



**HMNZS ENDEAVOUR A184**



HMNZS Endeavour was an ex petrol carrier – Patapsco class. Built by Cargill Inc. Savage, Minn., USA. Launched November 1944 and completed in June 1945. Commissioned as the USS Namakagon. Saw service until December 1957 when she was placed in reserve at San Francisco. In June 1962, Namakagon was lent to NZ. She went into refit and was strengthened for service in ice. Commissioned into the RNZN in October 1962 as HMNZS Endeavour. She served as Antarctic support ship until the end of the 1970/71 season and returned to the US in June 1971. Re-commissioned as the USS Namakagon, before transferring to the Taiwanese Navy as Lung Chuan.

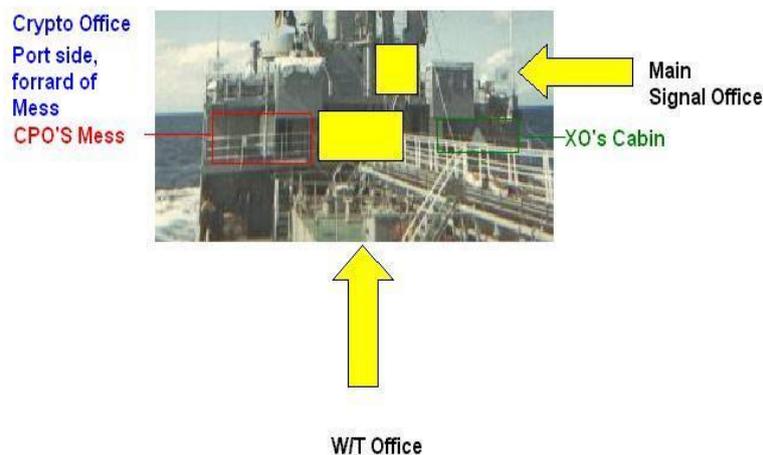
On average, an Antarctica Season for **Endeavour** would take about three months. This included two trips, returning to New Zealand between trips for re-supplying – taking on diesel fuel, aviation fuel and dry stores. The ship's cargo fuel tanks could carry between 500,000 - 600,00 US gallons of aviation fuel for which the US Navy paid \$1US dollar per gallon. One would have to think that this may have been in mind for the new HMNZS Aotearoa as she is earmarked to carry AVGAS to McMurdo Sound for the US Navy.

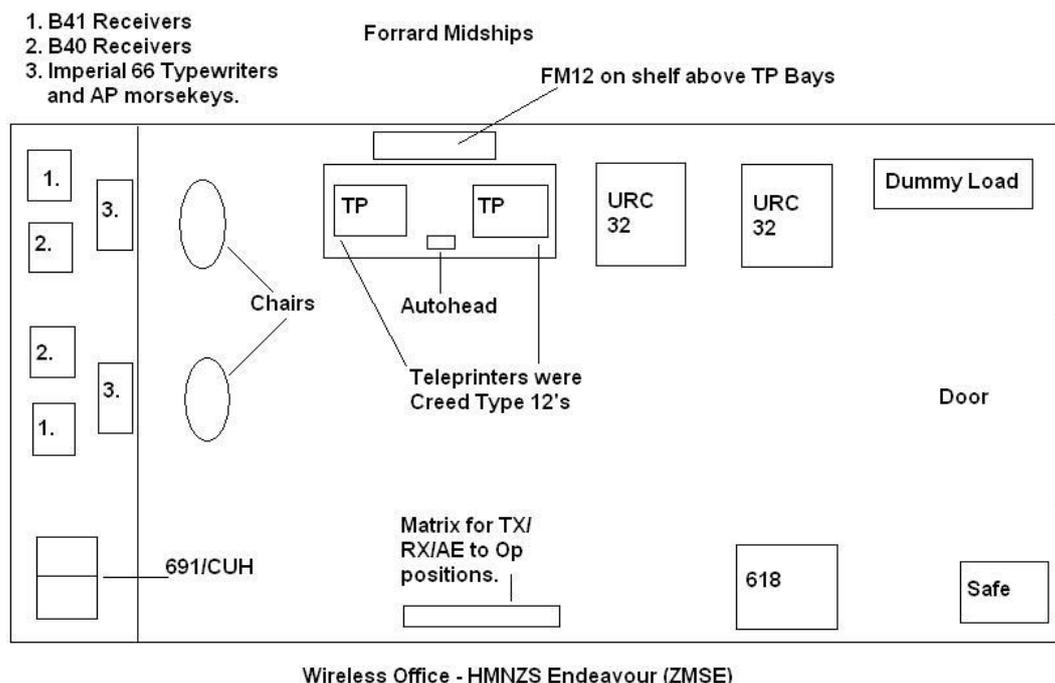
I joined the ship in July 1966 as an Able Radioman. The captain was Cdr Hodge, RNZN. The ship's communications complement was one PRD, one LSG and one ARD but was classed as a Single Operator Ship. Comms crew when I first joined was PRD Pippy Boyd, LSG Sticks Olds and ARD Lobo Young. George Hill relieved Pippy and Kevin Smith took over from Sticks. I think Lobo was leaving the navy after his eight years to become a commercial artist as he was a very accomplished cartoonist.

