



# Class of 65 Newsletter Edition 33-January 2011



*Disclaimer: This Newsletter is produced for members of the RMC Class of 1965 and is based solely on inputs from members of the Class of 65. It is not an official publication of the Royal Military College nor does it purport to represent the views or opinions of all members of the Class of 65. Articles will be entered in the official language in which they are received. Regrettably the Editorial staff still lacks the linguistic skills to produce a bilingual version.*

## Editor's Corner

Happy New Year everyone. I hope you all had an enjoyable holiday and are now invigorated to take on the challenges of the new year (including providing me with input for the Newsletter!!).

This Edition is a bit thin, but includes an important announcement on a significant Class happening. **Roger Chiasson** has donated his recollections as a ship's diver; a nice complement to **John Critchley's** article in Edition 28 on combat diving in the army. Finally, I am grateful to **Yvan Gagnon** for providing some more reminiscences of his time as a professor at RMC.

**Honourary Class President:** Some time after the Class's 45th anniversary festivities in Kingston in October, it was proposed that **6604 Jim "Fats" Carruthers** be named the *Honourary President* of the Class.

An initial sounding of some 20 guys representing all three of our "mother" institutions determined that this idea was not only well received but astoundingly so.

A subsequent e-poll of everyone on the Class mailing list resulted in nothing but acceptance, praise, and a "let's do it" attitude.

This special appointment is in recognition of Jim's longstanding and generous



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service to the Class as well as to the formative institutions for some or all of its members such as Royal Roads, the Canadian Navy, and in particular the Royal Military College of Canada.

One has only to note his personal involvement in the very successful fund-raising for the RMC Class of 65 Teaching Excellence Award, and the Class's newly established Professorship in Leadership, a total endowment of over \$1.6 million dollars. He also has his "own" military college scholarship program for young people from his hometown of Drumheller, Alberta, and has been a stalwart in all things naval.

His encouragement of regular luncheons for the sizable Ottawa "rump" of the Class has kept a great focal centre going so that even classmates from across Canada and overseas have felt there's a "place to go" in Ottawa, at least monthly. He's maintained a personal acquaintance of important persons such as the RMC Commandant, the head of the Navy, and the Chief of the Defence Staff. This has made him a real "go-to" guy.

Since graduation, the Class of 65 has had only one elected officer, Secretary **6439 Hugh Spence**. He was acclaimed at a Class meeting at its first reunion in 1970.

On Saturday, Dec. 18, in Ottawa, a small delegation from our Class gathered at Jim Cale's place in order to present Fats with this well-deserved honour.

In attendance, along with their better halves, were Jim's old HMCS *Gatineau* shipmates from the Class: **Hugh Spence, Peter Houlston, Jim Cale** and **Mike Braham**; plus Fats' "annoying" old friend from Roads and naval cadet days, **Doug Cope**, who made the actual presentation on behalf of the Class.



The certificate reads:

*Presented to 6604 James F. Carruthers on his appointment as  
Honourary President of the Class of 1965*

*In recognition of his outstanding, untiring and unselfish devotion and service  
to the Class as well as its formative institutions including, but not limited to,  
Royal Roads, the Royal Military College of Canada, and the Canadian Navy*

*An appointment unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed  
and applauded by his classmates, his friends*

"Copious" gave an appropriately irreverent "speech", passing around embarrassing photos of a very thin Fats doing various things with his equally trim Roads classmates. The origin of the nickname "Fats" remains obscure.



BRAVO ZULU Mr. President.

## My Life as a Naval Ship's Diver

By 6606 Roger Chiasson

Although the Navy has professional, full-time divers, it also trains ships' personnel to assist in man-overboard rescues, to perform minor underwater maintenance, and, during periods of risk of underwater sabotage, to search the underwater hull for mines or other terrorist/enemy nasty work. If/when such explosive devices are located, the professionals are called in.



As a naval cadet, I and a number of Royal Roads classmates (**Fats Carruthers, Richard Archer, GAS Brown, Doug Cope, Dallas Mowat, Marty Leesti and Tom Bailey** come to mind) underwent ship's diver training at the start of our first summer break. We were attracted to diving for a number of reasons - for one, we got paid 8 cents per minute as an incentive to keep our qualifications current. Also, there was the pure excitement and enjoyment of scuba diving on the Queen's shilling - the navy paid for the training and all the equipment. What follows is a brief account of some of my more interesting experiences as a ship's diver.

