

741 Southborough Drive,
West Vancouver, B.C. V7S 1N1.

February 26, 1982.

Mr. Stanley R. Redman,
197 7th Street,
Midland, Ont. L4R 3Z4.

Dear Mr. Redman,

It has come to my attention that you have written a book "Open Gangway" in which you cover the VE-Day riots in Halifax. I am particularly interested in learning what you have to say concerning the Navy involvement since I acted as Secretary to the Naval Board of Inquiry which was held in H.M.C.S. "STADACONA", May 15 - 21, 1945.

Before joining H.M.C.S. "New Waterford" about a year previous to this I had served as Secretary to Captain "D" for three years and gained considerable experience in dealing with Courts Martial, Disciplinary Courts and Boards of Inquiry. "New Waterford" returned to Halifax a few days before the riots took place and when the Board of Inquiry was established I was suddenly appointed to "Stadacona" for "Special Duties". A most interesting week ensued.

I enclose my cheque for \$7.00 which I understand will cover the cost of your book plus postage, and look forward to reading it. I will probably be searching through my memorabilia for my copy of the report. It was in two volumes, each approximately two inches thick so I trust it can be found although I still have a pretty good idea of what was contained.

I believe there is another book written on the subject. Perhaps you could let me know where I can obtain a copy.

Yours very truly,

P. J. Sharp.

197 7th Street
Midland, Ont. L4R 3Z4,
March 11th, 1982

Mr. Peter J. Sharp
741 Southborough Drive,
West Vancouver, B.C.
V7S 1N1

Dear Mr. Sharp:

When my controversial "Open Gangway" was published, I braced myself against attack by former Naval personnel, whom I expected would turn on me like a mother bear defending her cubs, as my comments on the upper levels of the RCN hierarchy were somewhat critical.

Much to my surprise, I have been contacted by a good many strangers who have tracked me down, and have generally been most complimentary. Indeed a number of them have volunteered to disclose long unrevealed material which would almost justify a sequel.

But none of these have astonished me as much as your letter of February 26th. In an effort to be objective and get both sides of the story, I tried to get access to the testimony of the Naval Court of Enquiry which dealt with Admiral Murray. I even enlisted the good offices of my local M.P. who approached Lamontagne (Minister of Defence) and Francis Fox (then Secretary of State) but was effectively stonewalled. After some jousting it was revealed that I might have a copy made at my own expense, but only after all the "personal information" had been deleted from it!

Even the redoubtable Pierre Berton, when he became aware of the situation, had it confirmed to his amazement that the testimony could not be made public completely. But if Parliament ever resumes business and if the long-delayed Freedom of Information Bill C-43 can ever be dragged into the House for debate, I have been promised that "Open Gangway" will be used as a horrible example of excessive governmental secretiveness. All of us are greatly exercised over what dreadful political embarrassments are concealed in this Report. Lamontagne even said that it was so confidential that it could not be made available to Department of National Defence history researchers! Amazing that we can read all about the top-secret Enigma Machine but yet not be able to get a peek at this 36 year old testimony!

And now you come out of the blue and suggest that you probably have this "Top Secret" testimony tucked away somewhere! I am only half joking when I warn you not to let Messrs. Lamontagne and Fox know it's in your trunk--unless you are the type who can't resist rising to a challenge; but remember what has happened recently to Neil Fraser for "speaking out". We may be nearer to 1984 than we would like to think.

One contention (speculation?) is that Admiral Murray was originally one number ahead of Admiral Jones with whom he had a "strained relationship". Somehow this position was reversed and Jones became the superior in rank, suggesting some political shanky-panky. If you do turn up this Report, I'm curious as to whether this juggling of the Navy List numbers was ever brought up. If you could confirm that I think you could make "Front Page Challenge!"

I will hold your cheque till some more books arrive from the Publisher, expected shortly. I am agreeable to supply "Open Gangway" on this basis to interested parties, although a bit reluctantly as I would sooner see it being stocked by Vancouver stores. But as there is no advertising behind it, they don't yet know that it exists. Classic, Coles and W.H.Smith stores are selling it very well on the East Coast and if there are any of these in your area they could order through their Head Offices in Toronto who are not quite convinced that anyone outside the Maritimes remembers the Great Halifax Navy Riot.

