

Turbo-charged patrol

The RCMP nautical ride

Mounties always get their man, so the motto goes. To do so, these officers ride 1,600 horses. Often, their turbo-charged Patrol Vessel *Lindsay* brings the only police that many coastal British Columbians ever see. "Boating isn't what we do," says Constable Trevor Murray, 10-year RCMP veteran, "It's how we get to work".

Boats have long been a tool of the trade for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but patrol fleets were gradually phased out. In recent years, the RCMP built four new vessels and headquartered its West Coast Marine Detachment in Nanaimo. The new vessels are BC-made, as is much of their specialized equipment and crew clothing.

Based in Campbell River, Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Victoria, each



Patrol Vessel Lindsay at 23 knots with her characteristic rooster tail.



In the Lindsay wheelhouse. Left to right: Constables Trevor Murray and Raymond Kobzey at the chart, Corporal Jim Vardy at the helm.

veteran and renowned cookie baker.

The *Lindsay*, a 20-metre aluminum catamaran with a seven-metre beam, is big, sturdy, powerful and fast. Twin 820 horsepower, turbo-charged diesels produce 34-knot speeds, gulping 300 litres of fuel per hour. The characteristic rooster tail results from articulating

drives designed to operate with the top one-third of the propellers protruding from the water.

Piloting the speedy vessel demands considerable skill. "On sunny days it looks great, but it's much different with green water over the bow and around the bridge," says Murray. "We must arrive on scene able to function, not

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boat is usually crewed by four RCMP officers who operate the vessel while, living aboard during a seven-day patrol. They also do their own cooking. "The menu depends on each person's specialty, so meals can be an adventure," says vessel commander Corporal Jim Vardy, 21-year RCMP

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sick or injured from the journey."

The wheelhouse is gadget heaven. Essential equipment includes radar; loran; global positioning system; police, military and VHF radios; night vision and thermal imaging equipment; computer, printer and even a fax. "We travel fast, so we really rely on electronic navigation," says Constable Raymond Kobzey, 24-year RCMP veteran.

Lindsay is self-sufficient, carrying 4,000 litres of fuel, 160 litres of water and a generator. Electric heat is augmented by a furnace and backed up with a

communities, ongoing investigations and dealing with occurrences along the way. During a 12-hour shift, which routinely lasts much longer, the crew manages situations encompassing myriad laws; criminal, customs, immigration, traffic and maritime, to name just a few. "You never know what the day will bring," says Kobzey. "It's police work on a boat."

If variety is the spice of life, then theirs is zesty in the extreme. The crew can be called to investigate a murder; provide VIP security; thwart sea-going terrorists; guard prisoners; transport victims; execute warrants; do night surveillance; look for impaired boaters and

become qualified to command a patrol vessel. Prior nautical experience is not required, but applicants must have at least five years RCMP service. Close-quarters living and working aboard a vessel as well as being away from home at least 14 days each month, requires a special temperament. Also needed is a well-rounded police background helps effectively operate in this very small detachment. "Crew members tend to be outdoors people with broad life experience," says Vardy.

Selected applicants join a patrol vessel for on-the-water training with an intense first-year learning curve. They attend courses including the Coast Guard's coxswain school in Bamfield, learn about the vessel and its equipment, and perfect tactics specific to nautical police work. The officers' sidearms and other weaponry are stark reminders of their dangerous occupation.

Some "clients" don't stop when asked, so the crew must be adept at apprehending fleeing craft. The manoeuvre — not for the faint of heart — employs their onboard high-speed Zodiac to deliver a boarding party. The patrol vessel is used as cover since the inflatable boat affords little protection from gunfire. At a critical moment the Zodiac erupts from its cover and speeds up against the escaping vessel's hull. The officers leap aboard with weapons drawn and the Zodiac veers away to safety.

"We're working guys on a working boat," says Kobzey, matter-of-factly understating the complex, intense and often unpleasant nature of the work. But helping people is what the job is really about — sometimes with a heartwarming bonus. Lindsay typically attracts attention at remote communities. When the officers patrol ashore on bicycles they often have a parade of local children following along. It's refreshing when that old adage turns around and the kids get their Mountie. □

Eric Manchester's nautical obsession originated on Emeryville's Lake St. Clair, launching years of living aboard, single-handed sailing and extensive year-round cruising. Now living on Vancouver Island he spends most of his time on his Cal 25 sloop, Ceilidh.



Underway at 23 knots, preparing the Zodiac for launch. Left to right: Constables Raymond Kobzey and Trevor Murray.

Dickinson cabin heater. Crew quarters are compact staterooms containing twin bunks, desk and locker. The crew shares a midship head and shower. Galley equipment includes electric stove and oven; microwave; double-door refrigerator; freezer; and built-in coffee maker.

The dining area doubles as detention centre for well-behaved culprits. "They're incarcerated at the galley table if they're good, otherwise we handcuff them somewhere less comfy," says Vardy. "We recently arrested a young fellow and fed him cookies — and he even thanked us!" Depending on who baked the cookies, that could be cruel and unusual punishment.

Patrols comprise requests from com-

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drivers; investigate vessel collisions; assist fisheries officers; quell protest violence; combat contraband and people-smuggling; or even douse abandoned campfires.

This is a serious maritime career in addition to the underlying police work. It takes about six years to