

CHAPTER TWO

On the 18th May 1964, I duly mustered at the Wellington Railway Station to catch the 1600 overnighter to Auckland. MAA Tasker was there to issue us recruits our railway passes and to check that no-one had chickened out at the last moment.

When we stopped at Palmerston North, I recognised a familiar face as he boarded the train. It was Stu Keith. Stu was training as a linesman at the NZPO Training Centre, Trentham Camp, and was also joining the navy as communicator. Another recruit who hopped on at Palmy and joining the same class was Vic Anderson. Stu was best remembered in Trentham as the lad who owned an Indian motorbike, couldn't afford to buy inner tubes for the tyres, so he stuffed them with grass. The engine was also prone to belching flames out the side - I don't know how many pairs of jeans he went through.

We arrived at 0700 19th May at Auckland Railway Station and boarded RNZN buses. I was expecting them to be painted RN Navy Blue but they were predominantly light blue with a navy-blue stripe down the sides. When we arrived at HMNZS Tamaki, Narrow Neck, North Shore, we were greeted by a very friendly Senior Rates and sorted in to classes according to branches. Communicators were CS72 and put in to Achilles Division. Our Class Instructor was Yeoman Herb Anscombe. The rest of the day was spent in getting our kit, including a wooden block and letters to put in back to front to make up your name. The name part was dipped in red paint and pressed firmly onto all items of uniform except the handkerchiefs and socks. You put your name on your hankie with pen and black ink. Socks had to have a small white strip sewn to them and name also appended by pen and ink.

Inside our housewives (sewing kit) were needles, black and white cotton, red embroidery thread, various black and white buttons and a pair of scissors. We had to embroider our names on the red paint that had been stamped on our kit. J.A. DELL didn't take as long as some of the others so I charged a small fee to help them out.

Over the course of the day, more recruits arrived in dribs and drabs but it wasn't until the following day that we were all sworn in. This was a large intake but we were all duly sworn in, pledging allegiance to God, Queen and Country.

20th May 1964, I was officially Dell, James Anthony, NZ18186, Junior Recruit Radio Operator, ready to start Basic Common Training. All communicators joined as RO's and sorted in to specialisations once we were in Basic Branch Training at the Communications Training School, North Head, HMNZS Philomel.

Parade Ground staff included CPOGIs Jack Baigent and an ex-RNer but I can't remember his name. It was french sounding and wasn't Basil Le Compte who was a Boom Defence CPO.

Our Seaman Instructor was PO Pete Coffey. I was to come across him again years later when he was the Caretaker of the RNZN Ski Lodge at Ohakune. We used to have seamanship classes in one of the old gun emplacements overlooking Hauraki Gulf and he also took us out sailing in whalers.

Padre was Harry Taylor who had served during WW2 and had been at Dunkirk, where he delivered the last rites to hundreds of servicemen on the beach. Many of them had never been christened and Harry considered it his duty to ensure new recruits were baptised. Greg Hartley was one such recruit and he asked me to be his Godfather. Unfortunately, I don't know what happened to his christening gown...



CS 72

Back Row: L to R - Dell (RO), Hartley (RO), James (Sig), Harvey (Sig), Kingi (RO), Henman (RO), Bird (Sig)

Front Row: L to R - Keith (Sig - Changed to Regulator later on), Graham (Sig), O'Leary (Sig), McKirdy (Sig), Anderson (Sig), Rushbridge (Sig), Farrow (RO)

- The scran queues were huge and if you were a bit late and it was raining, you could end up standing outside getting wet.
- Cleaning stations for Captain's Rounds was on a Friday Night and Greg Hartley and myself decided that joining the choir for choir practice was a better option as it was held on the same night.
- Captains Rounds were on a Saturday morning and one week we won the Captains cake for best dormitory.

CS 72 - winners of the Captain's cake. Herb Anscombe holding said cake.



