign or flag that is exposed to strong winds for any length of time. The reference is to untidiness born of a carefree nature in the Irish.

Jack Nastyface. Not a name one is likely to find except in books on naval customs. It is said that this is the pen-name of a sailor who wrote about the service in the navy in the 18th century. Another writer believes that he fought at Trafalgar and that some of the writings on that battle can be attributed to him. In the R.N. the term is sometimes applied to the ship's assistant cook; ships' cooks have long been the butt of sailors' humour and this allusion probably has no more meaning than that.

Jaunty - master-at-arms. A corruption of the French gendarme - policeman, through the old R.N. term John Danne, to its present form.

Long ship - a mildly uncomplimentary term occasionally heard in wardrooms, reflecting on one's hospitality in failing to offer a guest a drink; he has to go a long way to find one. Or: a long time between drinks.

Make and mend. Before the times when uniforms were issued the men made their own. When hands could be spared from work about the ship the pipe was made "hands to make and mend clothes". Later it was the practice for two or three men, more expert tailors than their fellows, to obtain permission to form in partnership what was called a jewing firm, in the figurative sense of unscrupulous dealers. The expression make and mend to-day bears little relation to its original use. Now it means a half-holiday granted in harbour; at sea we have a pipe down instead. Makers is the usual slang abbreviation. We have come a long way from the original term with our sports makers.

Make it so; rarely heard nowadays except in large ships. When the communicator at the ensign staff reports "Eight o'clock, sir" (or nine o'clock in winter) it is customary for the Commander to reply "Make it so", whereupon the corporal of the gangway will sound the requisite number of bells. The ceremony of colours then follows.

Mess - a word that causes considerable doubt in many ships. Some cynics think it refers to the normal state of the messdecks. Actually it is the anglicised form of the Spanish word for table - mesa. Mass has the same derivation. Until the last century a seaman's mess was nothing more than a table; even benches were not provided until the 19th century. Naval nicknames: a practice somewhat unique in naval and military circles is that of associating certain nicknames with particular surnames. A few of the more common ones are Daisy Bell or Dinger Bell, Nobby Clark(e), Jimmy Green, Pincher Martin, Dusty Miller, Spud Murphy, Nosey Parker, Spike Sullivan, Buck Taylor, Knocker White, and Tug Wilson. Although the reason for some of these is obvious the origins of others are obscure.

Padre - affectionate slang term for a chaplain; it is the Spanish and Italian word for father.

Queen's hard bargain - originally a British army term, now rarely heard in that service or our own. It is customary in law to give consideration to make a contract legal and binding. So it was that the old-type recruiting officer used to give a new recruit a shilling on enrolment. To refer later to the same man as a Queen's hard bargain, because of laziness or incompetence, meant in effect that the sovereign had lost on the transaction.

Regatta - formerly pertained to gondola races on Venetian canals, now is any kind of boat race.

Room to swing a cat. Referring to the foul berth of a ship at anchor it means that there is no room to swing even a cat-o'-nine-tails. (The feline mammal has never been a favoured pet at sea, except in the merchant service; whenever a cat is mentioned in this or any book about the navy almost invariably the reference is to the instrument of punishment described in chapter 6.)

She and He (in reference to a ship). The weight of evidence seems to be in favour of calling a ship she though there are examples of the masculine being used: merchantman, non-o'-war. In the navy officers in particular are apt to call a naval vessel he because of the practice of referring to the commanding officer by the name of his ship. An example of this is the answer to a boat hail given by the coxswain of a boat carrying the captain of a ship, the name of his ship being shouted in reply.

In defence of she much could be written. First of all several of the parts of a ship, particularly of a sailing vessel and its rigging,

are the same as the parts of a woman's body or her ornaments. Also we speak of dressing ship. Before the era of steam propulsion a figure-head mounted on the stem of a ship was usually of a female. A few collected suggestions are that a ship, like a woman, is obstinate and perverse; requires much cleaning and polishing, is an object of affection, needs men to look after her but they in turn are looked after by her, and whenever she sinks she takes a lot of good men down with her!

