

□ UNUSUAL FOREIGN SERVICE □

Every once in a while something unusual happens, and we generally conclude "unusual" because for us, particularly Canadians, the "unusual" is synonymous with "unexpected".

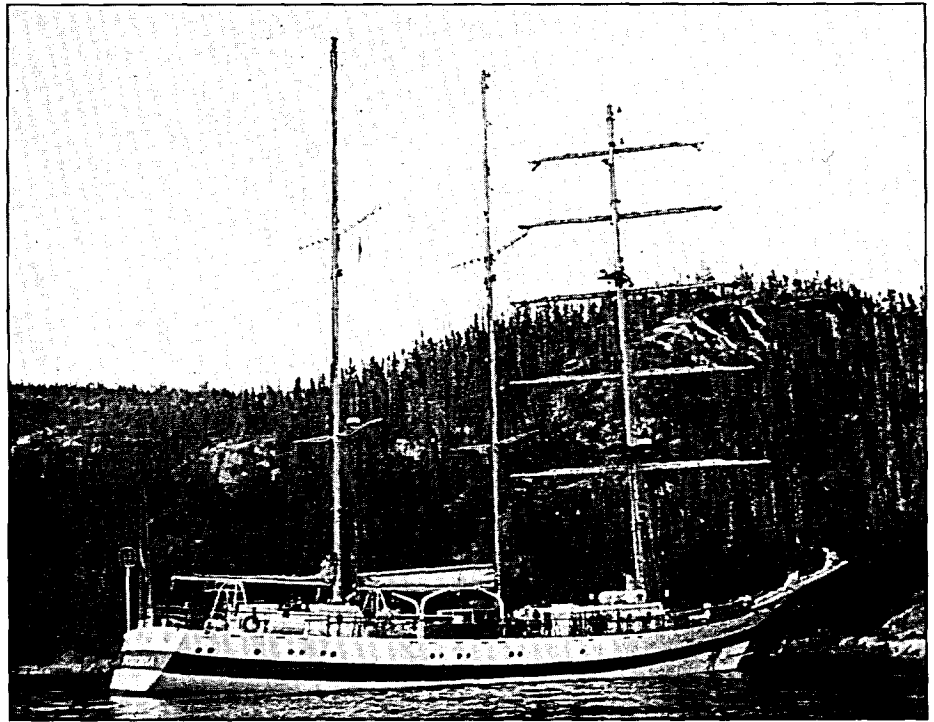
Who in our midst would be the first to climb Everest, to travel in space, to invent some synthetic food? Surely not a Canadian. Far better for us to be tentative and low-risk seconds in line...

Something very "unusual" is happening in a small yellow brick schoolhouse in Ottawa. The school, West Island College, emulating the traditional values of the independent school, has a poorly concealed and irrepressible flare for the "unusual". In 12 brief years the hallowed and as yet un-ivied walls of the College have been the high school home to over 1 000 young Canadians in Ottawa, Montreal and Calgary. Today, West Island Colleges, with over 600 students enrolled, is the second largest private French immersion high school in the country. "Unusual", yes; "unexpected", yes.

Meeting the College's founder and current president explains the phenomenal growth and success of the institution. Mr. Davies' energy seems boundless, his spirit indomitable, his creativity limitless. The "unusual" and "unexpected" are routine.

Recently the American Sail Training Association, a collection of every major sailing and education/sailing group in North America, acclaimed West Island College's Class Afloat to be the most dynamic, most unique and most successful education/sailing programme in the world. Moreover, this programme is recognized to have offered more educational integrity than any other.

"Unusual", yes; "unexpected", yes; Canadian, yes — and an unqualified success, yes.



From its genesis in the fall of 1984, an educator's dream began to take shape within the walls of the schoolhouse on Dufferin Road.

In September of 1985, 40 young Canadians from every corner of our country boarded the Polish barquentine, s/y Pogoria and set sail for 30 new lands of four continents. Armed with energy and commitment, these young people and their teachers set out on a 10 month, 30 000 n.m. adventure.

Climbing the 104 foot foremast to unfurl the royal; standing at the peak of the yard while rolling through 45°; studying Grade XII Calculus or International Politics interrupted every 10 minutes to lean over the lee rail and pay homage to Neptune; dialoguing with international counterparts; debating political, economic, and social systems; doing one's laundry while sweating in 40° heat in the Red Sea — Ahoy mates — this is Class Afloat.

From Montreal they travelled to Quebec City, Louisbourg, the Azores, Gibraltar, Morocco, Monte Carlo, Italy, Greece, Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Comores, South Africa, Ste Helena, the Ascension Islands, Brazil, Barbados, Guadeloupe, Bahamas, U.S.A. and finally Louisbourg, Quebec City and Montreal. Ten incredible months during which students gained an unparalleled appreciation of their world, acquired new friendships, went to class, learned and acquired new levels of tolerance and understanding.

Class Afloat, the finest educational opportunity of its kind in the world, proudly shared its experience with the Canadian Foreign Service. In fact, His Excellency the Canadian High Commissioner to Tanzania and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Derek Arnould, journeyed with our Canadian group from Mombassa to Zanzibar — Stephen Lewis addressed them in New York — David M. Miller received them in Kenya — the Right