

H.M.C.S. OTTAWA
at Sea.

February, 1962.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE "CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY"

Way back in the enlightened days of the world's history when the Greek civilization was in it's prime... when Romulus and Remus were nothing more than twinkles in their father's eyes, and Britons were even less civilized than they are to-day....there was a god; a deity, called Poseidon. As the books have it, "His domain was of Hercules; and he had some authority" - in other words he was god of the seas, and the ancient Greek matelots were accustomed to burning incense, and singing "Eternal Father" and other odds and ends to intercede for his good offices. In fact, the Greeks went even further than we do to-day by erecting Atlas at seaports, and training specialist priests to attend to the rites and rituals. It was an extremely highly organized business, but history does not relate whether or not Poseidon came through in the pinches.

Now Poseidon, by the simple expedient of turning on a storm now and then to frighten the poor Greeks, was doing quite well for himself for several centuries, and would have lived happily ever after if it hadn't been for the Romans. The Romans were not up to much in the way of seamanship, but they all had taken Leadership Courses, and even in those days this was what counted in the long run, for they finally succeeded in driving the Greeks from the seas. Even then, however, Poseidon continued to whip up the odd storm at sea, and the Romans, although this did not frighten them particularly, decided it was only logical to do something about the situation. The answer was, of course, to obtain the services of a god who could effectively put Poseidon in the shade, and the Romans, having no spare gods around Olympus at that time, had to borrow one from the Etruscans (history does not relate if he was ever returned). His name was Nethune, or Nethunus, depending on which part of Etruscia you came from, but the Romans called him Neptunus for short. Poor old Poseidon, of course was left far behind, because the Romans were fairly rich, and could erect more altars, and sing more choruses of Eternal Father than the Greeks ever deemed absolutely necessary. In fact, to show you how far Neptunus did go, Poseidon had a very big wheel in the Greek system, and he had gone to some trouble to marry this woman....she didn't particularly like the idea and had fled to Mount Atlas when she heard of it, but Poseidon sent along one of his Dolphins to collect her....Neptunus actually adopted this woman, which made him Poseidon's father-in-law, and Poseidon, on hearing this, committed suicide by drowning himself in his own ocean.

Well, to make a long story short, while we know all about Neptune, his life and works, historians of a later date were not so smart as the Romans and Greeks, and they did not write down how the "Crossing the Line" Ceremony came into being, so present day scholars have to say that "It's origin is wrapped (or shrouded) in mystery", and that "we can only guess at the actual date of its inception into the maritime services". Some fairly educated guesses have been made, though, and the dates have been narrowed down to the half century between 1768 and 1818. One Professor Callender, whose opinion we must admit, is rather biased in these matters, reckons that the custom was brought into being in the Royal Navy's East Indian Command during Nelson's day. Since most of the navy's most peculiar customs can be traced back to dear old Nelson one way or another, this may be considered not a bad guess.

Why they chose the Equator instead of the International Date Line or the Arctic Circle, is another point altogether, and your guess is as good as Professor Callender's.

To bring this short history right up to date, it should be mentioned that certain sects or cults, such as the Royal Canadian Navy, still practise the ancient ritual of Crossing the Line (although in its enlightened form), and on the following pages will be found the complete details of the latest ceremony which was carried out in Her Majesty's Canadian Ship "OTTAWA" when she crossed the Equator in February, 1962 in company with Her Majesty's Canadian Ships ASSINIBOINE and MARGAREE enroute from JAPAN to CEYLON.

The enlightened ceremony takes three phases; First, the Herald of His Oceanic Majesty comes onboard the night previous to the actual crossing in order to inspect the ship and decide upon its worthiness to receive onboard Neptunus Rex in all his glory. His opinion favourable, Neptune himself comes onboard the following day with all his court, and presents Orders and awards to those Shellbacks * who have proven themselves worthy thereof on the Quarterdeck. The Third and final phase is when King Neptune supervises the initiation of the Tadpoles **.