During the summer following our diving course, our group managed to gain approval for our own private diving cruise around Vancouver Island. When I look back on this I marvel at how lucky we were to be able to pull this off - I guess it was under the guise of "adventure training". Fats has reminded me that it was the doing of LCdr Ilsley, a Naval staff officer at Roads at the time. In any event, we joined *HMCS Oriole*, the navy's sail training ship, up-island from Victoria (I believe it may have been Nanaimo, or Port Alberni).

Within minutes of crossing the brow, I became a casualty. I had been aboard *Oriole* countless times as a Venture cadet, but as I was proceeding down the forward hatch I rested my hand on a stainless steel protrusion which I soon discovered was the vent for a newly installed galley stove. I

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burned the palm of my hand very badly - to the point that I was unable to dive during the trip! A day or two later we anchored off the coast, and went ashore to explore. I climbed up a steep slope, only to discover that, with my inability to balance myself with my bum hand, I was trapped and unable to descend. I stood there for a long time, and had visions of my shipmates having to rescue me from my predicament. But, my pride won out, and, somehow, I made it down.

A day or two later, we anchored in Sydney inlet, where several hundred years before, Captain James Cook had entered. We had heard of some hot springs nearby, and swam ashore in our wetsuits and flippers. We removed our wet suits, and spent an hour or so amongst the rocks, with the hot springs mixing with the ice cold swell coming in from the sea, creating a unique hot-cold sensation worthy of any five-star resort. Gotta love this navy!

A couple of years later I was due for a refresher course. Fairly late in the course, I punctured an ear drum, because I had not equalized the pressure in my ears during the descent. My ears were more sensitive than most, and I had to clear my ears (as one sometimes had to do while descending from altitude in an aircraft) more often than my course mates. I missed the last night dive, and was afraid that I might not pass the course - but I did, much to my relief. My ear subsequently healed without a trace of the puncture.

The training as a cadet diver all came to fruition when I joined the fleet. I was the diving officer in my first ship, *HMCS Columbia*, and in my second ship, *HMCS Restigouche*. While *Columbia* was in "work-ups" (a shakedown period to whip the ship and its crew into operational readiness) I had the rare opportunity to have a "clever Sub-Lieutenant" moment. The navy's response to possible underwater sabotage in those days was to go to action stations, which meant that the entire ship's company could be at a high state of alert for hours, if not days. I observed that we did everything else in three "watches", and only went to action stations when the threat warranted. I went to my boss, the Weapons Officer, and suggested that we really should be going to a three-watch system during lower threat periods of Operation Awkward, which was the term used for the ship's response to

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underwater sabotage. He agreed, made the case to the Sea Training Staff (the work-ups "police") and I was given free rein to make it happen. I organized the ship's response into 3 watches, and briefed the entire ship's company on the new approach. The exercise was a success, and to this day, Operation Awkward is conducted "a la Chiasson". For that opportunity, and a few others throughout my career, I was always grateful that I belonged to an organization that rewarded "out of the box" thinking, and was not as steadfast in its ways as some people may have been led to believe.

Part of our responsibility as ship's divers was to conduct minor underwater maintenance. The most common maintenance task, as I recall, was to replace one of the E/M (electromagnetic) log sensing elements, devices that measured ship's speed. They had a relatively high failure rate, and given the importance of knowing the ship's speed for navigation and weapons and sensors, Captains didn't like sailing without both elements working. The E/M log elements are small fin-like fixtures that protrude from either side of the hull near the bow, just above the keel. The routine was to disconnect the cables inboard (accessed through the inboard side of a coffer dam), and to replace the element underwater. I usually chose my senior diver, CPO Sackfield, for this task. The job was not that difficult, but it did have an element of satisfaction that we were carrying out an essential maintenance function. The most difficult E/M Log replacement job I experienced was alongside in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, with poor visibility and a very strong current in the Foyle River to contend with, and with very little to hang on to as we tried to handle tools to effect replacement.

