

For the time period of 1935 - 1940 I am having a difficult time pin pointing dates. I know that it was during this period that I finished putting the wall under our house. I also put in a concrete septic tank. We also seeded the lawn and planted trees and rose bushes around the yard. We had just nicely got the trees planted when old Mrs. McNutt came looking for young Donald. She broke the top of a tree to beat Donald. I was more than a bit cross with that, but that tree turned out to be the best shaped tree of the whole lot. They were all Silver Maples that we had bought from the nursery. T.H. told me that we wouldn't live long enough to see them grow. They're still there now, and mighty big trees too. There was a white picket fence around both sides of the yard, and along the front.

Our place gradually became the focal point of the neighborhood. Maybe it was the music that started it, because Jim and I played together a lot. It seemed like there was always an excuse for a sing song or a party. Neighbors were always dropping in and we were hardly ever alone. Daisy and Roy Adams stayed with the Duffields for awhile, and then rented a room in Charlie Brown's house. From there they came to our place. I helped build a house for them near the crossroads. Reggie and Alice Smith live there now.

Grace's brother Tom's wife Fanie gave birth to one of her babies at our place, in the same room where Ray was born.

In January of 1937 Renford's wife Vesta died during child birth. She said she knew she was going to die because about 2 weeks before that she had gone over to visit Lil and the dog wouldn't let her come into the house. It just stood in the doorway and howled 3 times.

On November 17 of that year Art was born in the hospital. That was Grace's birthday, although she didn't know it at the time. She thought her birthday was November 14, until just a few years ago when she got her official birth certificate from Halifax. On that day too, Dr. Murray got married. They are Ann Murray's parents.

For a birthday present I gave Grace an old fashioned pump organ. It was in good shape, and I don't remember where I got it, only that I paid \$5.00 for it. Grace loved it. She had taken lessons from Cassie Stone when she was a kid, and could play fairly well.

Grace's neice, Winnie (Hazel's daughter) kept house for us for 3 weeks. We paid her \$4.00 a week. She was 16 years old and was keeping time with Vic Hunter. He was at our place every minute he could spare. They were a lovely couple, a delight to have around, and our children loved them. Three years later they were married.

In the summer of 1937 Art Duffield had a stroke and died. He was 55 years old. Mrs. Duffield sold the farm and went to work for various people as a house keeper.

In 1938 dad's farm house burned down and I helped them build a new one. They lived in the old wood shed while the new house was being built. That's where Art learned to walk. He took his first steps on the kitchen table.

I never knew what prompted dad to buy a farm and to try and make a living there. As farms go I guess it was a good farm. But, dad was not a farmer and there must have been some pretty lean years. Especially in the summer when all the in-laws and out-laws came to visit and would eat them out of house and home. Doug was a burden to mom, and would eat many things he should not have eaten. So often he would go into a spell from either too much or too little insulin. The nearest doctor was in Pugwash. I think Doug was the deciding factor in bringing them back to Springhill.

In winter North Port was practically isolated, except for travelling by horse and sleigh. The roads were nearly always impassable for a car. Earl had an appendix attack and had to be brought to Amhurst hospital in a sleigh. It took all day to get there.

Things in Europe were getting quite bad, and talk of war was in the news everyday. Grace would get upset whenever Ben and I talked about it. There was a Militia in Springhill and Jim Spence belonged to it. We knew that he would be going into the regular army if war broke out. Those were still the depression years and it seemed like people were looking for a war to end the depression.

It finally came. Germany invaded Poland and then France. They started killing every Jew they could find. England and the Commonwealth declared war on Germany in November of 1939. England sent troops into France to try and stop the Germans, but the French army wasn't strong, and the British just managed to get out by the skin of their teeth, and the help of a lot of heroic people in every kind of conceivable boat.

Jim Spence and the Militia immediately ~~enlisted for active~~ service. Jim went into the Military police and was stationed in Halifax for quite awhile before being sent overseas. He never got to Europe but he saw plenty of the war in England when the bombing was going on there.

All the excitement and talk of war, with bands playing, flags waving, men marching and the incessant theme of patriotism coming at us from all directions got me fired up too. I tried to get in the army, but they said I was too old and had too large a family.

Grace didn't want me to go. I suppose she was right as usual. I have always been impetuous, and have had the bad habit of jumping into things without thinking them through clearly. I was still operating the sinking hoist and the mines had started to work steadily, but it was a monotonous job and 3 shifts. I couldn't resist giving it another try.

#4 mine had killed another 3 men in 1937, Walter Budd, Doug Main and Albert Weatherbee. In March 1940 it killed John Viennan. So in June of 1940 my brother Earl and I went to Halifax and signed on, Earl in the Army and me in the Navy.

