

WRITERS' WORKSHOP

By JOHN BISHOP

Look Ma, I'm a Sailor

Up and down; over and back; dodging one wave only to smash into another: the ship never seemed to stand still. The shrieking wind seemed to howl its pleasure as the ocean buffeted the vessel with another avalanche of water, sending him sprawling against the gun turret.

Limply his huge frame hung there. The blood trickled slowly from the gash on his temple; then catching the feeling of the tumult, vomited forth in great gushes, only to stop as abruptly. Slowly he drew himself up to a kneeling position and there he stayed. His eyes lifted skyward into the very storm that caused him such misery, and his lips cursed its being.

For a brief second the lightning shattered the gloom and lit up the young man's face. No one need be told it was his first trip. That haggard look could belong only to someone feeling the wrath of the sea for the first time. The blue eyes no longer sparkled but now drooped, tired and blood-shot. Sleep? It seemed a physical impossibility.

The sickening roll made him dive again for the rail and he spilled forth his latest attempts at food. Slowly he settled back into the shelter of the turret and wiped the spew from his face. His cap had been lost before in a previous belated rush for the rail and now the wind tossed his blonde locks as it did the waves. Color, long since drained from his cheeks, ceased to offset his naturally blond features, so that, except for the caked blood his face took on a deathly pale.

He looked down at his aching feet which were now too weak to support his two hundred pounds. Another roll sent salty green water spraying into his face, engulfing him in a torrent of slime which oozed all over him. Unconsciously his teeth chattered as he rubbed his hands together seeking comfort.

The top of his blue denim dungarees hung loosely about his massive shoulders which slumped forward in accompaniment with the discouraging surroundings. Across the water-soaked pants were stains of other frantic dashes for the side. Quickly he swallowed, choking back that dreaded feeling.

Peering into the gloom he searched the deck for the cookies. Wedged against the gunbase he found his soggy parcel and crammed another tasteless piece of dough into his objecting mouth. It was all a vicious circle-eat;

sicken; spew and eat. But what could he do? Far better to sicken on a full stomach than to feel the pangs of stomach convulsions on an empty gut. He winched at the very thought of it.

His fingers fumbled for a cigarette which he eventually managed to dig from a battered pack. Again and again his numbed fingers tried to light the drenched matches. When finally the little spark that rewarded his efforts was snuffed out before he could use it, he hurled it all into the teeth of the wind, cursing as he did.

Water swirled about his feet as more waves smashed broadside against the stern. His eyes hardly recognized his plight; at least his muscles made no attempt to improve it. The black boots that had once been his pride now absorbed water like a sponge. No longer did they glisten beneath a bright shine, but rather emanated a lifeless glow of putrid slime.

His body was the picture of despair. Too uninterested to try and improve things, he allowed his six foot two inch frame to sway with the ship's roll. The mournful look in his eyes was a strange companion for the hope that existed above all. The hope that soon things would be abate and he would again be himself. But beneath all, beneath his outwardly beaten body was a spirit that couldn't be denied. His clean cut features and stubborn chin all seemed to defy the angry tumult.

Gradually exhaustion overcame the nausea and his drowsy eyes closed. Sleep at last brought relief; the tightened muscles of his face relaxed and his body lost its deathly hue. Color would soon return anew and the battle between sea and man would start refresh, for it is an unending one and a constant one.

Father: "Your little brother just arrived."

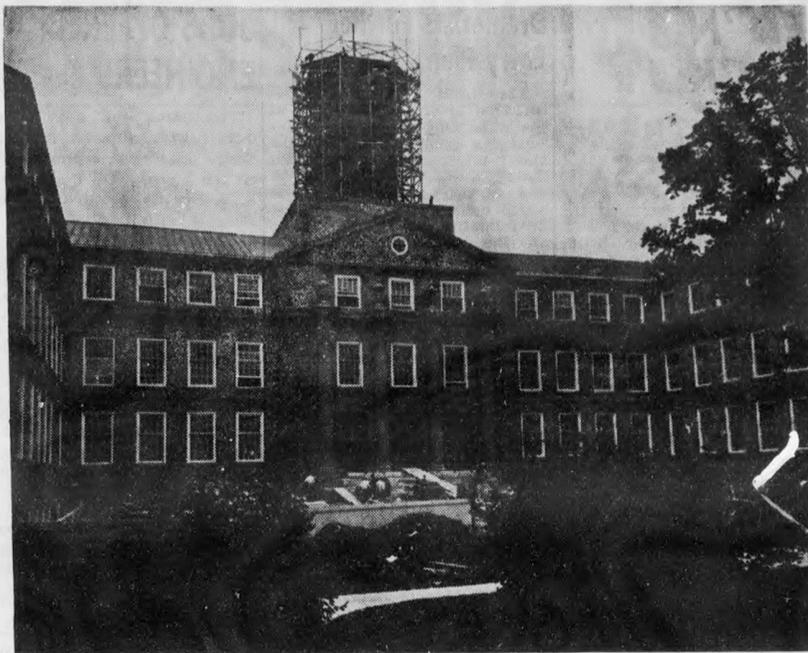
Little Boy: "Where'd he come from?"

Father: "From a far away country."

Little Boy: "Another darned subversive."

WANTED

A goal tender for the Residence Hockey Team
Contact Neil Smith,
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Dalhousie's new Arts and Administration Building which was officially opened last Saturday. (C.U.P. Dalhousie Gazette)

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