

M.V. Fairsea July 24, 1957

Dear Friends:

We left Quebec about 11:30 P.M. and all of us turned in. Many had turned in earlier because of the long train trip. After a good night we were awakened by the Cabin Steward with "Gooda morning boys. It's 7:30". Everyone piled out even though we are on the second shift and would not eat 'til 8:30.

The food is amazing - full course meals - soup, fish, meat, dessert with all the trimmings. At breakfast we get a pint of milk, cereal, eggs with ham or bacon, etc. etc. I'm sure we will all waddle off the ship as the rest of the day is spent sitting in deck chairs, movies, etc.

The crew are all Italians and understand very little English but we get by very well. The serving of food is grand - men waiters, three forks and sometimes three knives. All food has been excellent and plentiful.

Yesterday we saw two whales off the port side (left to you landlubbers) and as we were holding a troop meeting we all saw them except Baeza and Ball who were getting a haircut and couldn't leave the waiting line. We all need haircuts and there is only one barber - is he ever swamped. It takes several hours of waiting to get it done. Laundry is very reasonable but we swamped them the first day and they haven't been able to send any since.

The boat is terrific - clean, spacious (now we just saw another whale, this time on the starboard!) and the crew are very courteous and accommodating.

Seagulls followed us for a couple of days. The Scouts threw food to them and they would catch it in mid air and they'd fight over it. We finally had to discourage it so we had some rolls and bread to eat. We originally were going to take the southern side of Anticosti Island because of the icebergs but because we were late we are going north of the island and have been all day. At midnight tonight we should reach Belle Island and that will be the last point of land we will see. I understand they have the icebergs spotted and there will be no danger.

The weather is chilly enough for jackets and lap robes. I understand that Philadelphia is in a heat wave and they expect that it will be 100 degrees there today. Some change! At night and early morning you can see your breath here!

Because we will spend the first two days in inland waters we haven't had much motion. This morning one boy didn't want breakfast but wasn't ill. We don't expect too much because we will be almost 1/3 across before we get into the open sea. The ship travels about 400 miles a day at about 16 knots or better.

Every so often one of the leaders speaks on the loudspeaker and gives us our position and a little history and geography of the places nearby. Look on a map - it is a most unusual place. Soon we will go through a narrow neck and then really into the ocean proper. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is very large and at times we couldn't see land at all. However, the sea is calm, the sky partly cloudy and the breeze cool but not too cool.

Our rooms are on "A" deck and right up in the bow. We are 4 to 6 to a room and there isn't any room to spare. We all are sleeping sound and have to be awakened. Tom Short is in the bunk over me and Jim Clauson and Dave Jung are with us. We have Room 101, the first room closest to the bow. We have one port hole and can stick our head out and see the bow cutting through the waves 20 or 30 feet below us. Many of the staff have come down to look out as it is quite a sight! It is safe enough as the port hole is high - you have to stand on a ladder to look out and the hole is small. Lower down they can't open them because of the spray.

As you can imagine everyone is happy, delighted and pleased so far. We had some discomfort on the train trip but so far we are all well and happy here.

The boys are having quite a time trying to find their way around - all passage-ways are narrow and the ship is honeycombed with stairways, corridors, etc. We have several doctors with us as well as the ship's staff so haven't had much problem with ailments.

Just finished lunch - during lunch we saw our first iceberg and all afternoon we passed big chunks of ice half the size of the ship - they hug the shore and we skirt around them. A bright clear sky full of sun makes photography good. We'll have lots of pictures to bring back.

By the way, I had birth 13 on the train and am eating at table 13. If this is bad luck, I'll take bad luck every day!

Friday afternoon - Well things are going very well. (Had to change places, I was out on one of the wings near the stern and there was too much vibration.) Wednesday night we passed through the straits of Belle Island and out into the Atlantic. The Captain told us the next day that he saw more icebergs during the night (on radar) than ever before in his life. The waves, or rather the swells, were greater and we had several boys ill but motion pills soon took care of this.

The Captain said the sea was so calm that we could start tours to the bridge. 7 of us volunteered to conduct the tours and most of Thursday we spent on the bridge learning about the instruments and how the ship is operated. Later we were taken to the radio room and then through the engine room. Quite a tour!

