

A summer at camp for cadets

Each year, more than 200 Royal Canadian Sea Cadets from Manitoba are selected for summer training at HMCS Quadra, the sea cadet training camp on the east shore of Vancouver Island.

HMCS Quadra, about 120 miles north of Victoria, also has a sizeable number of Manitoba sea cadet officers on its staff for the three months — June, July and August — it operates every year.

About 800 officers and cadets man the camp at any one time, and come from as far east as Quebec and as far north as the Yukon. At Quadra, they put together and polish the skills and techniques they have acquired during the year in their local sea cadet corps work, as well as taking advanced training courses.



Cadet waits on jetty before embarking on day cruise.

A rigorous program opens door to maturity



Sea-cadet training boat takes disabled motor boat in tow in the Strait of Georgia.

The faces that were dragged with sleep only a while ago are now beaming with delight at their coup.

It was Ted Lofto's 20th birthday.

In that little incident lies the "message" of Quadra.

It is not a spit-and-polish boot camp.

The military aspect — the uniforms, the ranks, the saluting, the parade-square drills and the rest — does provide the framework of the program. But within that framework the cadets — from the youngest, who spend two weeks on a basic general training course, to those who spend two months at on-the-job training courses — learn just what their limits are.

Quadra is a springboard to maturity which demands — and gets — a lot from its cadets.

"The emphasis here," says Lt.-Col. Ralph Vipond, Quadra's commanding officer, "is not on military training. It's on becoming a responsible member of the community.

"And 'responsibility' in this context means being capable of assuming the consequence of your actions." In Quadra, Lt.-Col. Vipond said, "we give the cadet as much responsibility as he can handle. And the cadet knows, perhaps because of the military tie-in, that he is doing something real, that he's not engaged in some make-work project."

Youth work

A young man, the commanding officer has been involved in youth work for much of his life. In 1969 he became the first director of the Victoria Youth Attendance Centre, a B.C. provincial court agency which operates a program for the rehabilitation of delinquent youngsters. He's been active in the sea cadet organization since 1964, when he took command of a cadet corps in Burns Lake, B.C. He comes across as a man who knows what makes kids tick, and someone who cares.

"In all my years," he said, "I've never met a bad kid. I've met some terribly bent-out-of-shape ones, but there's no kid who wakes up in the morning and says to himself 'I think I'll become a delinquent — the hours are good and the pay's not bad.'"

Lt.-Col. Vipond transmits that to his officers — all of whom are in the sea reserves, not regular forces. "I make it pretty clear to them all that they have to really like kids and be prepared to spend their time dealing with them and getting along with them.

"If they're not, they'd better go into their cabins, pack their bags and sneak out of here before I catch on to them and send them flying out of here."

Most of the officers are just as committed as Quadra's commander. They spend 18-hour days working with the cadets and work at it seven days a week. Officers can't leave camp until 9 p.m. and even then most don't bother, or can't, because

they're too busy. Quadra offers no easy summer jobs.

The 80-odd officers who staff Quadra — they work with about 700 cadets — don't recognize a generation gap. It would be difficult, as the officers themselves range in age from teen-agers to men in their 50s.

Lt.-Col. Vipond questions whether a generation gap really exists, "and if it exists I don't think it needs to exist." He mentioned probation officers "who dress in mod clothes, talk the lingo of the kids in an attempt to identify with them — that's stupid.

"The kid doesn't need another weak-willed person to deal with him," Lt. Col. Vipond said. "He needs a strong adult, someone he can be able to look up to, respect, identify — someone from whom he can draw strength."

Restraint

"The men here," he said, "must respond to the emotional needs of the cadets, and yet have the courage to restrain those emotions in order to make the cadets bear up."

That statement comes as tacit recognition that life at Quadra, for the cadets, is not just a fun-filled holiday. The work, the discipline, the at-times rigorous routine can be fun, but it's also difficult at times. Cadets in Quadra for the two-week basic training course don't walk from place to place — they "double", another form of jogging. Homesickness is a common affliction, but for the majority of the boys it's a very fleeting ailment.

There is also, in Quadra, a distinct lack of privacy for both officers and cadets. Only a few officers end up in two-man cabins — the rest sleep in dormitories, as do the cadets. They eat together and work together. "This," one Quadra officer said, "teaches the boys that they can be members of a community, that they can relate to others — here they have no choice but to do that. It comes from shipboard life, where men — of necessity — have to form a close-knit community, where they spend months at sea and have to learn how to get along together."

Cadets — about 200 come from Manitoba each year — go to Quadra knowing what to expect. The camp's information booklet starts out: "Quadra is a strictly-operated training establishment where you will be expected to work very hard to accomplish a great deal.

Demanding

"The daily routine is demanding. You can expect to discover, before you return home, what your limits are. Perhaps, like previous thousands of Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, you will discover that your limits are much greater than you had ever realized."

The youngest cadets at Quadra are 14, the oldest 18. Their day begins — for all but the practical leadership trainees — at 6

HMCS QUADRA — It's 5:30 a.m. and a bleak dawn is breaking as a dozen young sea cadets, their hair tousled and eyes filled with sleep, trot on to the cold asphalt parade square.

A brisk breeze is whipping in over the Strait of Georgia as the boys, clad in gym shorts and a motley assortment of tops, start their morning callisthenics program.