My last diving story is about an interesting day in *HMCS Margaree*, where I was the baby engineer and the diving officer. We had been conducting sonar training exercises offshore, using a submerged target, at the end of a line several hundred feet long attached to a dan buoy with a radar reflector. The whole apparatus was held afloat by 5 or 6 elliptical floats. At the end of the sonar training exercise, it came time to retrieve the target. While approaching the dan buoy, the ship was drifting a little too fast (the large hangars acted like sails in the Improved *St. Laurent* class ships), and the gear got caught in the shafting. I was piped (summoned) to the bridge, and told that "my mission, which I had no option to refuse", was to go down and

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free the shafting from the dan buoy and the floats. I chose Petty Officer (Steward) McKenzie, one of my best divers, who was a day-worker (he didn't stand watches and was therefore available) as my assistant.

When we got to the scene, we observed the obvious: the floats were wrapped around the starboard shaft, the dan buoy was lying almost horizontal across the two shaft lines, with the line leading to the sonar target pulling in a similar line against the force of the ship's drift. It was a fairly straightforward task - we lifted each float clear of the shaft, but as we were about to flip the last float over the starboard shaft, I made sure that PO McKenzie understood that we had to be clear of the dan buoy as it broke free and ricocheted across the bottom of the ship.

Our mission accomplished, we popped to the surface, and started swimming towards the ship. I soon realized that the ship was drifting faster than we could swim, so I tapped PO McKenzie on the shoulder, removed my mask, and said "stop swimming, PO - if they like us they will come and get us". And they did, but the worse part of that entire evolution was being idle in the middle of the ocean, with the bottom a mile or more beneath us, and waiting for that ship to circle around to pick us up.

As they say about the navy - there's no life like it!

## TEACHING AT RMC -REMINISCENCES FIELD TRIPS

By 6715 Yvan Gagnon

Since I taught Canadian Government every year I was at RMC, I decided to take my students on a tour of the Capital, like the one we had as students with Roland Lamontagne, our politics teacher at RMC in 1964-65. This usually took place in late February or early March every year.

At the beginning, it was a hit and miss programme; the only "must" event was the Question Period in the afternoon. Our then-MP



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was Flora McDonald and she helped me get access to the House and to a few speakers. When **Fred Sutherland** got to the Privy Council Office, he kindly invited us there. From then on, we always started our visit at the PCO at 0930. We had different speakers telling us about the roles and happenings at this centre of public policy making in Canada.

One year we really lucked in at the PCO. Jean Chretien was away in Washington and Jean Pelletier, the head of the PMO (Prime Minister's Office), had accepted to come and talk to us. The General representing DND at the PCO, who was hosting us that morning, said he had someone really important to talk to us. While we were waiting for him, he would give us some pointers about his own job. That mini presentation lasted only a few minutes while the students could not figure out who could be more important than a General! When the unassuming Mr. Pelletier showed up, he simply explain how he, the Prime Minister and the Clerk of the Privy Council, met at 0845 every morning to discuss the important matters of the day for the Government of Canada. He gave us a few examples of the issues they were dealing with at the time and how they proceeded to include and/or to shuffle items on the Cabinet agenda. He also explained his role in helping the Prime Minister to get things done with the Liberal Party of Canada and, at times, with the Clerk, at the different levels of the bureaucracy. When he was done, he took a few questions, and by then we all realized who were the most important players in Canadian Politics - our hosting General was not quite there yet...

In earlier years, during the Cold War, I took the students to the Soviet Embassy. It was a very interesting experience where we all got the sanitized version of how much good they were doing in the world while we were served cookies and tea. From there, we went to the US Embassy where those students whose names were not on the list which I had to send in advance could not come inside and we were lectured in a hallway, standing up. Since the US propaganda was not much better than the Soviet one, the students decided that the Soviet visit was better - at least, we got nice sofas and cookies!

At a conference, I once met a very nice and interesting person working in the Department of Finance (Mr Lynch). As ADM he invited us to visit his department where he would have two or three young PhDs in economics explain



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to us what his Department did. We got very interesting talks about budgeting and one year, Mr. Lynch explained to us how the decision was made to determine the formula which decides which rich Provinces redistribute how much money to the poorest ones. The variables involved and their calculations were unbelievable to me... I then knew, for sure, why I always did so poorly on the economic side of my RMC degree.