Ship's people - ship's company. There is at least one commanding officer in the R.C.N. who requires that his commander, in calling the ship's company to attention at divisions, call them ship's people. A more usual custom is to call them by the name of the ship, e.g. ONTARIO'S. Probably because of the numerous lengthy Indian names for R.C.N. ships this latter custom is obsolescent in our own service. On the same subject, it is quite usual for a captain to refer to "my people", "my ship", "my boats", etc. These phrases no doubt brought about the jocular term for the captain, The Owner.

Sick berth, later sick bay, was introduced in the Mediterranean Fleet in 1798 by Lord St. Vincent. When he became First Sea Lord in 1801 he caused sick berths to be fitted in all ships. At that time these were usually below the forecastle. Now they are located amidships because there is less motion than either forward or aft.

Snotty - a midshipman. At the time when midshipmen joined their first ships as boys of twelve or thirteen, and often too poor to afford handkerchiefs, it is said that they would dry their tears of homesickness and wipe their noses on their sleeves, and to curtail this practice three large brass buttons were sewn on the cuff of each sleeve. It was after 1857 that this became the rank insignia for chief petty officers.

It is because of the youthful age at which midshipmen joined the navy that the officer appointed in charge of them has always been known as the Snotties' Nurse.

Son of a gun - an uncomplimentary expression dating from the times when women were allowed onboard and between decks. Reference has been made previously to the debauchery which took place in the gun-decks where the men lived.

South wind. The correct retort to "How's your glass?" might be "there's a south wind in it" meaning it is empty. A nor'wester is half spirit and half water, while a north wind is neat spirit - a bitter wind.

Spitkid. A kid is a small tub, usually of wood, or any small container. The naval expression "as handy as a cow in a spitkid" is adequately descriptive of clumsiness.

Stone frigate - a shore establishment. After the first Canadian naval college was partially destroyed in the Halifax explosion of 1917 it was moved to the Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario, into one of the barrack blocks renamed H.M.C.S. STONE FRIGATE. This was, of course, not the original use of the term.

Sun is over the foreyardarm - a phrase meaning it is late in the forenoon. The only time it is ever used nowadays is perhaps by a crusty old officer who thinks it is time to have the wardroom bar opened.

Swallow the anchor - a very old phrase meaning to retire from sea service. The idea seems to be that once swalled it is of no further use.

Talk a good day's work. Not often heard in the service but often applicable, and in any case self-explanatory.

Two hands for the Queen. The normal practice of a man aloft in a ship's rigging is to hold on with one hand and work with the other - "a hand for the navy and one for myself". A man completely dedicated to naval service is alleged to work with both hands at all times.

Very good is said by a senior, normally an officer, when a report is made by a junior. It seems to be obsolescent, especially among junior officers giving place to thank you or some such civilian phrase. Very good, sir, in lieu of Aye, aye, sir is not used in the navy although proper usage in the army and air force. Roger, sir is also, for the present, unacceptable.

Winger - an uncomplimentary term in its original sense, as a boy or young seaman befriended by an older man. In present usage winger is one's best friend.

Chapter 9 - WARDROOM CUSTOMS

Generally speaking the customs practiced by officers are those of polite civilian society, with modifications to suit naval circumstances plus other changes caused through historic development.

The name wardroom itself bears discussion. Before about 1700 each officer lived and messed in his own quarters, cramped as they were. The captain's cabin, on the other hand, was known as the Great Cabin. Under it was the wardrobe, a locker often used to stow articles of value taken from prizes. When not in use for that purpose the officers used it to hang their spare uniforms. It is first spoken of as being used as a general officers' mess about 1750, at which time it was of much greater size than a locker, and was renamed the wardroom.

Until the mid-19th century the gunroom was where the small-arms were stowed. Here the gunner lived, together with and in charge of the junior officers. Toward the end of that century it was thought advisable to have the warrant officers mess separately; it was as late as 1948 that warrant officers' messes were abolished.

