

Extract from the Log of Frank Start - VE3AJ from April 1979 Hi-Q by VE3UA

1927 - Aboard the Canadian Runner

In the summer of 1927, I was on the Canadian Runner, one of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine vessels. It was a general cargo freighter of 1840 tons headed for the West Indies.

The W/T equipment was a Canadian Marconi 2 KW spark transmitter, about and shape of an upright piano. The receiver was a crystal and tube type amplifier with the usual headphones and no emergency set.

From Montreal we went to the first of the Leeward Islands, St. Kitts, then Guadeloupe and then Barbados. At the latter port I got my first opportunity to take a swim off the ship's side. Had the misfortune to swim through a patch of oil which cut that fun short. I spent the remainder of the day trying to get the stuff off my skin. Made a short stop at Grenada which is a beautiful tropical island, the swimming was excellent and no fuel oil. At Trinidad I did not get ashore but managed to buy a case of grapefruit for 75¢ and a case of oranges for \$1.00. These lasted the whole trip.

Final stop was at Georgetown, which used to be the capital of Guyana. This is the tropics for sure. Hot and humid. A mixed bunch of people, including a lot of East Indians, most of them beggars. In Barbados they drink beer and ginger beer. Here they go in for beer and ginger ale and call it Shandygaff. The cockroaches are the size of mice. For souvenirs here we have alligators of all sizes-dead or alive. Small stuffed 'gators sell for 25¢ (that was before inflation!). I bought a large stuffed one about two feet long. Later on this proved handy when I was living in Montreal. Visitors who imbibed (not wisely-but too well) were put to bed with an alligator! Also to be had as souvenirs were tarantulas-also dead or alive. The six inch diameter type, at 50¢, would have a more rapid sobering effect than the alligator.

Guyana was our last port of call. It was good to get away into the cool breezes of the Caribbean Sea and head for home. The weather got a bit on the dirty side in the vicinity of Bermuda and the racks were on the table for a few days to keep the dishes on the table. Eventually we entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence and into the home stretch. But (Murphy not far away) we encountered some wet weather and fog.

Came the day we were getting up to Father Point, rain and fog continued. After supper we were out on the deck looking for the Rimouski Pilot Boat. Several other ships were in the vicinity all sounding fog signals. Quite suddenly we picked up the riding lights of another ship coming out of the fog.

We thought this would be the pilot boat. Then from the bridge, we heard the engine room telegraph ring and the ship started to swing. We were trying to dodge the other ship but it was too late. Her bow came out of the fog and with a loud crunch smacked us in the Port quarter. So had to go to work than and find out who had done the dirty deed. It turned out to be a British freighter, the "Norton Pride" inbound for Montreal. Her bow had driven a hole in our stern about ten feet wide and that many feet deep, just stopping short of a double bunk two seaman had just

vacated. It was now raining hard. The ship was stopped and the cargo holds and the ships tanks were being checked for water. There was a row on the after deck as two coloured firemen were found trying to put their suitcases into one of the lifeboats. Chief Officer got a bit excited, came into the radio shack and said to me, "Come on, you have got to help get the boats ready too". I ignored him as it was too wet outside and I had to work also. The coast station at Father Point called with a message to the Captain which asked permission for the W/T station to advise "Lloyds". I found the Captain and the Chief Engineer on the Bridge and delivered the message. The skipper read the message and much to my surprise said, "Lloyds? Who are they?" So the chief had to explain about Lloyds of London. By this time I was thinking that if I stayed in the shack too long I would get my feet wet. After a little traffic handling I got a suggested location for beaching the ship. So the ship moved and we settled down in the mud for the night.

More traffic was handled in the morning direct with Quebec City (VCC). In one case, I had some difficulty in clearing a message due to poor conditions and QRM and did not get a satisfactory QSL from VCC. The skipper come in and asked if I had sent the message. I said, "Yes, but I had not received an OK". The skipper said, "Well you sent the message, didn't you? That's fine." I said no more.

It was still raining when the wrecking tug "Lord Strathcona" finally arrived from Quebec City. The towing hawser was hooked on and we started our slow crawl to Montreal.