I had the pleasure of watching a TV interview with James Cameron recently. His book "Murray, The Martyred Admiral" takes quite the opposite view from that of mine. They included about 20 minutes of old film footage and I'm bound to say (not trying to rub it in) that it showed nothing but sailors taking the town apart! I don't suppose his book is in Vancouver either although the three book chains I mentioned are all aware of it. I understand that he won't be back home till late Spring but he could be reached through the publisher or I could give you his home address if you wanted it.

Needless to say I would value your comments and any word about the Inquiry when I can get the book to you and you have a chance to read it. I assume you must have got my address from the WRCNS Reunion Committee to which I wrote some time ago. They may well be a bit miffed at what I had to say about the Wrens!

Yours sincerely,

Stanley R. Redman
Stanley R. Redman

FREE PRESS

Single Copy 25c

102nd Year No. 98

MIDLAND, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1981

helen delaney on books



Story sheds light on Halifax riots

OPEN GANGWAY. by Stanley R. Redman, Lancelot Press, \$5.95.

In his dedication Midland author Stanley Redman makes it quite plain that he and his wife Helen did not share in the criticism and complaining that so many servicemen and their families directed to Halifax. The Redmans enjoy a "pleasant recollection of Haligonian hospitality" . . .

Early in the book Redman explains exactly what the term 'open Gangway' means. It comes from a time-honored Navy tradition, that, when their duties are completed, the men could go ashore at their convenience rather than wait for a specific hour. Even though civic and military authorities knew that with the Declaration of V-E Day drinking and damage could and would ensue, no order to close the gangplanks on His Majesty's Canadian ships was given. Thus, while soldiers and airmen remained within their quarters, all naval personnel not on duty were free to roam the streets of Halifax from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. of May 8, V-E Day.

EYE-WITNESS

Stan Redman of the RCAF Marine Squadron was there that day. His book carries



STANLEY REDMAN
... Midland author

both his eye-witness account of the event of May 7 and 8, and a factual description of the events and subsequent Royal Commission gleaned from the newspapers and photographs of that chaotic time. The riots and disorder raged uncontrolled for two days and a night. Damage to the city was an estimated \$5 million; looting, fires and breakage meant the closing of many stores and businesses. Civilians even joined the sailors in their insane spree. How had this Victory Celebration got out of hand?

High spirits (mainly liquid!) mushroomed from fun and frolic to a more determined ugly spirit as the liquor stores were broken into and looted. What began as a harmless caper no longer was innocent. As it became evident that no authority in sufficient numbers was present what had begun

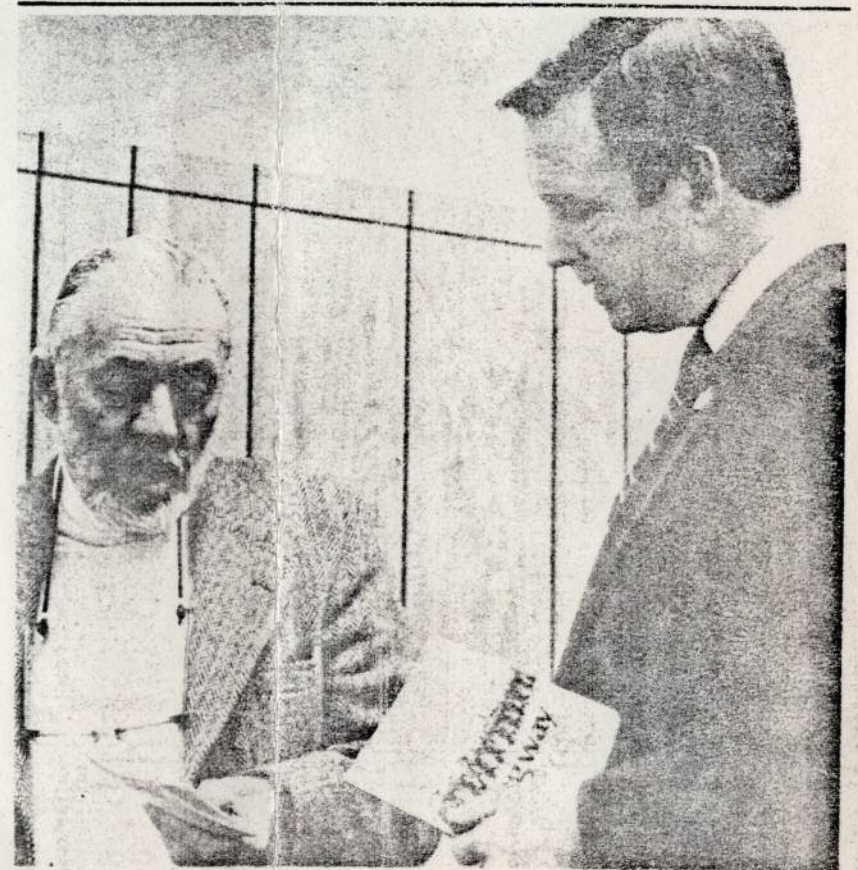
as a drunken revel was now a full-fledged riot.