NOTE: * A Shellback is one who has been initiated into the Ancient Order of the Mysteries of the Deep, i.e. one who has crossed the line before.

** A Tadpole is one who has not yet had this privilege.

SHELLBACKS

Commanding Officer, HMCS OTTAWA - CDR MACPHERSON
Executive Officer, HMCS OTTAWA - LCDR SHUCKBURGH

KING NEPTUNE'S ROYAL COURT (ALL SHELLBACKS)

NEPTUNE	LS GUNDERSON
AMPHRITITE	SLT BELAND
HERALD	P1 CORBETT
SECRETARY	LS LOGIE
JUDGE	LS MOREHOUSE
DOCTOR	C2 BRIDGES
DOCTOR	P1 HAMMOND
BARBER	LS SILCOX
BARBER	P1 GRIFFIN
CHIEF OF POLICE	P1 MCKAY
HEAD BEAR	P2 BEECH
TRUMPETER	LS COXON
TRUMPETER	P1 WREN
SCRIBE	LS CHAD
DAVEY JONES	P1 PHILLIPS
MERMAID	LT LARKIN
MERMAID	C2 BIGNELL
TRIDENT STAMPER	P1 SHERRING

BEARS

AB MEIN
P2 SLATER
LS MURRAY
P2 DOYLE
C2 CAMPBELL
C1 WOOD
C2 RAFTERY
P1 FLOCK
LT GUDGEON
P1 GOSSE
LS O'NEILL
P1 BISHOP

POLICE

SLT SLADE	C2 LOGIE
LS SLOAN	LS COLQUHOUN
LS NICKEL	LS JANSEN
P1 BATES	AB PROVENCAL
AB MITCHELL	LS MCGREGOR
P1 LUINING	P2 CUMMINGS
P2 NEIL	LS CORBETT
P2 GARRETT	P1 ROBERTS
P2 ROBERTS	LT TAYLOR
C2 KIRK	LCDR AIKEN
C2 PENNINGTON	LCDR MCLAUCHLAN(EO)
LS PEGG	P1 GILES
LS HIDSON	LS MURRAY
P2 GRIFFIN	C1 TOLL
AB DEBOICE	P2 MCLEOD
AB LACKEY	C2 GUTHRIE
LS FITZSIMMONS	C1 HEWITT
LS HAIRE	LS GARDINER
LS HENDERSON	C1 KEZIERE
P2 BUCKLEY	AB FULLAWAY
P2 SMITHSON	P1 NAGEL
MR SPARLING	

"TADPOLES".