.Pictured above, standing next to Ray O'Leary is Eason, who wasn't in the Class Photo.

- Hated cross country running as the issued sandshoes had no insteps and were hard on the feet.
- Hated pussers plastic sandals for the same reason above. Ended up with flat feet as a result.
- Greg Hartley saluted with his left hand when it was his turn as platoon commander and we had to go around again and Jim Harvey couldn't march with left arm and right leg out together. He marched left arm with left leg and right arm with right leg. We had to keep going around the parade ground until he got it right.
- As you can see from the above photo, Chris Farrow is wearing socks with plastic sandals. He had crook toes, couldn't wear shoes or boots and had to go and have an operation.
- We had a pillow fight one night in the dorm after lights out and as a result we had to duck walk around the parade ground holding our pillows above our heads.

- No leave for the first six weeks.
- When we did get leave, leave was up at Admiralty Steps at 2100.
- We were paid three pounds a fortnight with one pound and ten shillings of that put aside on your ledger. (I was paid six pounds a fortnight in the Post Office)
- Payment in fine weather was on the Parade Ground and in wet weather in the Junior Rates dining room. When it was your turn for pay, you stepped forward, saluted, off caps and presented your cap to the paybob whilst reciting your name, rank and serial number. Your pay was then deposited in to your cap, which you grabbed with your left hand, stuffed the pay envelope into your left pocket, put cap back on, saluted and turned right and marched off.

We had a classroom equipped with morse key and buzzer for the instructor and the remaining desks had earphone sockets and earphones. We were given the morse code to learn for the first week during evenings (which I really struggled with...) and then when Herb thought the Class was ready, he would transmit the alphabet at about 5 WPM, gradually building up to about 8 WPM using sentences. One evening he started transmitting and then increased the speed to as fast as a Yeoman could transmit to see how I was doing. He was satisfied with the result and thereafter I ended up taking the class in morse lessons. This left Herb to check out the Senior Rates Mess to make sure that all was well.

We finished our BCT and posted into HMNZS Philomel 31 August 1964 to commence our BBT. Once there, Yeoman Charlie Cameron argued that it was pointless keeping me in the class that I was in and the hierarchy agreed to put me in to CS63 that had joined Tamaki in January 1964.



CS 63 as BCT Class

Back Row- Tuhiwai, Alder, Bird, Mihaere, Fowler, Cupples, Mitchell, Parry, Ohlsen.
 Front Row - Lawford, Sanson, Purves, Ratu, Mathie, Graham, Simonsen, Philips.

September 9th, I attained the age of 17 and a half years and was promoted to Recruit Radio Operator.

We were having a lesson in Automatic Teletype Procedure and I was sitting next to Derek Lawford who decided to engage me in animated conversation about something really interesting, when our instructor decided that we weren't paying sufficient attention. We were ordered to the front of the class where, to my utmost horror, he produced a rather, vicious looking cane that could deal with two offenders at once. I thought I had left my "inflicted" punishment days behind me - wrong! We were ordered to bend over and touch the chalk tray at the bottom of the blackboard. The instructor was right handed which meant that he was going to administer the pain from our left. I placed Derek to the right of me, knowing that the end of the cane would flick and inflict more pain - sorry Derek... The instructor must have read my old discipline master's notes because he also felt that four strokes was the appropriate number.

(I was going to mention my instructor's name in case he felt remorse but thought better of it...)

Finished BBT training 17 December, promoted to Radio Operator (General) 2nd Class on the 18th and drafted to the Port Wireless Station, North Head, whilst awaiting a draft to HMNZS Royalist in January 1965. In the meantime, we were billeted in the transit barracks at Philomel which only had hammock slings. I was lying in my "mick" one-night reading, when my right hand, hammock occupant staggered back in from a run ashore. Took his clothes off except for his nicks and leapt into his hammock - unfortunately, he kept going, landed on the deck and broke an arm. He survived and was one of CS63 to draft to Royalist.

More to follow...