Some customs, originally taken from society to make life at sea more tolerable, regrettably have disappeared from civilian life. Wardroom customs are not really the strange rituals of a secret fraternal organization, although the traditional practices of mess dinners might appear to contradict this statement to no small extent.

The firm rule about not calling anyone a liar in the mess is obvious and sensible -- it avoids trouble and bad feelings. Likewise, though with little present-day application, is the rule regarding not drawing swords in the mess -- to discourage duelling. In fact the rule usually observed is that one does not even wear a sword in a strange mess; to do so in your own is frowned upon.

It is customary for officers, and should be for men as well, to remove their caps before entering a mess other than their own; the custom applies equally to officers' messes and enclosed messes, and should be observed when passing through seamen's messdecks except on duty. This is the same as the practice ashore -- you do not wear a hat in someone else's home, and though you may wear it in your own home you would not normally do so.

All wardroom drinking is, or should be, social; solitary drinking is considered taboo. It is customary to buy drinks for other officers particularly one's friends, and then to toast the others with "cheers", contracted from the Englishman's "cheerio". Canadians have turned a bit more cosmopolitan and it is increasingly common to hear skol, bon sant', salud, or even, in ships returning from a Latin-American visit, a variation of salud y amor y pesetas -- health, love and money. In the R.N. it is a custom that foreign languages are not spoken in the mess unless foreign guests are present. As both English and French are officially recognized in Canada and in the R.C.N. Canadian officers take a little note of such a rule.

The custom of toasting is said to have begun with the ancient Greeks. The host took the first sip of wine to show his guest that it was not poisoned. Restaurants where wine is served allow the host to sample the wine before the guests' glasses are filled. At a mess dinner it is forbidden to propose a toast before the Loyal Toast to the Sovereign, except that foreign heads of state are toasted first if foreign guests are present. In civilian circles it is permissible to drink toasts in water; naval superstition presupposes death by drowning for the personage toasted. Likewise a glass that rings tells the death of a sailor; stop the ringing and the Devil takes two soldiers in lieu. This will explain why naval officers never clink glasses in drinking a toast.

At mess dinners it used to be a custom, not often observed now, to propose what was known as the toast of the day. The list that seems

to be most commonly followed dates from before Trafalgar, and is:

- Monday - our ships at sea
 - Tuesday - our man
 - Wednesday - ourselves, because no one else is likely to bother
 - Thursday - a bloody war or a sickly season (to ensure quicker promotion)
 - Friday - a willing foe and searoom
- (The two preceding seem to be of historical interest only.)
- Saturday - wives and sweethearts, may they never meet (reply is made by the youngest officer present)
 - Sunday - absent friends

Two kings of England, Charles II (1660 - 1685) and William IV (1830-1837), are each credited with authorizing the drinking of the Loyal Toast while seated. Whichever king it was, when he rose in one of his ships to reply to a toast to himself, struck his head on a low beam and then and there ruled that officers might drink the toast while seated. He is reputed to have added "Gentlemen, your loyalty is not questioned". However present-day regulations (Q.R.C.N. 61.03) require that officers stand when the National Anthem is played or when the head of a foreign state is toasted, so our own sovereign will not suffer offence. The officers of H.M.S. BRITANNIA, the Royal Yacht, as especially favoured servants of the Crown, always rise for the Loyal Toast.

The port or madeira decanters are unstoppered, passed always to the left, and then stoppered, before the Loyal Toast is drunk. This practice suggests that the wine is served only for that purpose.

The custom of calling on senior officers and their wives and the leaving of calling cards is now almost unique in military circles. There is good reason for this custom, based on the fact that naval officers are moved about so much; by making one's number an officer is often assured of hospitality, and if not at least he indicates good service manners.

