

# WOMEN REPORTERS CONCLUDE NAVY IS STRICTLY FOR MEN

## Get Insight Into Efforts of Canadian Ships Hard at Work

### DULL BUT DANGEROUS

(By Marlon MacIntosh, Canadian  
Press Staff Writer)

An East Coast Canadian Port, Jan. 29.—No ships were in sight as we sliced through a gray Atlantic swell outside this port. Somewhere ahead, the destroyer men told us, were the ships of the convoy, rolling along toward England under guard of other war craft. Astern lay this port, veiled in mist.

#### Nicer Under Cover

Before us had gone the minesweepers, carrying out their daily humdrum—and potentially dangerous—job of clearing the shipping track of enemy explosive. Now we had the sea to ourselves as our destroyer's 34,000 horse power hustled us out so the party of women reporters could see what a convoy looks like with the comforting land out of sight and possible enemy ships ahead.

With a chill wind singing through the rigging, it was nice to wait below decks, look at the pictures in the captain's cabin and sneer at those hardier souls who braved the unsheltered bridge.

So as we bucketed along, officers down below explained navy matters to us—things like gunnery ranges and calibres and knots. No holds were barred as far as questions went. What if we didn't understand all the answers?

They told us that, even as you and I, sailors get seasick, too. That boys from the prairies make good seamen, even though most of them have never seen salt water before joining the navy. And that their favourite dessert is apple pie.

#### Menu Change Is Wise

A brief exposure to the weather brought us up to the commissary department, where cooks were throwing together a meal for their 150 or so charges. One was cooking what seemed to me enough beets to carry a small family through a winter, but he expained they were merely to be used as a relish with a supper of cold meats.

What they told me should make us women glad our kitchens aren't mounted aboard roller coasters. Stormy weather has the tricky habit of setting destroyer food to crawling all over the place, and

it's a wise cook who decides to change the menu to sandwiches and let it go at that until things quiet down.

Up forward—ahead, to you—were the men's quarters, where they sleep in hammocks slung from the deck above. More comfortable than beds on a heaving ship, they stay in approximately the same place and let the ship do the bouncing.

Sailors sleep with one eye open anyway. One told up how he used to be bothered at first because a spray of water shot down on his hammock every time the destroyer lurched a certain way. Now, when the vessel gives that pitch, he just twitches out of the way automatically, without even being conscious of it.

#### Never a Surplus

Here's a tip, by the way. If you want to open up letter-writing relations with the navy, send along a pair of knitted wristlets with your name pinned on. It's an old navy custom, they told me, for the receiver to drop the sender a line; and it's a good way to use up odd ends of wool.

While the men of Canada's navy are well supplied, there'll never be a surplus of knitted articles. I asked one seaman how many sweaters he wore when it got really cold. "I never keep track of the number after I get the fourth on," he grinned.

Socks are in favour, too. The original issue is two pairs of socks and two of stockings, but they can stand plenty more. At sea, there is neither time nor facilities for washing and drying, so the more changes the better.

While this reporter was absorbing this information, the destroyer was coming up on the convoy. Off on the horizon appeared the sterns of a bevy of craft, bobbing about in the swell as they lumbered away to the east.

We just came near enough for a brief look before turning for home and leaving them to the adequate care of the warships escorting them. I took my peek through a porthole and went back to the pictures.

#### In a Man's World

If you really must know, I nearly froze. That is, during the first few minutes of the trip. The rest of the trip was spent in front of an electric grate below decks.

Not, mind you, that the efforts of navy men to make the trip interesting were not appreciated. They did their best.

But the more I see of navy life, the more I think we should draw the line somewhere in this "complete equality for women" stuff. It gets awfully cold out there on the Atlantic!

The men are doing a great job with this navy business. But it's a man's world.

When our party of women reporters went aboard ship, the officers made it clear that we could ask any questions we wanted. Still, you couldn't help noticing their anguish at some of the queries.

There was, for instance, the girl who pertly inquired, after the gunnery officer had got through explaining how his pets operate: "And what happens if the shell misses the target?"

"Nothing," replied the officer.

politely. War does bring out the true mettle of a man.

#### Are Having Fun

It was the same ashore. They wanted us to get the "women's angle" on the navy. But while an inside peek at the navy's side of the war turned up 1,000 facts, the one that really stood out was that the dockyard cat was named Min.

Then there was the sailor on the minesweeper, who explained he grew his luxuriant red beard because he had a cold.

Twenty-eight seamen, we were told, work the 'sweeper when she's out combing the coastal approaches for enemy "eggs." They live in scant comfort, and life's a constant bore, spiced only with the prospect of a run-in with sudden death. But they appeared to be having fun.

Their job is to keep the shipping lanes clear for the ocean-borne traffic that pours in and out of this port unceasingly.

Almost as dangerous as the job of hunting for mines is that of getting aboard and off the 'sweepers. We negotiated a series of icy planks and rails of intervening ships at the expense of only our dignity and a pair of silk stockings, to arrive safely back on dry land and head for the destroyer.

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