

CHAPTER 4 - NCC Wellington

I had several weeks leave when Royalist got back to Auckland, so I went down to Wellington to stay at my Mother's place in Heretaunga. My parents had split up when I left home to join the Post Office and my father had been posted to Waiouru. I figured that my leave pay wasn't going to last that long so I looked at getting a temporary job and I wondered if the International Telegraph Office in Wellington would take me on.

Fortunately, the old Superintendent had retired and his 2IC had been promoted in his place. We had got on rather well in the past and was glad to have me fill the gaps over the Christmas/New Year period. Public transport wasn't that great in and out of Wellington late at night in those days but the Public Service ran a taxi service for government shift workers and I was able to get to and from Heretaunga for the evening/middle shifts.

I came home from the day shift on one occasion to find my mother grim-faced and holding my spare wallet in her hand. "What's this?" she demanded holding out a condom in the other hand. She had picked up a pair of my trousers off the floor and the wallet and some of its content had "happened" to spill out on the floor. She had already received one shock when I first got to her place and discovered that I had visited a couple of tattoo parlours in Hong Kong. What had her little Jim been up to? I said that I was holding the condom for someone else and when she asked who it was, the first name that came to mind was Dave McKirdy. My mother had met Dave at our passing out parade at Tamaki and she said "What! He didn't look as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth!" I mumbled that looks could be deceiving. Fortunately for me, she never met Dave again for him to verify my scandalous statement.

Well, all good things come to an end and I reported back to Royalist to do my drafting out routine, given a travel pass and found myself heading south again on the "Rattler". Drafted in to HMNZS Wakefield 16 January 1966 and told to report to the NCC on the 8th Floor. I had been therefore when MAA Tasker had arranged a visit back in 1964 and on that occasion I was greeted by LRO Neal Catley. The CRS at that time was Vic St Clair who had retired and became the Canteen Manager on Royalist.

I was put in Bob Farrant's watch with Blue Godfrey as the killick. There was also Bill Sinclair, Jake Huka and Nick Carter, who worked the Fixed Service circuits to Vancouver, Canberra and Honolulu. There were landline circuits to Deepfreeze HQ, HMNZS Olphert, Navcommsta Waiouru, NCC Auckland, Army Comcen at Buckle Street, the RNZAF Comcen on the 3rd Floor and the Naval HQ MSO on the 2nd floor. During the week day, the MSO on the 2nd Floor was manned by a Yeoman and Signal Wrens. At night and during the weekends, it was manned by the watch LSG - in our case, I think it was Jake Huka.

The only Royalist operators that I remember drafting down with me were Bonce Craig, Larry Maindonald and John Cupples. The four of us ended up flatting together as we found Ft Dorset cold and unappealing. The Day Watch would start at 0800 with the Night Watch starting at 1600. The Back Bar of the Midland Hotel was nearby and would open at 0700 and close at 1800 (the days of the 6 o'clock "swill") and sometimes we would end up there after the night shift.

NCC Wellington also keyed the off-line radioteletype (WVR) and the CW (WV) broadcasts as well as the Local Command Net on 3192 kHz (CW), 2532 kHz (DSB) and a UHF Voice circuit on 270 odd MHz using a 691/CUH. The CW broadcast normally ran at 22 WPM but when a British submarine was on station, it was cranked up to 90 wpm. The subs would raise their antenna, receive their signal traffic on a tape recorder, then when their sked was over, playback the tape at a slower speed.

The RN 4th Submarine Flotilla was based in Sydney from 1949 until 1969. The flotilla, which varied in size between two and three boats, was used to support the Royal Australian Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy in anti-submarine warfare training and SUBMISS/SUBSUNK. SMASHEX procedures (exercises carried out in the event that a submarine went missing or known to be sunk) were always carried out during these periods.

Bill Sinclair found himself on a Posting Order to HMNZS Endeavour but didn't want to go as his 8 years was nearly up. Him and I put in for an exchange posting, which was granted, and I duly reported onboard 22 July 1966.