Finally two customs by which deference is shown to senior officers. A junior officer always enters a boat or car first and leaves last, the original idea possibly being that the senior might remain dry and safe that much longer. Although confusion exists on this point a junior should precede his senior over the brow on going ashore and follow the senior officer onboard. This works at its best when a senior officer and his staff are calling because it enables the captain to greet the officer and lead him to his cabin without having to become enmeshed in staff officers. On departing the entourage can disappear over the brow or down the ladder, leaving the senior officer to engage in parting conversation with the captain.

Henry VIII ordered that "no captain shall take the wind of his admiral", by which was meant the junior officer should pass to leeward of his senior so as not to inconvenience him by cutting off the wind from his sails. Similarly it has long been the custom to request permission to cross a senior's bows, though the necessity for such a manoeuvre should be avoided if at all possible because it might require the senior to shorten sail or reduce speed to avoid collision. Some officers observe this seamanlike practice in the mess: if they reach in front of another officer they say "may I cross your bows?" This rule has a present day application with aircraft carriers operating into wind, to which the U.S.N. has applied the saying, "Never stand behind a mile or cross ahead of a carrier!"

These remarks on officers' customs are concluded with a part of the address of the American admiral John Paul Jones to the Naval Committee of Congress on 14 September 1775. Even in this year of expansion in the Canadian naval service, set in an era of modern weapons and futuristic warfare, the famous admiral's words are excellent advice. The final paragraph is considered of particular importance and interest because it states most clearly the principle of command at sea.

"It is by no means enough that an officer of the navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honour

"He should not only be able to express himself clearly and with force in his own language both with tongue and pen, but he should also be versed in French and Spanish.

"The naval officer should be familiar with the principles of international law, and the general practice of admiralty jurisprudence, because such knowledge may often, when cruising at a distance from home, be necessary to protect his flag from insult or his crew from imposition or injury in foreign ports.

"He should also be conversant with the usages of diplomacy and capable of maintaining, if called upon, a dignified and judicious diplomatic correspondence; because it often happens that sudden emergencies in foreign waters make him diplomatic as well as military representative of his country, and in such cases he may have to act without opportunity of consulting his civic or ministerial superiors at home, and such action may easily involve the portentous issue of peace or war between great powers. These are general qualifications, and the nearer the officer approaches the full possession of them the more likely he will be to serve his country well and win fame and honors for himself.

"Coming now to view the naval officer aboard ship, and in relation to those under his command, he should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, and charity. No meritorious act of a subordinate should escape his attention or be left to pass without its reward, even if the reward be only one of approval. Conversely, he should not be blind to a single fault in any subordinate, though at the same time he should be quick and unfailing to distinguish error from malice, thoughtlessness from incompetence, and well-meant shortcomings from heedless or stupid blunder. As he should be universal and impartial in his rewards and approval of merit, so should he be judicial and unbending in his punishment or reproof of misconduct.

"In his intercourse with subordinates he should ever maintain the attitude of the Commander, but that need by no means prevent him from the amenities of cordiality or the cultivation of good cheer within the proper limits. Every Commanding Officer should hold with his subordinates such relations as will make them constantly anxious to sit at his table, and his bearing towards them should be such as encourages them to express their opinions to him with freedom and to ask his views without reserve.

"The Navy is essentially and necessarily aristocratic. True as may be the political principles for which we now contend, they can never be perfectly applied or even admitted onboard ship, out of port or off soundings. This may seem a hardship, but it is nevertheless the simplest of truths. Whilst the ships sent forth by Congress may and must fight for the principles of human rights and republican freedom, the ships themselves must be ruled and commanded at sea under a system of absolute despotism."