The date of enlistment was June 7, 1940. My number was V25427. The V stands for volunteer, special service. The day of enlistment was something to see to be believed. I've seen something of the same in comedy movies.

One of my eyes use to be turned in when I was a child, but as I grew older it gradually straightened. I had practically lost all sight in it. Things were however being done with the services. Dr. Nicholson, a dentist from Springhill, (my dentist and friend) was the examining eye doctor. He saw me coming and he knew about my eye. He took me aside and gave me a copy of the eye chart to study. So naturally when I took the eye test I passed with flying colors. All that was left for me to do was, get a kit, get measured for a uniform and sign on the dotted line.

I know that the reason I was accepted so quickly was because I had steam engineer papers. I was signed on as an engine man and wore a Petty Officer's uniform. I was so proud of it, but Grace wasn't, and to this day she still gets angry about it when the subject comes up. I can't say that I blame her. My reasons for signing up were purely selfish, glory and excitement and a way out of the mines. Leaving Grace with 3 little children was a pretty mean thing to do, but once done there was no backing out. When I signed on I weighed 145 pounds and was 5'9 1/2" tall. There have been some changes since then, I now weigh 175 lbs. and am 5'8".

The barrack's routine was something else too. I walked miles and miles from this office to that office, and then was finally put on "lodge and comp" and had to find a boarding house. There must have been a gaurdian angel watching over me. I found a place to board at the home of Ansel Russell. Ansel was a sargeant in the Halifax police force. His wife Irene was really good to us. She had a brother in the Navy and all the guys who came to board there were P.O.'s and all very nice guys. The Russel house was at 43 Union Street, straight up the hill from the dry dock, and the first street up from Barrington Street. So it was a relatively short walk from there to the dock yard.

I had to do the usual parade ground routine, which consisted of forming fours and marching aimlessly around the parade square. For some reason I was chosen to be the marker for the Petty Officers division. I didn't mind that, in fact I was quite proud of it, but I did make a blunder that caused me a lot of embarrassment. The route of our marching was usually around the square and then up the road to the gate and back again to the square. The huge mess hall was along side the road near the top of the hill. On this particular day we were being reviewed by the Governor General and were expected to be at our best. All went well, at first. We were formed up in platoons with the band about 200 yards behind our platoon. I was marking as usual, so everyone lined up and kept in step with me. We did a good job of marching around the square and then we started up the road. When we got near the mess hall the echo from the band from the building was louder than the band itself and about one step later. So you can imagine what happened. I fell into step with the echo and put the entire parade out of step. I sure got a bawling out, and had a very red face. But I was still marking and they changed the route of the march after that.

The parade square thing was a twice a day occurrence, morning divisions and evening quarters. During the day I worked in the machine shop or was sent on working parties on board ships that were in to get patched up. So here I was in the Navy, but still carrying a kit of tools.

Grace came to Halifax to visit me whenever she could. I went home as many week-ends as possible. I hitch hiked most of the time. The motorists were pretty good to us in those days. Only once did I get picked up by a guy who didn't want to stop. When I put out my arm, he stopped because he thought I was a cop. He was an American and wasn't very polite, but he didn't put me out, and I got all the way to thought I was a cop. He was an American and wasn't very polite, but he didn't put me out, and I got all the way to Gough's store with him. At that time the best route to Springhill from Halifax was via Lynn Woods and the shore road, a distance of 155 miles from home. It was long and narrow and at times the fog got too thick to see through. The snow and ice didn't help either. It was and is a beautiful drive in the summertime but it was nasty in winter. Snow and ice; and those were the days before they used salt.

Grace and Irene became good friends and still are. Grace would stay at Irene's when she would come to visit me. That's the way my early days in the Navy passed.

On September 13, I was drafted to the Arras. The Arras was a coal burning Department of Fisheries vessel that had been taken over by the Navy and fitted out to do mine sweeping outside of Halifax harbour. Her Chief Engineer as well as her cook came with her. The Chief was a skinny little guy, wrinkled and old looking and he always looked dirty. The cook's name was Oikle from Lunenburg. He weighed about 300 pounds. He was clean and jolly.

One of the first people I met when I boarded the Arras was Jim Spence's brother Tom. He was the leading stoker and also part of the crew. I was glad to see him. He helped me get settled on board the ship. The next morning we went outside the harbour for a sweep, it was rough and raining. I will never forget that day. We had kippers for breakfast. They came up and everything else with it. To make matters worse Tom gave me a drink of rum. He said it would settle my stomach. It damn near killed me. I didn't drink or smoke in those days, and my system sure took a shock. I got over it in a few trips and then I enjoyed being at sea.

The Arras didn't tie up at the Navy dockyard but tied up at the French Cable wharf on the Dartmouth side. That meant either a trip on a bum boat to Halifax or a ride across on the ferry.

