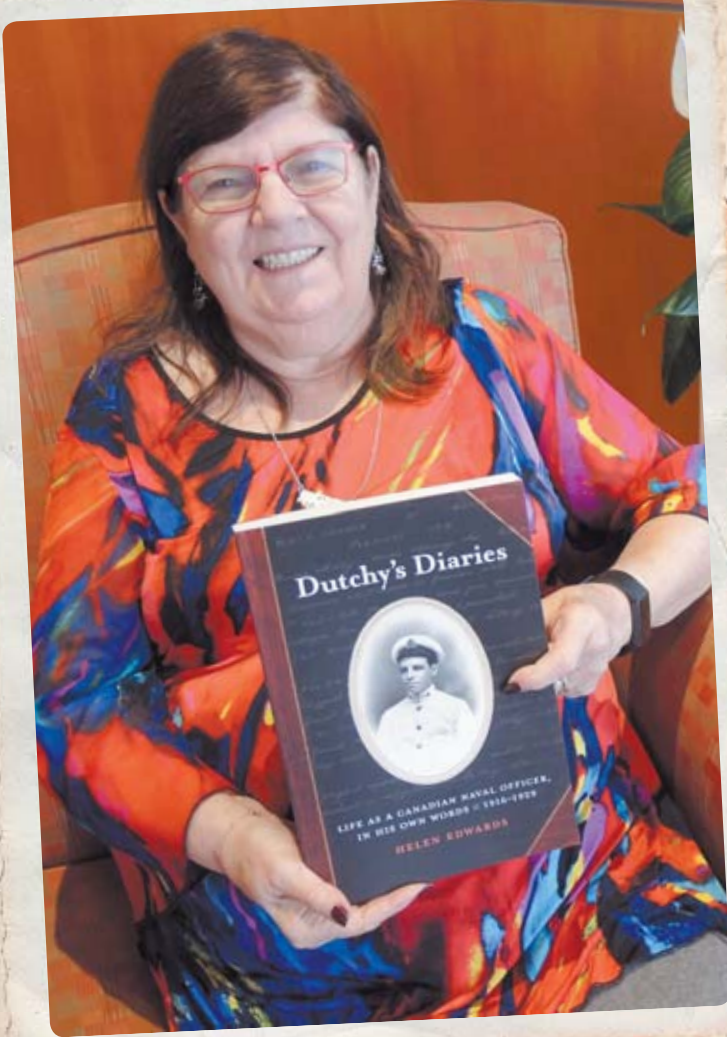


# War chest - a true treasure



**Peter Mallett**  
Staff Writer

**H**elen Edwards has transformed the contents of a family member's long-forgotten storage box of navy mementos into a newly released book.

Extensive journals and hundreds of photographs were amassed by the Victoria resident's father-in-law, Royal Canadian Navy Commodore John Crispo Inglis Edwards between 1916 and 1929. The treasure trove of historical items remained inside the plain wooden box for decades.

She knew the box resided in the family's basement but had no idea what was inside.

Seven years ago, she cracked it open.

"My jaw dropped when I realized the contents inside," said Edwards.

Below the jumbled clutter of paper clips, magazines and stationery, she found a large photo album containing over 100 carefully labelled photos mounted on black paper. Most important to the find were four diaries with extensive handwritten entries from his travels around the world.

The diaries were all different in size and colour, which leads Edwards to believe they were not navy issued stationery.

"The ink on the written passages was very well preserved and while some of the photos and the handwriting on them was a little faded, overall they are in good shape considering they are a century old," said Edwards.

Born in Londonderry, N.S., Edwards was the sixth child of Major Joseph Plimsoll Edwards, a noted Canadian historian, and Emily Susan Crispo. After attending the Royal Naval College of Canada in 1911, he graduated as part of the school's second class before embarking on a 39-year career in the newly formed RCN.

During the buildup to, during, and following the First World War, he served in eight Royal Navy warships and five RCN warships including HMCS Shearwater, HMCS Stadacona, HMCS Festubert and HMCS Champlain as commanding officer. Many of his postings as a senior officer towards the end of his career were on the west coast with units HMCS Naden and RCN Naval Barracks Esquimalt.

His travels around the world

included stops in the West Indies, where he was stationed for much of the First World War.

One of Edwards favourite images from the photo collection is her father-in-law and two other sailors riding camels in front of the pyramids of Egypt.

"That the diaries had survived the myriad of moves a naval family makes is a minor miracle. Doubly amazing is the fact we also found photographs that enhanced his story."

The Wardroom will host Edwards' book launch on Feb. 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. During the launch she will present highlights of the more intriguing content in her self-published book entitled *Dutchy's Diaries, Life as a Canadian Naval Officer in his own words, 1916-1929*.

Dutchy, says Edwards, was her father-in-law's nickname during his sailing days and is derived from his reputation as a penny pincher.

"Transcribing and researching his journals has been some of the most thought-provoking work of my life," says Edwards. "Each day brings new discoveries, but none can top the day I found these journals."

Author Helen Edwards poses with a copy of her book *Dutchy's Diaries*. The book focuses on the life and times of her father-in-law Commodore John Crispo Inglis Edwards of the Royal Canadian Navy and his travels from 1916 to 1929. Edwards will hold her book launch at the Wardroom on Feb. 18.

Photo by Peter Mallett, Lookout

## Journal entry, Jan 24, 1918

"Jan. 24th Hostile aircraft dropped bomb not far from us at Kastro. Relieved from patrol & proceeded to Mudros. Rec'd. part of our six weeks mail. I was awfully relieved to hear from Mother saying that they were all uninjured at home, after the recent Halifax explosion. Rec'd. numerous letters & Xmas parcels & a whole bag of official correspondence. Heard that the Louvain has been torpedoed quite close to Mudros, with quite a large loss of life. Also most of our Xmas parcels. The "Colne" is pretty sure she got the Fritz who loosed off a mouldy54 & only missed by three feet. The latter streamed up the track of torpedo & dropped depth charges. It is fine getting some of our mail although I think that a lot of my parcels have gone down."



Commodore John Crispo Inglis Edwards along with two navy colleagues tour the pyramids and Sphinx in Egypt.

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