To indicate the confusion, the bumbling about authority, Redman says "while the forces of law and order most need reinforcements, an Airforce NCO and his men sat tight in the Halifax Police Station awaiting orders that never came — two platoons of police went off duty for lack of instructions to the contrary." And so it went — Murphy's Law in action.

By the evening of May 8 a semblance of order was observed. Now came the fiery editorials from across Canada, blaming Halifax, the Navy, the Westerners, the Upper Canadians — feelings ran very high. Then of course, "that much-beloved tool of uncertain governments was formed — a Royal Commission"

Eventually, after considerable time and much ineptitude the hearing was concluded and summarized in 60 pages and 25,000 words. The complacent Admiral Murray had been relieved of his command on the walls of Admiralty House his photograph is noticeably absent from those of former Commanders-in-Chief.

This is a well-written, eminently readable account of one of the darker episodes of Canadian history.



The way it was in 1945

Midland author Stanley Redman, left, and his MP, Doug Lewis, holding a copy of Redman's new book, *Gangway*, look at Redman's snapshots taken during the navy riots in Halifax in 1945. Lewis was given a

copy of the book, a first hand account of the riots, for his effort, although ultimately unsuccessful, to obtain sensitive official papers for Redman to use in his research.



LANCELOT PRESS
Box 425, Hantsport, N.S.
684-9129

MURRAY

THE

MARTYRED ADMIRAL

BY
JAMES M. CAMERON

MURRAY — The Martyred Admiral by James M. Cameron. An illuminating biography of Rear Admiral Leonard Warren Murray, Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy on Canada's East Coast during the Second World War. The career are described. When the Halifax VE-Day Disorders occurred Admiral Murray was fired, before an inquiry began, by political leaders in Ottawa. In this book the author attempts to restore Admiral Murray's "name to the place it deserves."

Open Gangway by Stanley R. Redman. An account of the riots that occurred in Halifax at the conclusion of the Second World War. The author, who served with a Marine Squadron of the R.C.A.F. stationed in Halifax during the war, had a ringside seat at the events described in the book. This controversial story, involving Admiral Murray and many other strong men, is vividly recounted. The drama of the event, the mounting tensions, and the interplay of personalities make this a complex and unforgettable period. \$5.95



gangway

AN ACCOUNT OF THE
HALIFAX RIOTS, 1945

By Stanley R. Redman

Open Gangway, an Account of Halifax Riots

Midland author's book takes us back to a chapter in nation's dark past

by Shirley
Whittington

On May 8, 1945, VE Day, Sergeant Stan Redman of the RCAF Marine Squadron marched in a victory parade down Barrington Street in Halifax.

It was an "eyes-front" situation, but the young sergeant couldn't help noticing some unusual goings-on out of the corner of his eye.

As he tells it, "A sailor sitting unconcernedly on a case of expensive Scotch whiskey, before him an open case from which he plucked bottles...in St. Paul's cemetery, the weathered tombstones almost obliterated by

the blue uniforms festooned over them and naval ratings swilling beer in Canada's greatest open air canteen..."

Sergeant Redman was witness to the Halifax riots, the wild celebration of victory in Europe which began in a spirit of fun, but carreened into craziness fuelled by hundreds of cases of booze "liberated" by servicemen and civilians. Redman remembers clearly that the gutters ran with booze and the streets were ankle deep in broken glass.

Two days and a night of chaos caused \$3

million in damages to Barrington Street businesses, nearly all of which were totally looted.

Two stores were burned out. Birks, Eatons, Hudsons, Zellers, Woolworths and many other stores were closed indefinitely after the riots. It was a calamity and Sergeant Redman (who was also a writer,) made mental notes of what he saw, and wisely collected newspapers and photographs of the destruction.