Once Peter Milliken became our MP for Kingston, these annual trips to Ottawa took on a routine that lasted until I left RMC. After the PCO visit, we went to the Pearson Building for talks on Foreign Policy. My contact there was a Mrs. Dupere and every year she tried to get us interesting talks on current international issues for Canada. We almost always got a huge conference room on the bottom floor with three or four presentations between 1015 and 1230 hrs. An advantage there was their cafeteria which could easily accommodate all of us, by allowing one cash register line exclusively for us; I would come in last and pay cash, usually between \$700 and \$900.

From there, we went to the House for Question Period and then, in a room below, to listen to presentations by members of each political party at the time; three parties until the Bloc came in. Peter tried to arrange the best possible speakers. We always got the Minister of National Defence when the Liberals were in power. We never got the equivalent Minister from the Conservatives; so much so that one year, I had to ask David Collenette to come back and talk to us even though he was out of Office. He was much more talkative the second time around, while no longer in Office, but he was somewhat disappointed when he asked how much he could charge me for this second appearance and I told him that I hoped that it would not be much, considering my DND budget for these things... We had a good laugh about it, and it was a very cheap price for a very candid presentation.

From there, we always ended the day with a supper at the Parliamentary dining room. With reservations in advance they would have a choice of 2 or 3 very good meals at a fixed price served cafeteria style. We would try to get parliamentarians to come and eat with us, at their own expenses of course, and since I took between 20 and 30 students on that trip, it was sometimes difficult to get enough of them to have the students within speaking distance

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of these people. These suppers always included wine; it was a polite affair.

Once we had the 4 American military exchange Officers at Queens' come with us and another year, there was a group of ten Queens' students also having supper at the same place. To be gracious, I sent them two bottles of wine, from their friends across the river in Kingston. Another year, the Minister of National Defence sat with me and when time came to pay, he asked me on whose budget this would be going. I told him it was my departmental budget, so, showing me his Master Card, he said that it was directly connected to my budget and it would easily take care of my supper. So I got a free talk from one ex-minister and a free lunch from an active one.

Sitting next to us at this supper was an O/C from Nova Scotia. He showed up at my office the next morning at 0830 asking me if he and another student could go to an interesting conference in his Province since he knew that I had a little over \$1300 left in my annual budget since the Minister had paid for supper. He got the money because we were in mid-March already... I am reminded of this story because I received an E-mail from him last week and his case is quite unique in the history of RMC.

I wrote a letter of reference on his behalf to be accepted at the McGill University Law School before he graduated from RMC. He passed all of his exams in fourth year and he was the best student of his class. He of course was accepted at McGill but then he refused to do his compulsory service. I do not know the details, but RMC denied him his degree even though he had completed all the academic side of the four pillars. I met his father when he was packing his belongings in front of the Stone Boat before the graduation parade. I then found out that his dad was a high ranking judge in his home Province and he thanked me for helping his son get into McGill. He studied in Montreal and then in the US and I thought he was a lawyer in New York.

Last summer I received the book "*The Principles of Politics*", by J.R.Lucas, Oxford U Press, 1966-7, that he had found in his stuff at home. Since it was written in large letter in the opening page of the book to PLEASE RETURN THIS BOOK to Prof Gagnon, he did so even if he was more than 12 years late! And in the last Email he says that he is not practicing law in New York at all,

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but that he has a business about which there was a long story in the New York Times; it is about how groomers should ask the right question to get a positive answer. Anyway, I do not think that he will ask RMC to review their decision on his degree and for the record, he is extremely positive about his experience at the College.

Since I came to RMC to teach International Relations, I also instituted a trip to the UN in New York that went on for many years even though I had to give it up to Tony Miller who came to RMC from England. He was a real gentleman and a very good teacher (and an avid soccer player, he became head of our department but died very young (51) of a brain tumour).