There were a few ex-Royalist crew onboard - EMs Barry Fraser and Wayne Philip. ABs Jack Rosewarne, Colin MacDonald and Stu Robinson. Stds Laurie Speck and Noel Harrod. Laurie Speck - of Royalist infamy. Came back ashore one night in Pearl and decided he wanted a soda from the vending machine on the wharf. After several frustrating attempts to get a can out of the machine, Laurie decided that the vending machine was better off elsewhere. There was a forklift close by with the keys still in the ignition. Laurie drove the forklift over to the vending machine, used the forks to lift it up and decided that it was going in the harbour. It did, plus the forklift. I can't remember if Laurie ended up in the harbour as well, or if he jumped clear at the last moment.

Anyway, I digress. The W/T Office was in the forrard section of the ship with the MSO starboard side aft of the Chartroom. XO's cabin was directly opposite the W/T Office. My cleaning station was the officers' heads and bathroom - one head and one shower. The communicators seemed to have won this odious task on all the ships with the senior rate in charge being paid Captain of the Heads allowance. Apart from the CO, who had his own ablution area, the XO was the only other officer living up Forrard. The others were down aft, Port side 1 Deck. POs' Mess was directly underneath on 2 Deck and the Junior ratings accommodation was on the same deck, starboard. Galley was on the Port side, 1 Deck and scientists laboratory on the Starboard side, 1 Deck.

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There was accommodation up forrard with 12 bunks, plus heads and bathrooms aft of the hold. This accommodation was for scientists, RNZNVR and Sea Cadets. The hold was very large and on the forrard bulkhead was a spare propeller. The hold was also used to show movies. The J/Rs Messdeck was divided in to two parts - bunk space and dining room/lounge. Pure luxury after the Broadside Messing on Royalist.

My day would start at 0600 - shit, shave and shower, followed by breakfast. Then at 0800, cleaning stations in the Officers' head and shower, followed by cleaning out the W/T Office. The PRD would send the 0600 weather and the 0800 Position, Course and Speed reports. I would send any ship to shore traffic from 0900 onwards and copied two-hourly skeds on the off-line radioteletype broadcast WVR from Navcommsta Waiouru with the first sked starting at 1000, send the 1200 weather report followed by lunch. Next sked was at 1400 and the last one at 2200. At 2359, I would send the six hourly weather report, turning in about 0030.

The PRD would leave me to my own devices and the LSG was responsible for encrypting/decrypting classified traffic (including setting up and cleaning the KL7 rotors), typing up and distributing signals.

Between August and November, the ship carried explosives to the Cook Islands for use in harbour development projects, and then took on old ammunition at the Motuihe anchorage for dumping at the allotted area in the Hauraki Gulf. Whilst anchored off Rarotonga, a couple of the junior rates decided to stay ashore and the following morning they borrowed an outrigger and rowed to the stern of the ship. There, they climbed up the metal rungs and cautiously poked their heads up at the quarterdeck, where, looking down at them, was the XO (Lt Cdr B. Commons). "Good Morning gentlemen. Please see me in my cabin after Colours." Needless to say, stoppage of leave followed.