LT WHITMAN	AB JONGERHUIS	OS HOWSON
LT GILLILAND	AB PUJO	OS CISAROSKI
MR. NICHOLSON	OS ALDRED	OS DONALD
SLT SMITH	AB HOLT	AB HULFORD
SLT SPAVEN	AB JOHNSTON	P2 LANG
SLT COUSINS	AB HUBBARD	OS TUCKER
AB EASTHOM	OS HALL	OS GUNDERSON
AB HUMPHREYS	LS ROY	AB ZUTZ
AB WEHRHAHN	LS WOYCHUK	OS LEVI
AB FRASER	AB HAMILL	AB RENDALL
AB MOREY	AB WILSON	OS BAPTIE
OS BZDELL	P1 HAMILTON	AB DAVID
P2 BENDALL	OS BURMEISTER	LS ACHESON
C2 OFFER	AB DUTCHAK	AB PRAGNELL
OS ANQUIST	C2 PAULSEN	AB CUST
AB YOUNGER	C2 WEBSTER	OS JOSS
AB TANNOUS	AB VAN MOL	AB SENFT
LS SYER	AB SUTHERLAND	AB ROBERTS
LS WATSON	AB CRYER	AB NELSON
LS TURGEON	AB JONES	OS KOCEVAR
OS PILON	AB FIELDING	C1 MERCIER
OS MELANCON	OS MILLS	AB BOYD
LS BOYDEN	OS POTTER	P2 BELLEFONTAINE
AB CLARKE	AB SZAKA	P2 JONES
AB STOKES	OS CAREY	AB RIBBANS
LS SUTTON	OS BALL	P2 TAYLOR
OS STURCH	AB HANNON	P1 DEANE
OS CLARK	OS FRETTER	AB WILLIAMS
C1 DUNCAN	OS MCBAIN	LS FRANCEY
OS FRANDSEN	P2 ORCHERTON	LS CHUBAK
AB THOMPSON	P2 MCLEAN	AB LEBOUTILLIER
AB WILSON	P2 FERGUSON	AB JARVIS
AB PAYNE	AB SHARPE	MR. COX
OS HATTON	OS RUNNALLS	LS LAINCHBURY
OS MCFARLANE	AB TEAGUE	OS BADIUK
OS FINNIE	OS DAHL	P2 CATHCART
OS HEFFELL	OS HEDRICK	OS PETRUIC
LS RICHARDSON	AB PUGH	AB CAMPBELL
AB UPTON	OS REDISKY	OS HAYDEN
AB WILSON	AB SEMINIUK	OS SMITH
LS BENT	OS LINFOOT	P2 UNISCHEWSKI
OS SWAGAR	OS LEWIS	AB SMITH
OS PRATT	AB OKE	AB RAE
P1 KEAYS	OS CARRUTHERS	AB DOSKAS
AB DAVIDSON	LS GUENTHER	AB SUTHERLAND
AB WADDELL	AB BAYLY	LS WHITE
F1 KISHKAN	AB JAMIESON	P1 BRANDT
C2 VAIL	P1 CHADWICK	LS FULTON
AB HOLDEN	AB EAGLE	AB CARTER
AB WALKER	AB DUFFY	AB ROSS
LS GORSLINE	AB AVENT	AB GREEN
OS SEMPLE	P1 HOFFART	OS BLONDIN
OS HYGGEN	AB BEGG	P1 LAMOUREUX
AB HAINES	OS MANTEL	OS HURRELL
AB MCBRYAN	P1 MCKEOWN	LS MOORE
C2 RODGERS	P1 HUTCHINGS	P1 RYAN
AB SWAIN	LS TOPPING	

CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY

ACT I

Scene I: The Bridge. As if by mistake the whole scene is enacted over the Armament Broadcast.

TIME: Around 1900 the night before crossing the Line.

O.O.W. (Over Armament Broadcast) Object bearing right ahead Sir. Looks like some sort of fish - (short pause) Appears to be surfacing Sir.

CAPTAIN: Very good. That will be King Neptune's Herald. We are closing the Equator rapidly. First Lieutenant, Pipe clear lower decks to the forecastle, O.O.G. muster the Honour Guard, Officer of the Watch, stand by to, . . . (Captain is interrupted by the lookout).

LOOKOUT(OOW) Green one zero, Sir, a light, near!

CAPTAIN: Very good, alter course towards it, Officer of the Watch.

(The ship will close the alleged light for about five minutes with no further patter in order to allow the ship's company to assemble on the Forecastle).

Scene II (Both Herald and the Captain speak through loud hailers - the Captain on the Bridge and the Herald on the Forecastle)

HERALD: (From behind the fog spray) SHIP AHOY!

CAPTAIN: OTTAWA

HERALD: I've heard your ship's around,
Now tell me, wither bound?

CAPTAIN: We're sailing for Ceylon Island;
We've sailed for many a mile,
Now I've got a lot to do,
So tell me, who are you?

HERALD: I am the Herald of the court,
Of his Oceanic Majesty;
King Neptune ordered me aboard
And I'll commit no travesty.

CAPTAIN: For you I'll stop my ship.
Come forth, and no more lip.

(Herald, accompanied by Davey Jones, A Mermaid, 2 Bears and a Bugler, advance through the spray whilst the Bugler sounds the alert).

Look sharp then sire, if you please
By what right have you to challenge us on the high seas?