Today the tours started and my first 2 groups at 9:30 and 10:00 were our own Troop 23! We spent the full hour on the bridge and they all took many pictures and had lots of fun. Murdock and Hanna actually steered for awhile much to the delight and direction of the rest. These tours will continue both coming and returning as long as the weather is good and I will be on for one group in the morning and one in the afternoon.

After the first day Ernie Schmidt, one of the Scoutmasters (and on the National Staff at Schiff) started giving our position and bits of news and information every morning and evening. Last night he asked me to tell about the Labrador Current. I looked up what I could and gave this ending by suggesting that it is an A.C. Current that does not go back and forth but up and down, up and down. The boys all kid me now about my corny joke.

Movies are shown every night. They are pretty good. Tonight is Walt Disney's "Living Desert". Even the crew enjoy them. The weather is actually cold. Air 50 and water 50. Everyone comes on deck with blankets to wrap up in. The ship itself is air conditioned and heated so it is quite comfortable below. The Head Steward is a friend of Ron Depiazza's and we get first class attention, not that we need it because the food is excellent, but the Scouts have fun getting special attention.

Sunday Morning - Mid Atlantic - Everyone feels better today. We have entered the Gulf Stream and it is much warmer. Church Services are going on in every gathering place and even then it has to be done in shifts. Spirits are high and everyone is eating regularly. We all are catching up on our rest and much time is spent sleeping. As we are losing an hour every day and a half the breakfast hour is getting earlier and earlier and so the fellows go back to bed or sleep on chairs on the deck. It is funny to see these fellows really sleeping at all hours but it is good they do because we will be plenty busy when we hit Plymouth. The major problem is in getting our supplies ashore and to the Jubilee site in time to set up camp before dark.

Today they will accept mail so I will mail this and start another letter. Just want you to know that we are all well and happy and having the time of our lives.

Wednesday, July 31 Sutton Coldfield

Well here we are at the Jubilee Jamboree. After a pleasant sunshiny day Monday we went to bed with the knowledge that we could see the first lights of England in the distance. We were all up at 5:30 and could see the lights at Bishop's Rock but a slight fog hid the coast of Land's End.

After an hour we entered Plymouth Harbor and had an ideal picture of the sun just rising as the Pilot's boat came out. Had a hasty breakfast on deck to see the fortifications of the harbor and dropped anchor.

Our passports stamped and to the piping of a Kilty Band we were soon down the gangplank to a tender (the harbor is too shallow for an ocean vessel) and after a wait to get 1/3 of our group on the tender we finally shoved off for shore. Hardly time to change film and we were past Drake's Island (here Sir Francis Drake sailed forth to defeat the Spanish Armada) and to the wharf where we literally walked through customs (they didn't open a pack of ours) and onto a very nice coach. We were off at 9:45. The train was much like ours, except the locomotive was much smaller, and away we went for some 7 hours. The boys were much pleased with the trip and were delighted with the neat pastures each with a hedgerow, the small cars and the houses with many chimney pots. The train made a fast trip with hardly a stop. Came up through Bristol, Gloucester and Birmingham. We had a grand lunch on the way. We were met well and soon were on our way to our site. They trucked our Rucsacs in and we marched in (quite a hike). Upon arrival we found that a major problem had developed in the unloading of our sleeping gear. Most of it arrived late at night but in the meantime we were placed in with British Troops from Worcheshire and Shropshire. This proved to be a real highlight. The boys were absorbed two to a patrol and immediately began talking and swapping so that we could hardly find our own boys. The British (naturally) made tea-hot, with sugar and milk and filed us through. It was good and they were delighted that we enjoyed it.

As soon as the sun set it became quite cold and we soon turned in. Our tent poles and mess gear still have not arrived and the plans are that we will stay with them 'til it does (it's now noon) and they are starting lunch.

I talked to several other of our Scoutmasters and they all agree that, if nothing else, we got off to a grand start because our boys know and have met and lived with more other Scouts than they would have in any other way. It really has been fun!

All of our group are well but many are suffering from change of diet and some sniffles - nothing serious. Our greatest problem is that if we send them to the first aid tent they transfer them to the hospital so don't be alarmed if you hear that so and so is in the hospital - it is just a procedure of double checking in order to catch anything early. We have our own doctors plus the Jamboree doctors and have been well taken care of. By the way if we do have any illness or injury of a serious or extended nature we will notify the parents directly. So no news will be good news.

Sincerely,
Bernard C. Hains
Scoutmaster
Troop 23 Jubilee Jamboree