

Crossing the Desert on Water

A convoy of ships was forming at the south end and another convoy was forming at the north end. Finally, everything was in place and we waited for the signal to start. When the signal was given the ships in the south started moving north and the ships in the north started moving south. The journey through the Suez Canal had begun. The trip through the Suez is 120 miles long and the scenery for the whole length is sand. The canal takes you from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. We were on our way to Kuwait to pick up oil.

The canal is a single-lane passageway so there is no way to pass ships along the way. About half-way through the transit there is a by-pass that is 10 kilometres long and will hold 17 ships. The convoy heading South veers into this by-pass and stays anchored while the convoy heading north passes. The ships are separated by a wide sand bar. While we were waiting for the North bound ships to pass we went for a swim. The water is so salty that you can lie on the surface without moving. It is like lying on a beach. We walked across the stretch of sand separating the 2 convoys and waved at the crews on the other ships.

We waited 8 hours for the other convoy to pass by and then we were on our way to Kuwait. It takes approximately 14 hours to transit the canal. We loaded up with oil at Kuwait and then returned through the Suez canal on our way to Amsterdam. En route we were advised that there was a change of plans. Instead of going to Amsterdam we were going to deliver our crude oil to Montreal. That created a dilemma for me. I had been away from home for 1½ years. Should I sign off the ship and go home or keep on traveling?

We arrived at Montreal at 8:30 a.m. I was on a T.C.A.(Air Canada) flight to Toronto and arrived home at 4:00 that afternoon. My Mother was startled when I walked in the house unannounced after being away for 19 months. The first thing she said to me was, "I hope your home to stay". That's when I had to tell her that I was leaving for Curaçao the next day and then back to Europe.



The next day I flew back to Montreal, boarded the ship at 3:00 a.m. and 4 hours later we were on our way to Curaçao to load up with refined oil and then continue on to Germany. Thus began the second year and a half of my 3 year journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leadley" or "Leadley" with a long, sweeping underline.

Brad McInnes
YMASC President 1970 - 1971