The 1966/67 season started off too early - departing Auckland late November 1966. We called in to Wellington to embark RNZNVR personnel and I dropped off the names and telephone numbers of ships company that wanted to make radiotelephone calls on Christmas Day. I had to go to the Wellington Toll exchange to drop off the list and met the operators that I would be speaking to over the air. Lyttelton was the next port of call to take on aviation fuel for the US Navy. Got thrown out of the British Hotel for being underage.

Departed Lyttelton and headed south. Even though Endeavour was fully laden, she used to roll heavily from side to side making it impossible for the radioteletype comparator/convertors to maintain the required signal for good printability. I would invariably have to revert to the CW broadcast WV. I would wedge myself in the right hand operator's position, bucket between my knees and type the incoming signals on an Imperial 66 typewriter.

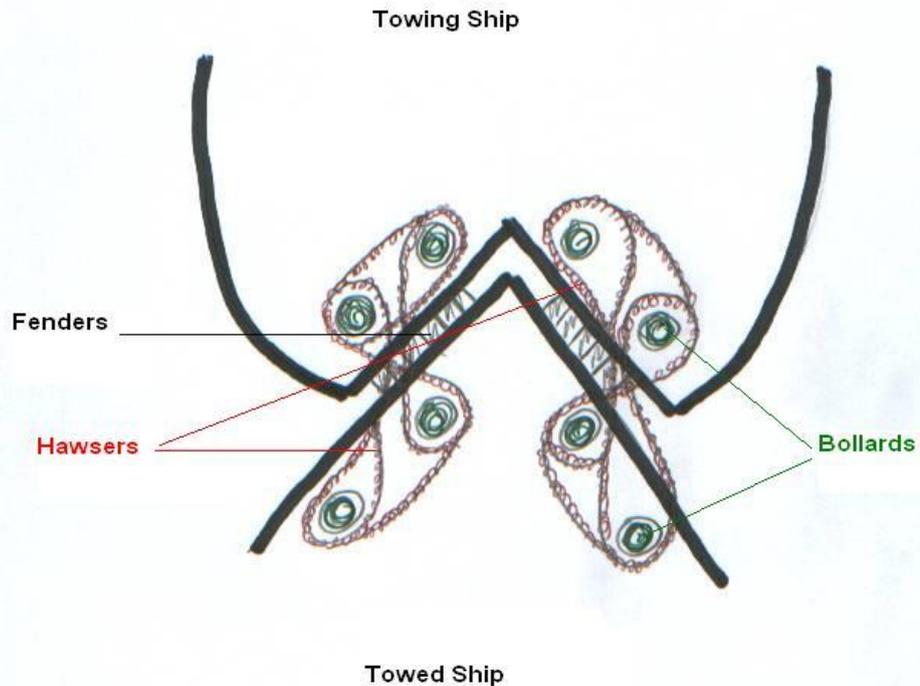
As we travelled further south, the Aurora Australis would cause ionospheric interference making communications with NZ difficult. Fortunately, the US Navy (NGD) provided good coverage with a 50 baud off-line radioteletype broadcast (AR) and ship to shore for CW traffic.



Christmas Day 1966. Pic taken by Laurie Speck - I was on watch. Stu Robinson in the centre, with Barry Fraser on the right.

On reaching McMurdo Sound, the pack ice was still too thick. Fortunately, three US Ice-breakers had already made a rough channel. At the rendezvous point at the outward end of the channel, the three ice-breakers waited for us. Whilst we gingerly edged our bow into the wedge of the quarterdeck of the larger ice-breaker, **USCGC Glacier**, the two, slightly smaller vessels went ahead and made a wider channel. Once we were physically secured into the "crotch-towing" position with **Glacier**, the operation commenced. **USCGC Glacier** then physically towed us into Winter Quarters Bay - the last few hundred yards we were towed on a single wire, where we commenced to unload fuel and supplies for the US Navy and Scott Base.