Gradually they stop shivering and begin to come alive. After 10 or 15 minutes of exercises they stop, once again form ranks and jog with their leader to the jetty.

Their leader is Capt. Ted Lofto, a sea reserve officer from Winnipeg who is in charge of the practical leadership course — one of the toughest on Quadra — which these cadets are taking. Capt. Lofto, too, is in gym shorts and going through the same rigorous routine.

Jump in

Once on the jetty — a long dock — the cadets strip down to bathing suits and don lifejackets. And now for their real wake-up tonic — a 17- or 18-foot jump off the jetty into the cold sea. One by one they take the plunge until, with one exception, they're in the water, arms linked and floating effortlessly.

In the practical leadership course, one of many taught here, cadets learn to depend on each other, to have trust and confidence in each other — in short, they're welded into a sort of corporate entity that can function as a single unit when the need arises.

So the one cadet who won't jump isn't a light matter. He can't be ordered to jump. He can't be pushed. He has to be made to want to jump. He has to learn not to be afraid. And that takes time.

Capt. Lofto asks the boy why he won't jump. The cadet replies he has a sore knee, and can't.

No jeering

The chaps already in the water call to the loner to take the plunge. There's no jeering, no sneering — perhaps it can best be described as exerting peer-group influence. Still the boy won't jump, and he then produces his trump card — a chit from the medical office saying he can only jetty-jump every second day.

Against that, the captain is helpless. The boy is resolute. Normally, the cadets already in the water would stay there until every boy has jumped. But the medical chit wins the battle this time.

The cadets in the water get the nod from the captain and launch into their morning morale song. That done, they pull their little surprise.

Arms still linked, still floating, they break into a rendition of "Happy birthday, Captain Lofto, happy birthday to you . . ."

a.m. with "wakey, wakey." At 6:10 a.m. there's physical exercise, either ashore or pulling at oars in the boats, followed by breakfast at 7 a.m. An hour later the boys fall in for inspection, and classes begin at 9 a.m. There's work and recreation throughout the entire day and evening, ending with lights out at 10:30 p.m. And it's a seven-day week for everyone.

The camp offers five types of training during the summer. It's a type of sequential training program, since all cadets must first go through the two-week training period. About 275 "two-weekies" are in Quadra at any one time, and a new group comes in every two weeks. This is the basic course for cadets, and includes swimming, sports, sailing, rifle drill, parade training, an over-night sail in an open boat and a day cruise.

If a cadet has gone through the two-week course, he can apply the next year for a two-month stint at Quadra. If accepted, he goes into a trade school for one of a variety of courses — engineering, operations and watchkeeping, supply and administration, cooking, medical assistant, music or practical leadership.

On-the-job trainees, also at Quadra for the full summer, are employed as part of the camp's training and support staff. They work as instructors in all departments, as crewmen aboard the boats, as clerks, cooks or hospital attendants.

The OJTs, as they're known, must have gone through the basic two-week course and a trades school before qualifying.

The camp also has officer sea training — where officers from sea cadet corps throughout Canada go to sea for two weeks aboard one of the camp's six diesel-powered patrol boats; and through actually doing the work, learn the basics of navigation and ship handling.

At the head of the list is a three-month officer cadet training program. The officer cadets are divided into two groups, one sea-going and the other a "general list" section. The sea-going group goes through an initial three-week navigation course, then spends the rest of its time at sea aboard the camp's boats. They will staff, in future years, the sea training courses for both Quadra and their cadet corps back home.

Administration

General list officer cadets learn the administrative functions required to operate Quadra, and details applicable to their home corps. It is a demanding course, and officer cadets represent the cream of cadets in Canada.

One of Quadra's advantages is that it can offer cadets sea training available nowhere else.

Its six boats patrol the Strait of Georgia throughout the summer. They make two 10-day cruises and three seven-day cruises, each time taking nine to 14 cadets. Under the direction of the permanent crew, the cadets carry out the crew's functions — and do notebook work as well.

While at sea, the boats double as naval auxiliary patrol vessels, keeping a watch for pleasure craft — and there are plenty of them sailing these waters — in distress. Often, it's no more than a motorboat with a disabled engine requiring a tow to the nearest port. The YFPs have also responded to distress calls from boats on fire, those carrying injured people — they're ready for any kind of call.

The boats carry out numerous drills simulating rescue work while they're at sea. To see how well they manage, Maj. F. W. Greenwood, the camp's flotilla commander, heads out to sea himself every so often to carry out inter-ship competitive drills. Since the six boats are divided into Group North and Group South — three to a group — they can patrol a 3,000-square-mile area, and Maj. Greenwood doesn't pull them off patrol for competitive drills too often. When the drills are held, the three boats steam together and on signal each crew carries out a specific task — the first to finish hoists the X-Ray flag and scores the points.

Ashore and at sea, Quadra's cadets are challenged to do their best and excell. "Kids today," Lt.-Col. Vipond said, "say 'I am capable of doing so much more than anyone asks me.'"

"We don't exact an unfair price here — no price at all, really, in that sense — we just give the boy a chance here to do his best, to prove to himself that he can do something, and do it well. That's why Quadra exists."



Incoming cadets present duffel bags for inspection before being assigned to dormitories.