The French cable wharf was also used by ships bringing cargo up from the Barbados. The crews of these ships were friends of our cook. He'd go and visit when we were there together and he would invariably get loaded and we would be called out at one or two in the morning to bring him back on board our ship. He was too big to carry so we had to use a cargo winch. Some fun! He was a great guy. Even his coffee was good, if you like coffee. He made it in a big pot on Sunday and just kept adding more water, coffee and egg shells with a dash of salt all week long. By the next Saturday that was some brew.

I spent 7 months on the Arras, and I got my sea legs and stomach in pretty good shape. I learned to like rum and cigarettes too. Tom Spence gets the credit for that.

It was while I was on the Arras that I first hurt my back. I was doing some work on the engine and was lifting a wooden box out of the tool cupboard when the bow wave of a passing ship caused the ship to lurch just as I lifted the box. I spent 2 weeks in the hospital and my back has bothered me for the rest of my life.

On April 18, 1941 I was drafted to the Arvida. My rank had been changed from Engine man to Stoker Petty Officer, not directly of course, the Navy didn't do things like that. I was drafted to Stadaeena on April 4th, then to Arvida on April 17th. The Arvida was one of the first Corvettes to be built in Canada, and at the time of my draft to her, she was still under construction in Quebec. I was one of the advance crew that was sent up to get acquainted with the ship. I was to be the Regulating S.P.O. The rest of group consisted of the Chief Engineer the Captain, the 1st Lieutenant, a Leading Stoker, Leading Sea Man and several others.

Arvida was being built in the Louzon ship yards. I got a room in an old hotel room in Old Quebec City. That was something else, bed bugs, millions of them, but I survived.

We went to the ship everyday, where we each got acquainted with the part of the ship that we would be working with. I studied blue prints and traced piping and watched boilers and machinery being put together.

We were catered to and entertained by the big shots of the ship yard. It made me feel like I was really somebody.

We were on L & C from April 18 to May 21 at which time we went on board ship to live. During the time we were in Quebec I had no opportunity to get home. A combination of circumstances got me in bad with Grace. The hotel keeper had a daughter who was trying to teach me French. I had written and told Grace this. In the meantime she had written to me and asked if it would be alright for her to come up for a week. I had written back that it would be impossible, because there would be no place for her to stay. She put 2 and 2 together and got 5, and I was in the soup. I was completely innocent but I'm not sure she believes me even yet.

The ship was finally finished, and had her trial runs. We brought her down the river to Halifax. Would you believe we ran into a tree on the way down? Yes we did, at a bend in the river the channel was close to the shore. There was a big tree leaning out over the water. Our bridge structure struck the limbs on the way by. I found out later, that there was nothing impossible ~~for the Canadian Navy.~~

Those were busy times, a new ship and a green crew, some of whom had never been on a ship before. It's a wonder we didn't sink our own ship. Somehow we muddled through and were ready to go to sea on convoy duty. We came down the river to Halifax on May 22 and left on July 30, 1941. Those were 2 hectic months. We even got credit for sinking a sub outside Halifax harbour. We had been out for 2 days and had made contact and dropped a pattern of charges, but as far as

we could see we had just killed a school of fish. That evening when we went downtown, people shook our hands and bought free beer. It was some fun for sure, but I still think it was fish.

Soon after this we sailed to St. Johns, Newfoundland and there joined a convoy for Britain and a real shake down. The trip over was uneventful and we finally landed at Greenock.

From there we went to Tobermory, in North West Scotland, where we were really put through our paces. Day and night we worked, and when we left there to take up our job of convoy escort we were pretty good. It wasn't all bad at Tobermory though. We had rifle practise and I was good at that. A few of us were able to go to an old Scottish estate that was opened up especially to give the Canadian crews a bit of relaxation.

From Tobermory we went back to Greenock, then to Londonderry where we picked up oil and supplies and started the routine of convoying merchant ships across the Atlantic. The real misery had begun.

It would be impossible to describe the misery of being on the North Atlantic in a Corvette. It was bad, even in the summer, but the winters were pure Hell.

During that first period we all slept in hammocks, except the Officers and the Chief Engineer. I said slept. but there was really very little sleep at sea. There was always noise, and as the ship rolled and pitched the hammocks swung back and forth bumping into stanchions and bulkheads. There was always someone coming or going and someone always talking. Sleep was something you got when you could, in bits and pieces, always with your clothes on and always damp.

The Arvida was one of the first Corvettes built in Canada and she had a short forecastle. Even in calm weather every wave came over the side, so that making a trip from fore to aft was a hazardous journey.

When it got rough, which was most of the time, you just didn't move without hanging on to something. Some of the waves were actually as high as the top of the funnel and those little ships did everything but turn hand springs. I was pretty sea sick the first days of those first trips. Once I got over it, I really enjoyed it. The first trips over the Atlantic are just dreams to me now. I didn't keep a diary in those days.