Crotch Towing - The towing Icebreaker had a large Vee cut into the quarterdeck to allow the ship to be towed, physical access to the towing ship. The ships were kept apart by fenders.



The US Navy took communications guard for us whilst alongside Elliot Quay, Winter Quarters Bay.

The ships company went into three watches alongside - 8 hours on and 16 off. There was a Quonset hut at one end of the quay and it was for the use of ships alongside. We offloaded most of the beer from the ship and took it to the hut where a makeshift bar was set up and a duty barman appointed. Most of us preferred to go to the Club at McMurdo where it was heated. They also had a PX there where you could buy Duty Free goods.

We visited Scott Base where we were warmly welcomed and some of us went on dog sled rides. Arms were not permitted on the Antarctic continent except for Scott Base. They had an old .303 rifle which they used for killing 50 seals a year for dog meat for the huskies. Dogs are no longer used as mechanised transport has taken over.



December 1966 - Ross Ice Shelf crumpled up against the shore at Scott Base



Dog sled ride - very exhilarating!

During the transit through the ice, a blade had broken off one of the propellers. We departed McMurdo with Glacier towing us out by the crotch-towing method and when we got to the edge of the ice-pack, one of the smaller ice breakers took over and towed us back to Port Chalmers - a long, slow trip. The ship went into the dry dock there, where the broken prop was taken off and the spare put in place. In Port Chalmers for about two weeks then we went to Wellington. A short scientific cruise was undertaken at the end of January, between Wellington, the Chatham Islands, and Lyttelton, with members of the Oceanographic Institute on board. At Lyttelton, we loaded on more stores and aviation fuel and headed back to McMurdo.

The return trip was a bit eventful. On one occasion whilst traversing the catwalk above the tank deck to go on watch at 2200, I was hit by a greenie which soaked me to the skin. Went back down the mess to get changed and got about half way across the tank deck when another greenie hit me, once again soaking me. Went and got changed again, only to be soaked to the skin a third time. At this point, I had run out of dry clothing so proceeded to the Wireless Office, where I stripped off and dried my clothes in front of the heater whilst I did my watch naked. Fortunately, by the time the Bosuns Mate came down with the 2359 Weather Report, I was dressed.

We called into Wellington after the second trip of that season to take on ammunition from the NZ Army for dumping out at sea. The ship pulled into Shelly Bay to find about 50 army trucks from Waiouru waiting for us and the person in charge was Staff Sergeant Dell! It took about two days to load the ammo onboard and the ship sailed for the ammo dumping area off the Wellington coast and then onto Auckland. My father and a small team of soldiers were onboard to help out with the dumping and take passage. I believe he was made comfortable in the Petty Officers Mess.

Endeavour was guard ship for the Whangarei-Noumea Yacht Race, during a navigational training cruise for midshipmen. The French minesweeper **FNS La Orientaise** was also an escort for the yacht race and I went over to visit their sparkers. Strings of garlic and onions hung from the deckhead in their mess and volumes of red wine were quaffed toasting each other's health. My school boy French came in handy and there was a lot of "Ello! Ello! Mon Ami!" going on. We took on three extra sparkers for the trip and a newspaper reporter. Sparkers were Greg Hartley, Harry Peters and a reservist, Alan Roberts. Pretty busy during the actual race with all the yachts reporting in every 24 hours and press reports being transmitted and we also reverted to full-time reception on Broadcast WVR. Couple of days spent in Noumea with copious quantities of Heineken being consumed and hosting the French sparkers from the minesweeper onboard, with rum and Leopard lager before returning to Auckland.

This was followed by calls in the Pacific during which stores and obsolete explosives for reef clearing operations were delivered to various islands, including the new decimal currency to NZ's Dependencies in the Islands - the Tokelaus, the Cooks and Nuie. Millions of dollars were brought into the Naval Base under Police and SAS escort and loaded into Endeavour's hold. Decimal currency was introduced into NZ, 10 July 1967 so the currency was taken to the Islands at least a month beforehand.

Upon our return, George Hill and Kevin Smith drafted off. Their replacements were PRD Rex Handcock and ASG Murray Purves.

More to follow...