Now his recollections and research are incorporated into a well written and fascinating account of something

almost unbelievable — an uncontrolled riot led by thousands of Canadian servicemen — mainly sailors.

Open Gangway, an Account of the Halifax Riots 1945 is published by Lancelot Press of Hantsport Nova Scotia. It is Redman's first published book, but certainly not his first published writing. Stan Redman's name is familiar to local and national newspaper readers. He has described himself as a "consistent and caustic contributor of letters to the editor." Over the years he has had many magazine articles published centering on

his hobbies and interests — boating, stamp collecting, and history.

He considers the publication of **Open Gangway** as a door opener. "I have written another book on the British Monarchy. It is a critical one — I'm a republican — but I ran into the stone wall that confronts writers. It seems you can't get published without an agent, and you can't get an agent till you're published.

Several publishers looked at **Behind the Ermine Curtain** but most considered it too explosive. Meanwhile, Redman completed an espionage trilogy **The Unicorn Side**, which also awaits publication.

Redman, determined to get a foot in the door, tried to think of a subject about which he knew a lot, and which was colourful and interesting. The Halifax riots proved to be a natural choice.

As well as the graphic description of the wanton destruction caused by the Halifax riots, **Open Gangway** also deals with the subsequent investigations. Says writer Redman, "The Royal Commission over which Mr. Justice Kellock presided was almost a model of how not to conduct a public inquiry, and included suppression of evidence, failure to explore obviously relevant areas

and a barrage of leading questions. None of this was much credit to the legal profession."

Materials from the Naval Court of Enquiry are still considered so politically volatile that they are being held inviolate in the public archives of Canada.

MP Doug Lewis tried to help in securing records for writer Redman's perusal. Since the book has been published, Lewis has been informed that some of the material is available for Redman's perusal if he wishes to have it copied at his own expense, and only after a civil servant has deleted the sensitive parts.

Open Gangway's most pervasive message is of the deep and apparently uncloseable gap between the people of the maritimes, and those of the rest of Canada.

Redman's book says that during the war Haligonians lived with a constant litany or criticism delivered by unhappy Upper Canadians billeted unwillingly in Halifax.

He says, "The largely unwanted visitors had few inhibitions about commenting on the lack of night life or any other kind of life, on the gouging rents paid by those so fortunate as to find a room, the meagre allotment of one bottle of liquor per person per month. In short the servicemen were sick

and tired of the war and considered themselves exiled...where their presence was bitterly resented..."

In fact, claims Redman, the word was out, the navy was going to take Halifax apart.

They almost did, and it was a performance that the Navy was not proud of. Admiral Murray was judged to have shown poor supervision and planning and was removed from command. His picture is now conspicuously absent from the display of former commanders in chief.

Very few history books give more than a perfunctory nod to the dreadful riots of May 7 and 8 1945. Stan Redman's book is therefore a valuable addition to our own knowledge of ourselves and our history. It is well researched, brightly written and historians especially will find it almost compulsively readable.

With reference to Redman's efforts to obtain additional (and unattainable) research material MP Doug Lewis said, "If Canadians are to learn from the past, then I would suggest that the past must be opened to people with a legitimate interest in history!"

Open Gangway, does more than open the past. It makes it into an exciting memorable story.



TRIDENT



Trident is an authorized military publication distributed across Canada and throughout the world every second Wednesday, and is published with the permission of Vice-Admiral Wood, CMM, CD, Commander Maritime Command.

.. Maritime Command Trident, Wednesday, May 14, 1986

Trident book review

Open Gangway: An Account of the Halifax Riots, 1945

by Stanley R. Redman

Lancelot Press, Hantsport, N.S.

1981. 167 pages. \$5.95

Reviewed by LCdr R.M. Buxton

Although *Open Gangway* has been available for the past five years, this issue of Trident, which coincides with the 41st anniversary of the Halifax Riots, seems an appropriate time to review what I believe is the most controversial book on this subject.

Mr. Redman served in the RCAF during the War and was stationed at Halifax where he had firsthand experience of the overcrowded conditions and of the behaviour of the thousands of naval personnel in the city. We are not left in doubt about Stanley Redman's opinion of naval discipline, or of the competence of the naval command.

