



On board a naval ship

Making lots of waves with Emer

Geraldine on board the L.E. Emer at Cork Naval base. The L.E. Deirdre and L.E. Ethna are in the background.



Geraldine Comiskey thought a trip on board Irish naval vessel, the L.E. Emer, would be a voyage of discovery. It certainly was . . .

EMER looked impressive on that mild Monday morning at Cork naval base when I boarded her. One of the five naval warships at the State's disposal, she had her big guns bared — a Bofors in front and two Oerlikons at the flanks. Before the ship cast off, I feasted with the captain, Lieutenant-Commander Brendan Stockdale, and officers around 6 p.m. Sailors eat well; the main course was potatoes, steak and vegetables. There are no women in the Navy — the general reason given is that separate facilities would be costly, though I felt very welcome.

We were heading for the SEGA (South East Grey Area) — "box" of water which is claimed by both Britain and Ireland. I walked onto the bridge wings and watched the spray covering the bow. All part of the romance of the sea, I thought. But the sea motion caused equal motions within myself. My great voyage, courtesy of the Irish navy, was off to an inauspicious start. The Captain and "Doc" (Nurse Jim Feehan) stood over me as sickness struck. One sea-sickness pill was but a drop in the ocean. I was given both Stugeron and Avamine but nothing would stay down. The cabin was gyrating like Michael Jackson and sometimes it shuddered.

NO ONE told me I would be shielding my head from flying chairs, hanging onto the bunk and retching into a bucket at the same time. It was like a scene from Poltergeist. The sea was supposed to be

picturesque, framed in paintings or poems. Granted, Nelson was said to have suffered nausea. This comforted me slightly. But if Prince Andrew could survive the sea, so could a less pampered soul. So I waited until the ship leaned over the right way and let myself fall to a standing position. Like a drunk I staggered from one bulkhead to the other (in landlubbers' language, I was still calling them walls). The Atlantic is a wild place to be in a Force 9 gale. The

Navy crew has seen worse. I was with men who had sailed through Hurricane Charlie. **B**OARDING a Spanish trawler in a Force 7 to 8 wind was all in a day's work for the crew. It was a mixture of freak and exhilaration for me. It started at around 10 a.m. the next day when I was suitably recovered. A loudspeaker announced we were boarding a trawler which had been picked up on the radar the previous evening. I was

mummified in an inflatable suit — which was a lot of help. The Gemini inflatable motor-dinghy plunged into watery canyons and sort of skipped over to the rusty Gonzalez Parada, where a group of dark Spaniards stood. The Gunnery Officer, Aidan "Midge" Clery, and LS Matthew Connolly climbed up effortlessly. I made it with some help. The Spaniards wore house-slippers, soaked in seawater. The smell of fish was



Lt. Commander Brendan Stockdale, captain of L.E. Emer.



In the galley with Able Cook Michael Alcock, (left) and Ordinary Cook, John Mullins.

ove
M
on
ba
ke
difi
inc
jud
A
ha
tra
ing
ove
int
I
ste
on
sp
for
A
un
bre
was
eye
and
feet

L
hea
cull
war
cha
and
arn
star
cre
by
Mic
'oo
rad
tied
A
exp
not
Joh
In
dow
and