HERALD: By the custom of powers invested right
In King Neptune and Queen Amphritite
Who sent us to your mighty ship
To check and see if you are fit.
We cannot take you across our line,
Without the stamp of the Trident Sign.

(Herald draws his sword, and the bears growl --
Mermaid titters - - -)

CAPTAIN: It is of course without disdain
That I'll accept your word,
We're crossing into your domain
So sheath that mighty sword. (Sword of course, is a
ridiculous looking affair)

HERALD: King Neptune will be glad I'm sure
to have you cross his border.
If you're a shellback let us hope
Your papers are in order.

CAPTAIN: A hardier shellback never lived,
Or walked the ocean floor;
So tell King Neptune that I have crossed
his bloddy line before,
And if you think I'm not so hard
Have Davey Jones inspect my guard.

HERALD: I'll do your will
So sound the still. (To Bugler).

(Bugler complies, and as he does so Davey Jones steps
through the spray. Meanwhile the guard has been
marched to the front, and Davéy Jones inspects it
with a lot of slapstick...e.g. points out haircuts with
a dead fish which he carries under his arm like a
telescope).

DAVEY JONES: A froustier guard I've never seen,
They look like Hell and smell unclean.

(Bears commence shouting "UNCLEAN! UNCLEAN!" at the
top of their lungs).

HERALD: Keep silence in the Bears. (Then addressing the crew)

Before this mighty ship of war
Had slipped from her home port
A spy of mine had come aboard
Her complement to sort.
He's scanned the names of every one....
Come forward now, your work is done.

(Secretary makes his appearance carrying a large book).

SECRETARY: The nominal list I've closely scanned
To learn by whom this ship is manned:
A hundred and fifty persons more or less
Who by their conscience must confess
They have not joined our Royal Mess.
They must be made to taste the salt
Of my King's Royal Main,
And choke upon our pills and soap
'Ere they can cross again.

(Bears once more start shouting "UNCLEAN UNCLEAN!")

HERALD: At four bells of the Forenoon watch
To-morrow, come what may,
His Oceanic Majesty, King Neptune will hold sway.
And by the ancient laws laid down
By custom will ordain
That all you tadpoles, young and old
Be initiated in our name.

SECRETARY: All Hail, King Neptune!

(Bears in a fit of fanatic fervour shriek "BLOOD BLOOD!")

CAPTAIN: Keep silence....(Pause till shouting dies down).

Assure King Neptune that we all,
Are honoured by this meeting;
And please convey to him our thanks,
And our most loyal greeting.
We shall be ready for your King
And glad to meet his Queen
And will she bring her daughters fair
To beautify the scene?

(Bears make wolf calls, etc.)

HERALD: It cannot be: A sea nymph form
Would take each sailors heart by storm
Our good Queen spares them from such shows
Because they haven't any clothes....
The Queen will come alone.

(Bears once again start wolf calls again, etc.)

(The company commences retiring through the spray;
The Herald is last to go through and just before
he does, he turns to the multitude and says:

"I command you all to rest with sorrow
The fittest will survive to-morrow...."

(Very lights of various colours are shot from
before the spray and as they are, all lights on
the F.X. are turned out, and a hideous, sub human
laugh is heard from the eyes of the ship.

ACT III

Scene I:

The Quarterdeck: Lower decks have been cleared to the Quarterdeck and King Neptune's Court has assembled in the Main Cafeteria. Bears and Police, having cleared a path in a traditional fashion muster on the Quarterdeck and it is now time for the Royal Court itself to arrive.

HERALD:

(On Entrance) HEAR YE! HEAR YE! MAKE WAY FOR HIS MOST GLORIOUS OCEANIC MAJESTY NEPTUNUS REX, RULER OF ALL WHO SAIL UPON THE SEA UPON THEIR LAWFUL OCCASION. HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

(On arrival of Neptune and Amphitrite) ALL HAIL KING NEPTUNE!

BEARS AND POLICE

ALL HAIL KING NEPTUNE!

