

Martin Southwood served his deck apprenticeship on the *Chantala*. For their first 2 years, cadets were required to keep a journal, but some, like Martin, continued to record interesting events in their journals for the duration of their apprenticeship. Here is the record of one such event.

**TRANSCRIPT OF RUSSIAN ENSIGN ADVENTURE
BY
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The following is an exact transcription from my Cadet's Journal. By this time in my apprenticeship (my sixth trip or about three years in) the keeping of a Journal was not mandatory and so a few of us kept them going just for interests sake. Needless to say, the following account would not have been so described if the Journal had still been examined by the Captain or Cadet Instruction Officer!

Sunday 5th October 1958

At Sea

Well, we're on our way again after quite an exciting last night. Let me give a little general information. The docks (Newark, New Jersey) lie on the western side of Newark Bay, a completely enclosed sheet of water. On the eastern side, just about due east of our berth, there is a park with a couple of roads running through. In this park there is a driveway or avenue of the sort used for ceremonial occasions at right angles to the main thoroughfare; at the park end of this avenue, there is a large flagpole on a raised dais. Our intention, to put a Russian ensign on the said flagpole.

We quickly and quietly took off just after midnight (in the whaler). It was quite cold with a clear sky and a young moon. By using the new oars we got over to the park in about fifteen minutes and quietly came alongside in a part that was pretty dark. I might add that there was an inlet with a sort of imposing summer house but it was too well lit. Also, we could clear the bank quicker than we could clear the inlet if any trouble developed. We were going to be prepared for it if there was any.

Our crew consisted of Ted, Hamish, Moose, Bev, Wag and myself. Three of us, Ted, Hamish, and myself were the shore party and the others stood by the boat ready for a quick take-off. We set out across a large piece of open ground which was probably some sort of pitch and headed for the slope on top of which the area concerned was situated. The tension was terrific. The three of us were in extended line, quietly crossing this open ground. Heads continually turning and all senses tuned to a high pitch. We reached a small lake and had to detour round it, then we were under the cover of the rising ground and the few trees that stood on it. We made our first base there, preparing the flag. We had run some stout wire through the rope lead, securing it at the top and leaving a long end from the bottom. This was to be wrapped round the pole to prevent the flag from coming down of its own weight. I need hardly add that we were not going to attach the downhaul.

When we had completed these preliminaries, we set off carefully for our objective. There was a low balustrade running round the end of the road area with a large flight of steps in the centre descending to the park itself. We quietly closed the balustrade and carefully scanned the target area. To our dismay, there was a car parked close-by. Further investigation showed that it was a police car! They must use the place as a rest on their beat. The others retired and I stayed by the balustrade. A good twenty minutes to half an hour passed and then at about 0050, they moved off.

We immediately went into action. Ted and Hamish took the flagpole and I stood lookout about fifty yards away towards the main road. Several cars came along the small road right next to the pole. However, with a series of whistles from me, the others could take shelter in time. Once the cop-car came back but carried on without stopping. I could hear the wire of the flag screeching against the metal of the flagpole as the flag was hauled up and then a pair of headlights appeared up the avenue. It was another cop-car! It came slowly up and must have seen the others for it carried on towards the pole. From the way it hesitatingly approached, the cops must have been wondering what on earth was happening. With a final heave, Ted got the flag up and then headed for the tall timber. He cleared the balustrade in one stride at flat-out miles per hour; I decided to beat a cautious retreat and went about fifty yards to a path that was going in the general direction of where I wanted to go, behind some shrubberies. It soon came to another track leading to a house. I was then about ten yards from the small road. The cops must have seen me for they slowly came down the road towards me in their car. By this time, I really had the wind up.

There was a large tree in front of me and I took cover behind it but they must have seen me as they came up the road towards the house, luckily, still in their car. I edged my way round the tree keeping it between me and them. It must have been effective because they only stopped their car beside it and didn't get out to investigate. I was then only about five yards from them and plenty scared! They then decided to move up the track towards the house to turn round and that's when I took off. I sped across the road and broke left along the top of the rise only I didn't recognise it. It took me about five seconds to evaluate it and go down it at a considerable rate of knots. Around the edge of the lake I pounded and as I was getting out of breath by then, I hit the deck to see if they were following me. I stayed there about thirty seconds but didn't see any visible sign of pursuit so off I went at a fast trot, bent double, towards the bank. It took me a few worried seconds to find the whaler and then I was aboard. Ted and Hamish had got back about five minutes before me and we were all ready to go. In I jumped and we were off like a bomb. We put a good hundred yards between us and the shore before we rested on our oars and gave vent to our pent up emotions! Gee, the yap that passed in that short time; like a Womens Institute!

We proceeded on back to the ship and quietly got the whaler back in its chocks, itself no mean feat. Then down below for a cuppa and a fag. We got back at 0205 and turned in about 0230. Mission accomplished!!!

We sailed at 0800 this morning; strange, but less than six hours ago, we were being chased by cops! As we sailed down the bay, there was the Russian ensign still flying at the flagpole!! Stand by for international incidents!

Bear in mind this was the height of the Cold War, 1958, and thinking about it today, a Russian flag up a ceremonial flagpole and extremely difficult to get down!! Someone must have had a very red face! What a bunch of rascallions we must have been!

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