This New York trip took place every year during the May field trip time. We left RMC on Monday morning and I had to arrange informative talks for three consecutive days. We came back on Friday. The first problem was to find a place to stay that was cheap enough for the Cadets since they had to pay for this. The first time we went, the Canadian Colonel attached at the Canadian Mission found us a place at Governor Island, the Coast Guard place at the end of Manhattan. Not only was this place close, it was free! That was a good incentive to continue the trips, but we never had this place again. We stayed at a military hospital for \$8 a night per students... etc. But the real problem to make this experience worthwhile was to get good speakers. The Canadian Mission did its best to fill the first and last days, but I had to fill the Wednesday.

The visit of the UN *per se* was Wednesday afternoon and we tried to get a better tour than what all the tourists get when they go there. It often included talks from people working at the UN when I could get them. I was lucky one year when I contacted the US Embassy to the UN. My contact there was Ms Dotty Pappas and she was very good in finding two or three speakers to fill the Wednesday morning 0900-1200 hrs slot. I would call her two months before the trip and discuss what she could find to fill that slot. One year she proposed the American Ambassador to the UN for Latin American affairs. He was a former Political Science professor from Columbia University and he gave us a brilliant analysis of the American situation in Central America.

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Unfortunately, in that class of mine that year, there were four cadets who were more aware of the situation in Central America, the year of the Contras etc, and they took him to task in the question period. They just would not let him get away with easy media type answers. So he took up half the time of the next speaker who was standing on the side, waiting his turn, and at the end, I accompanied him to his office to thank him for his brilliant academic presentation. When I got back to the lecture hall, the second speaker said that he would never think of butting in on an Ambassador's talk, but really, he was so amazed by the exchange going on between these four students and the Ambassador, he would have never interfered.

Coming out of the Embassy around lunch time, three other students in the group, the engineer types that came along with us, wanted me to "charge" the other four who had so vigorously attacked that poor Ambassador. I told them that I would certainly not do that; the world of social science benefits from such exchanges. What they of course did not know is that this Ambassador, on the way to his office, had asked me what we did to our Cadets. He said that a week earlier, he had West Point Students for a similar presentation and that they had sat there almost at attention and that they had no questions for him at all when he was done. He found the Canadians much more aware, much more interesting, and that he had loved the exchange and that experience with us. He even said that he would be happy to do it again if I wanted him to do so.

Guess whom I asked Dotty to get to talk to us the following year? Unfortunately, he had a trip away from New York planned for the date we were coming, but he said to give him two weeks before giving that time slot to someone else. And you guessed it. He delayed his trip by one day to be able to talk to us again. And this time I introduced him as someone who could discuss American foreign policy with the ideas of political philosophers, going as far back as Plato. The second time around he concluded his talk with a quote from Aristotle. I, of course, never punished the "aggressive" cadets for getting this learned university professor to defend his then precarious positions.

The talks we got at the Canadian Mission were of different quality, depending on whom the Colonel in charge, at the time, could get to speak to us. One year, however, we got the jackpot. The first Secretary of the Embassy of Israel

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came to explain their defensive policies in the volatile situation in which they have to live. At one point, he said that they would take all the necessary steps to protect the national sovereignty of their country. There was another professor from RMC that year with me and he remarked to the Secretary that he had heard a very similar argument made a few decades ago. Of course, my colleague was referring to Hitler and the Secretary became livid. He said that in the diplomatic services they must be ready to tolerate lots of abuse, but that there were limits and that this limit had been passed. He almost left the room on the spot, but our own Ambassador to the UN was there and he defused the atmosphere right away, pointing out the differences between the pre-WW2 situation in Germany and the present time in Israel.

That Secretary left, and in comes the Lebanese Ambassador to the UN. He was in a wheelchair, wounded in the last conflict with Israel, speaking in French from Arabic notes. His presentation was excellent and when he had left, our Head of Mission, Gerard Pelletier, asked us who had the better arguments in this conflict. Even in French, the Lebanese won easily.