Chapter 10 - ODDS AND ENDS

The word knot as a unit of speed has an interesting beginning. The first method of calculating the velocity of a ship was by Dutchman's log. A chip of wood thrown from the fore-castle was timed as it passed down the side of the ship; the calculation of speed was based on the length of time the chip took to travel between the forward and after marks, since distance divided by time equals speed. But it was from a later type, the hand log, first used in the 16th century, that the word knot develops. A triangular piece of wood called a log-ship is weighted at the bottom, and slung by means of a three-legged rope crossfoot, one leg of which is secured to the log-ship with a removable wooden plug, in such a way as to present resistance to the water when towed astern of a ship on a log-line. This plaited line of about 150 fathoms is marked every ten fathoms. In the days of sail the hand log was streamed once an hour by the midshipman-of-the-watch and the boatswain's mate. The latter rigged the log with the plug in securely enough to remain in against the water pressure to be expected, and streamed it astern. As

the log-line slipped through his fingers, at the first knot that passed after the log was clear of the wake, the boatswain's mate called out "turn" and the midshipman inverted his hour-glass. When each subsequent knot passed the boatswain's mate sang out its number. As the last of the sand fell into the bottom half of the glass the midshipman gave the order "check"; the boatswain's mate stopped letting the line run out, noting the number of the knot nearest his hand. Comparing the number of the knot against the time on a chart gave the speed of the ship. By jerking the log-line the plug was removed and the log recovered. Thus it was that knots in a line became associated with nautical miles per hour. The reader will understand from this description that the land-lubber's 'knots per hour' is meaningless.

Although the glass referred to was probably graduated for about three or five minutes a half-hour glass was used aboard ship until 1857 to mark the passage of time. The ship's bell was struck at the time of turning the glass, a custom instituted in the 13th century.

Whistling is forbidden in most ships if only for the reason that it can often be confused with the sound of the boatswain's call used for attracting attention before making a pipe. A former reason for the no-whistling rule was that it was the custom to whistle a wind when becalmed in a sailing ship; if perchance a gale ensued the assumption was that they overdid it. So sailors, being superstitious, rigidly curtailed their whistling habits. At the time of whistling for a wind it was customary to drive a knife into the mainmast on the bearing the wind was desired. Another strange and very ancient superstition for producing wind was the knotting of a short length of rope, a single knot for a light breeze, two for fresh breezes, and three for strong winds.

A killick is Gaelic for anchor, an invention of the Chinese emperor Yu (2205 - 2197 B.C.), and it is from the badge of a single foul anchor that the leading seaman takes the naval slang term for his rank. The foul anchor, otherwise known as the sailor's disgrace, has no intent of reflection on the wearer's seamanship ability, but had its origin in ancient times as a religious symbol of steadfastness, hope and salvation. It appears in the heraldic device of Lord Effingham, Lord High Admiral in the late 16th century, and naval use of it probably dates from that time.

Records indicate that tobacco was introduced in the navy in 1798, mostly for chewing, although we read that in later years informal meetings of a smoking circle about a smoking lantern were held on the upper deck in fine weather, at other times in the galley. The U.S. Navy refers to this smoking lantern in lieu of our stand easy and out pipes.

The broad arrow or crow'sfoot on government stores, not just naval gear, was the personal mark of the Commissioner of Ordnance during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558 - 1603). The same mark is used in Canada for military stores with the addition of the letter "C" about the arrow.

The term compass rose no doubt comes from the French rose des vents, an imaginary flower of four petals, one for the wind of each cardinal point. Roman records show that what is now the north point was in their era marked with the letter "T" for trans montana or tramontana --across the mountains, i.e. what lay to the north of the Mediterranean. The French later substituted their national symbol, the fleur de lis.

Mention has been made elsewhere of the silver chain and boatswain's call now worn in lieu of a lanyard by men of the quartermaster branch. A silver whistle and chain have also played a part in military as well as naval command. For some centuries this item of regalia has been part of the military bandolier, now rarely seen except in ceremonial parades of historic regiments.

A custom not often practised at the present time is that of hoisting between the masts of a ship, or at the yardarm, on the day of marriage of a member of the ship's company, a garland of evergreens, symbolizing continuing fruitfulness.

For centuries the marines in a ship lived between the officers and the men. The small-arms racks were kept nearby since the marines were the soldiery of the ship. After the More Mutinies St. Vincent had the marines moved further aft, and the small-arms moved with them. The marines' mess is traditionally called the marines' barracks.