HERALD:

(Call for silence and is assisted in getting it if necessary by Police).

Captain, call your crew to attention for the Oceanic Anthem.

CAPTAIN:

(Complies).

Led by the Herald, the complete ensemble of shellbacks sing in dolorous tones, the Oceanic Anthem, (tune of "All Hail Methusalem").

All Hail His Majesty,
The ruler of the raging sea
All Hail Queen Amphitrite
Her gorgeous beauty, - what a sight.

(Captain now stands the ships company at ease and bids it pay attention.)

In humblest duty, Sire, I bring
To you, our Oceanic King
All here on board, may they submit
To what in Ancient Laws is writ.

NEPTUNE:

(Acknowledges Captain's remarks, then turns to address Ship's Company:)

Good afternoon, OTTAWA, you've come a long way,
And I've waited months for this glorious day.
You all know full well what I've come to do
For I hear there are tadpoles among your crew.

HERALD:

My barbers are good, and widely renowned, (barbers step forward gesticulating sadistically). Their razors are sharper than's ever been ground;
My doctors are butchers and as for their pills;
They're better than Exlax for curing your ills.

CAPTAIN:

Ere you punish our crimes with that terrible fork
I present for your favour my crew to your court.

NEPTUNE:

From my courtly Herald I've heard it told
That there're some in your crew so brave and bold
As to warrant my favour....there may be some missed;
So Herald, bring forward my Honour List.

HERALD: CAPTAIN!

CAPTAIN:

"ANCIENT ORDER OF THE FENDER"

IT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO THIS COURT'S ATTENTION
THERE WAS AN INCIDENT WE'L HAVE TO MENTION.
AT MIDWAY YOU DID RECEIVE YOUR TEST
UNDER WIND AND WEATHER AND MUCH DURESS.
YOUR FULL ASTERN CAME JUST IN TIME..
TO SAVE THE MIGHTY 229.
SO TO PROTECT THE PARTS THAT ARE TO TENDER
WE PRESENT YOU WITH THE ORDER OF THE FENDER.

OH HO, oh Portly Skipper
Get down on your knees and crawl
For you've entered my Royal Kingdom
On a ship with no hawse pipes at all.

The King of the Deep O' Captain
Could easily rupture a bladder
While trying to board your vessel
On a flaming jumping ladder.

Now I order you holy master
That while in my domain
You wear this juicy rainbow trout
Attached to this chunk of chain.

NEPTUNE: AWARDED THE ORDER OF THE FENDER - ALSO THE
FISH AND CHAIN.

HERALD: FIRST LIEUTENANT:

X.O.

SO YOU ARE THE JIMMY OF THIS SHIP
NOW HEAR ME OUT AND NO MORE LIP.
YOU'VE TRAMPLED OVER EVERY "ODE" (Ode pronounced OAD)
WHILE TRAVELLING DOWN THE BURMA ROAD
SO TO MAKE YOUR DAY MORE COMPLETE
WE DUMP THIS TRASH HERE AT YOUR FEET.
LOOK NO FURTHER, NO MORE LONG TRAMPS
WE PRESENT THIS ORDER OF THE ROYAL LAMP.

NEPTUNE: AWARDED ORDER OF THE ROYAL LAMP.

HERALD: ENGINEER OFFICER:

"THE ORDER OF THE DRY TAP"

AS ALL GOOD SHELLBACKS AND "EVEN" LEARNED POLLYWOGS
WELL KNOW - OUR DOMAIN IS MADE OF WATER!
BUT "YOU", THE LOWEST OF LOW (YEAH) POLLYWOG BRACKETS
(E) NOT ONLY PREVENTED PROTECTED SHELLBACKS FROM
LANGUISHING IN THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BUT HAD THE
AUDACITY TO SHUT OFF TAP.
THE CONVEYOR OF OUR BLESSED H2O.