On a more social note, one year we stayed at West Point after the Colonel, who stayed with us for the Hockey weekend at RMC, offered us to stay there free. Logistically that was a mistake; West Point is too far from New York if one wants to be in town by 0900 and leaves the city at 2400 hrs every night... Anyway, he had invited me and all my students to a BBQ at his place the Monday night that we arrived in West Point. There were maybe 18 students that year, including John Forington, the CWC and four of his 4 bar men. The BBQ was mostly outside but we all moved in for a fairly long talk with three other Colonels and their wives. He supplied us with Canadian beer and we all had a good time until, after the Cadets went back to their quarters, the four wives assaulted me in the living room asking what did we do to our Cadets. Worried of some horrible behaviour by some student, I was on the defensive, ready to take a solid blow. But the exact opposite happened. They said that they never had such an interesting evening with Cadets. First of all, nobody got drunk, even if they could have all the beer they wanted. Second, nobody ever said the word ma'am which is used all the time by the West Point Cadets addressing ladies. They could not believe that one could talk to ladies without that word and our Cadets did it for a whole evening. And, most of all, they

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could carry on very interesting conversations about a vast array of subjects, with jokes and making the whole evening truly fun and enjoyable... Well, I said that was ready not to defend their bad behaviour if any, but I was not going to take credit for what our College as a whole does for them. But having beer machines on the premises was perhaps not that bad an idea... But really that group was exceptional and it was the right time=and place to have them along.

One year a francophone student in my Intro to politics class for Engineers gave me a paper that was so good, so above average, that I called him in to make sure that this was not a case of plagiarism. He told me that he still had the rough copy of his paper and he showed it to me. Indeed it was hand written and full of corrections. Since, very exceptionally, it did not have a single mistake in the text, I asked him how is French could be so good. He said that his mother had insisted that his language should be perfect and that he actually had won the Calixa Lavale first prize for essays in French the last two years that he was in High School in Quebec. In all honesty, in comparison to the other papers I was getting from these students, he deserved 130% if I did not want to lower the rest of the class to an average grade of 60% or less!

Anyway, at the end of the year he asked me to come to New York and I was more than happy to oblige, as long as he did not have other obligations at the college at the time, the usual requirement for engineers to come with me. Once there, I, personally, usually go to as many classical music concerts as I can, and that year, Alfred Brandel, a famous pianist, was playing Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas at Carnegie Hall in eight spaced-out nights. Since we were there for one of these nights, I was not going to miss this, and Stephane Germain, the francophone cadet in question, asked to come with me. Another O/C also came. When we got there, the other Cadet, seeing only one grand piano on the stage, was quite disappointed to find out that he had paid \$12 to listen to such a concert. So I asked Stephane why he had come. He said that he played the piano and that he actually played two of the sonatas being presented that evening. I know that you all aware of how unusual it is for most people to play these sonatas; I know of only one other Cadet who played one Mozart piano concerto.

A few years after Stephane had graduated, RMC gave an honorary degree to

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Jacques Lamarre, the CEO of SNC Lavalin in Montreal. I had lunch with him at the Commandant's residence before the ceremony in the afternoon. Aside from the fact that I studied with his brother in Jonquiere, I told him about this francophone Cadet who could write French and play the piano. He then asked me if I knew where he was, which I did not, because he would hire him on the spot, with absolutely no other recommendation than what I had just told him. He said that he was appalled by the lack of knowledge of the French language of all his new young engineers and that playing piano is a discipline that one seldom finds with the new generation, aside from the cultural aspect the matter. Stephane Germain never heard this story and I do not know where he is and what he is now doing...

I think that all these trips in Ottawa or New York were very valuable to the students. If some people at RMC thought that they were only fun times, they did not have to listen to, most of the time, very high level talks and discussions where my only rule to all was that you shall not sleep! And by the way, I never had one disciplinary problem with the Cadets on these trips. I had only one problem with a military bus driver who told me where to go when I asked him to stop for lunch one year. Fortunately I had three UTPOs with me that year and one of them, a Major, read him the riot act and that was the end of it, except perhaps that he went back to driving trucks when he came back to Kingston. That bus driver was very proud of the fact that he had won the best driver award in the Forces on the two previous years; he did drive very well indeed, but that did not put him in charge of everybody on the bus. And finally, if these trips were great for the students, they were also very demanding and tiring for the Prof. Maybe that is why nobody continued on the New York trip, even he I tried to give anyone all my contacts to organize it.

## **Closing Notes**

Thanks again to this month's contributors for stepping into the breach at such short notice. This should give the rest of you plenty of time to produce something of interest for February's issue.

Cheers, Mike