The naval tudor crown, as described in the Manual of Seamanship, volume 2 (1952) "consists of a circlet surmounted by the sterns of four men-of-war, each with three poop lanterns, and four square sails each spread on a mast and yard and fully filled and sheeted home; the ships and sails being positioned alternately". The Sailing and Fighting Instructions published in 1746 appear to contain the first written description and use of the crown in the navy. It was there stated that it was an award to a ship's company for being the first to board successfully an enemy man-of-war.

The normal place for the naval crown now is at the top of ships' crests or badges. The latter are drawn up in accordance with the historic rules of heraldry, that is from items of office, name or history, and are submitted for approval to the Clarenceaux King of Arms, titular head of the College of Heraldry. R.C.N. crests have two green maple leaves in addition to any other distinctive Canadian symbols or animals. A sealed pattern of each ship's crest is issued to the ship by Naval Headquarters.

By traditional right the starboard side of the quarterdeck belongs to the captain, though it may be used by any officer so long as the captain is not on deck. Less necessary now but certainly a reality in the days of small vessels on long voyages was a space to walk, and even now captains or officers-of-the-watch can be seen pacing the quarterdeck. Presumably the starboard side became the captain's choice because it was farthest from the noise and turmoil of loading the ship on the port side.

The adjustable screw plug which fits in the muzzle of a large gun is called a tampion or tompion. Some of these, particularly on mountings or turrets on the quarterdeck, have the ship's crest or some other symbol affixed. These fittings were invented by a London clock-maker named Tompion in the year 1690.

The seaman's hammock was first introduced to the Old World by Christopher Columbus who had discovered them in the West Indies in 1493. The present name comes from the Spanish hamaca and the original English word was hamaco. The British first saw these at the Armada (1588) and they appeared in service in the British navy in 1597. At first they were issued on a basis of one for every two men, and for foreign service only. In 1693 they were noted as supplementary stores items for flagships only --400 for the Admiral of the Red, 300 for the Blue, and 200 for other flagships. They were listed under 'Boatswain's Stores' as 'hammacoes, swinging! Until well into the 19th century these and the sailors' trousers were made of heavy brown canvas from damaged sails. On clearing a ship for action the lashed hammocks were placed in the nettings along the upperdeck bulwarks to protect exposed guns' crews from musket fire.

Under international law the territory of a state extends, with some local exceptions, to three nautical miles to seaward from mean low water level. This distance, determined in the 17th century, is based on what was then considered to be the maximum range of cannon. It has long been an established right under the law relating to territorial seas that ships which ordinarily operate outside the limits of such waters are exempt from excise tax and duty on certain articles such as tobaccos and alcoholic beverages which are for consumption onboard by the crews and passengers. For some years the R.C.N. has enjoyed the added privilege of these exemptions while operating exclusively within Canadian territorial waters, or even while ships are in refit. These fringe benefits are considered a valuable compensation for the inconveniences and discomforts of seagoing service.

The anchors and cables, and other heavy rigging, in ships before the advent of steam propulsion were worked by hand-operated capstans of massive size. In the VICTORY, for example, the main capstan was handraulic

The Sailors' Psalm

"They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters: those men see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. For at his word the stormy wind ariseth which lifteth up the waves thereof. They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep: their soul melteth away because of the trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

"So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he delivereth them out of their distress. For he maketh the storm to cease so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are at rest; and so he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be."

--- Psalm 107, verses 23 -30.

The Naval Prayer

"O Eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging of the sea; who has compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end; be pleased to receive into thy Almighty and most gracious protection the persons of us thy servants, and the Fleet in which we serve. Preserve us from the dangers of the sea, and from the violence of the enemy, that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and her Dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions; that the inhabitants of our Empire may be in peace and quietness serve thee our God; and that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruits of our labours, and with a thankful remembrance of thy mercies to praise and glorify thy holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."