I HEREBY DECREE THAT YOU SHALL FROM HERE ON IN BE
KNOWN AS "DRY TAP MCLAUCHLAN" TO ALL SHELLBACKS THAT
SAIL THE SEAS - PRESENT THE ORDER OF THE DRY TAP....

NEPTUNE: AWARDED THE ORDER OF THE DRY TAP!

HERALD: CHIEF PETTY OFFICER PAULSEN:

OUR HAPPY TAS I WE ALL KNOW
WHEN CHASING SUBS ITS GO MAN GO!
YOU CHASED THEM YES, IN NORTHERN CLIMES
BUT NEVER YET HAVE CROSSED THE LINE.
SO TAKE YOUR DUNK, BE ON YOUR WAY
AND MAKE THOSE BLOODY SUBS TO PAY

JUDGE: Seeing as you come of late
Causing Neptunes court to wait
Of Neptune we ask; remove this stain
And make him a member of your vast domain.

DOCTOR AND BARBER DUE YOUR JOB!

HERALD: ORDINARY SEAMAN PUGH:

ORDINARY SEAMAN PUGH IN THE FORWARD HEADS DID SPEW
T'WAS CLEANED UP HE SAID,
THE SMELL REMAINED,
SO BIG BEARS THIS TAD MAKE CLEAN,
AS THE FORWARD HEADS SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

JUDGE: Surely a Tad of this size
Will take a lot to deoderize
So Bears it may take all your might
To bring this Tad out clean and white.

DOCTORS DUE YOUR STUFF!

HERALD: CHIEF PETTY OFFICER VAIL:

OBLIGATED, OBLIGATED ON OUR DEMANDS
NOW BEFORE US HERE HE STANDS.
LOOKING FOR LENIENCY SO THEY SAY
BUT IN OUR COURT YOU MUST PAY
FOR HARDSHIPS IMPOSED UPON US ALL
PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ONE HELL OF A FALL

JUDGE: DOCTOR AND BARBER SHOW THIS TAD THAT OUR GEAR
IS NOT OBLIGATED:

BEARS TAKE NOTE:

HERALD: MR COX OUR LANKY FRIEND
OLD NEPTUNE'S RULE DID TRY TO BEND
SHELLBACK HE SAID AND WAS NOT
SO FAITHFUL BEARS INTO THE POT
OTHER TADS TAKE PROPER HEED
OR AQUALUNGS YOU MAY NEED.

JUDGE: A man who would stoop so low
His punishment it must be slow
Do Doctor, Barber, treatments begin
and when you're through, into the brine with him.

BEARS: WATCH FOR THIS ONE.

HERALD: LIEUTENANT WHITMAN

SHOOTING SELLS YOUR AT YOUR BEST
BUT HOW DID YOU PASS YOUR DRIVERS TEST
FOR ITS NOT TO OFTEN A HOUSE DOES STRAY
ON BEECHWOOD DRIVE THROUGHWAY
BUT CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE
YOU DID NOT HIT THE HOUSE THE HOUSE HIT YOU

JUDGE: It must be true - for all gunnery types are blind
for punishment I've already signed
Doctor: Two extra Pills and Soap Suds too
and into the brine when you are through

HERALD: ABLE SEAMAN SILZER:

THIS TADPOLE WHO TRY'S TO COOK
WHO'S RECIPES COME FROM A COMIC BOOK
YOU MUST AGREE HAS LOTS TO LEARN
FOR AFTER HIS MEAL THE RAILING YOU YEARN

JUDGE: For this man, eager as well as young
let no real harm be done
as for your meals we all have ate
INTO THE POOL WITH THE REPROBATE

HERALD: PETTY OFFICER HOFFART

FROM JUGGLING THE BOOKS TO BUYING THE FOOD
AND GIVING OUT CASUALS WHEN IN THE MOOD
A TADPOLE NOW, BUT SOON TO PASS
WE DUB YOU NEPTUNES BANKER FIFTH CLASS

JUDGE: No mercy can I see
For such a PO as thee
Do your duties and do them well
GIVE THE SCRIBE REALLY HELL.