The first chapters describe the sorry events of 7 and 8 May, 1945 in chronological order. How the disturbances of 7 May began when ratings attacked a tram car on Barrington Street and ended with the looting of liquor stores by ratings and civilians. not only did the City Police and the Naval Patrol fail to prevent the disorders, they seriously misjudged the situation which was likely to occur on the following day and failed to take any effective action to prevent further incidents.

The wholesale destruction of plate glass windows, looting of stores and the complete loss of control by the authorities on the following day are matters of record.

The last half of the book consists of a description of the hearings of Royal Commission which followed the riots and an analysis of its findings.

The reasons for the Halifax Riots are still subjects for debate with some blaming the resentful and unhelpful attitude of Haligonians, some the folly of closing theatres, restaurants and liquor stores on VE Day, and some the questionable state of naval discipline. Mr. Redman has no doubt about the cause, however, and he lays the blame squarely at the feet of RAdm L.W. Murray.

Open Gangway does not pretend to be a scholarly study of the Riots, but it moves at a fast pace and leads to conclusions which appear inescapable. The first time I read this book I resented the severe criticisms of the Navy which are expressed in it, but after rereading it, together with the Report of the Royal Commission and the apologetic *Murray, the Martyred Admiral* by James M. Cameron, I must confess that I think Stanley Redman is correct: the blame for the riots rests with RAdm Murray and his senior staff.

Perhaps the time is now ripe for the Report of the Naval Board of Inquiry to be released so that a definitive study can be made.



TRIDENT

THE MARITIME COMMAND NEWSPAPER
LE JOURNAL DU COMMANDEMENT MARITIME



Volume 20, Number 11

Wednesday May 14, 1986

Maritime Command Trident, Wednesday, May 14, 1986

WERE YOU IN HALIFAX ON VE DAY?

Stanley R. Redman of Midland, Ontario, author of the recently published book *Open Gangway* — an account of the Halifax Riots, 1945, poses the question!

He has received many letters, some "very interesting" he says, from veterans (including WRENS) with personal reminiscences of the Great Riot. He is now seriously considering writing a sequel to his book, to be entitled "*Open Gangway II*": if its predecessor is any yardstick, this would be a worthy project.

Those with contributions are invited to write to Mr. Redman at 197, 7th Street, Midland, Ontario L4R 3Z4. Those who choose to may order a copy of the current book *Open Gangway* (now in its 4th printing) directly from the author. The price is \$5.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling. A copy of a nostalgic map of Halifax with the parade route marked will be included as a bonus.

Contributors are asked to specify whether their names could be mentioned or if they would prefer not to be identified.

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Perhaps the time is now ripe for the Report of the Naval Board of Inquiry to be released so that a definitive study can be made.

If you should mention this in your Newsletter or Bulletin, I'd appreciate a copy.

197 7th St.
Midland, Ont.
LAR 324 April 6/8

Mr. P. J. Sharp
741 Southborough Drive,
West Vancouver,
B.C. V7S 1N1

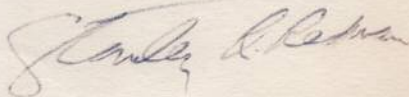
Dear Mr. Sharp:

AS I now have the famous 1945 Naval Court of Inquiry testimony via Freedom of Information Act, you would surely be absolved from your long imposed silence on the affair.

I'd value your comments (and criticism of OCY) you have as I'm trying to tell more of the Navy side this time.

Open Gangway is now in 5th printing but very few in the West have heard of it yet!

Yours sincerely,



from the desk of

STANLEY R. REDMAN

OPEN GANGWAY

"I have read *Open Gangway* from cover to cover and found the book completely fascinating. It is extremely visual and dramatic in its implications, the final one being the curious behaviour of Admiral Murray on the witness stand. His testimony verges on the incredible ... the mystery of the VE-Day riot remains and your book is a most valuable one. Why the Defence Department continues to clam up suggests that something very peculiar has happened ... your rendition of Murray's performance is simply amazing — a fascinating book."

Hugh MacLennan

"I have read *Open Gangway* with deep interest and pleasure. You have covered the riots thoroughly with many sidelights hitherto unknown to me. Your book will help to clear up the false impression created by Sandwell and others who never bothered to consult anyone but a few disgruntled ex-naval personnel from Toronto and points west."

Thomas H. Raddall