In 1941 the Canadian escort was relieved by an escort from Britain, and the Canadian escort then went to Iceland, usually first to Reykyavik, the capital and then to

Hvalfjord which was an American base. It was to be our last convoy before refit, and we were ready for it.

The night before we left we had all gone ashore, and of course we had taken on a few. We left Newfie the next morning at 5:00. It was snowing a bit and blowing hard. In fact we had trouble getting out of the gate. We finally made it and that was the beginning of a nightmare. Was it rough, we didn't join the convoy until that night.

Our escort was made up of Montgomery, an old American four stacker destroyer that had been handed over to Britain in a lease lend deal, and Corvettes, Trail, Arvida, Chilliwack, Dauphin, Kamsack and also a Bangor type mine sweeper, the Fort William. Montgomery, Arvida and Chilliwack were on the front screen. The convoy was the HX142. The bad weather continued for 4 days but it would have been better for the convoy if it had stayed rough.

We had reached the spot where there was no air cover from either America or England, and the next day we were told that subs were following us. Everyone was on edge and we wore life belts all the time. There was no moon and that night the leading ship of the convoy got hit. At first she started to burn, and then she exploded. She must have been carrying high octane gas, because it was a hell of a bang, and right after that, there was a warm wave of air. It was a scary sight.



The escorts started putting up star shells, the sub was sighted and we took after her. We dropped charges but we could see no results. The Arvida was racing around like mad and not getting a contact. That went on for 3 days. We picked up a lot of survivors. We started for Iceland escorting the rescue ship. Our relief escort had arrived from Londonderry and we were short of oil. On the way we heard on a German radio station that 27 ships had been sunk. Some of the survivors were from a freighter, they were gunners.

We put them ashore at Rykjavik and we went to Hvalfjord where we took on oil and had the doors put back on the boiler hatches. That night it started to blow and we were sent out because our anchors wouldn't hold on the rocky bottom. That was a real nightmare. The storm worsened, it started snowing and the wind was blowing at 100 m.p.h.

We lost our life boats and early floats and an engine room ventilator. We wedged ourselves between the pipes and hung on. It blew like that for 3 days.

We went over and down past the coast of Greenland. We were beat. We finally reached Newfie, got oil and grub and headed for Halifax. Then we went on leave and we were ready for it. My nerves were shot. The alarm clock went off one night, and I was dressed and in the kitchen before I realized where I was.

During the 1st period we all slept in hammocks. I say sleep but there was little sleep at sea. There was always noise and the hammocks swung back and forth. Someone was always coming or going. Sleep came in bits and pieces.

So we got by the year 1941. We got back to Halifax after Xmas. I went home on January 1st. I was sick in bed for 2 days. Joey and Raymond had diptheria and were quarantined. Grace was having a rough time. The neighbors were good and checked in at the kitchen window everyday to see if she needed anything. When the quarantine was lifted on the 7th, it was a big relief.

Jim Spences's mother died on the 9th. On the 15th I went to town and got the deed for the house and insured it for the first time.

On January 17th Cliff and I took a trip to the woods, and we took Cliff's donkey. It was cold so we got off the sleigh and started to walk. That darned donkey was watching us and at the first chance he started to run away. If I hadn't been a good runner we would have been in trouble, but I caught him. We stayed in camp all night and came home at 2:30 the next day, and Ronnie stayed for supper. Grace still laughs about that. She had made a pie, but there was a hole in the oven of her coal stove and a puff of wind blew soot into the oven and over her pie. Grace just scraped the top off and covered it with meringue. No one knew the difference.

Mom and Dad were in town for a visit. We all went to a show on the 24th, Daisy, Roy and Eva were there too. We nearly froze coming home.

On January 26th we went to Northport and got stuck in the snow going there. We stayed all night. The boys made ice cream and we had a good visit. We came home the next morning and got stuck again coming home. It was snowing hard and we nearly froze. Mable and Doug came over to spend the evening and Mrs. Duffield was also out.

All good things must end and on January 28th I went back to join my ship in Halifax. I couldn't find her so I had to spend the night at Venture. Don Garrett was also there, the next day we found that our ship was in refit in St. Johns. So we were drafted to St. Johns. It was cold and stormy and we had a heck of a time getting our gear to the station. Don froze his ears. We stayed at the K of C all night and got the morning train. We arrived at the ship at 10:00 p.m., January 30, 1942. The ship yard men were working on the ship, Don, me and the Chief were the only ones aboard. We got a new E.R.A. that day, Walter McQueen. He was something else, he was a nice guy, but he liked his beer and then he was a nuisance. I went to a dance with him one night, and he got plastered. We were tied to the wharf and the tide was out, so it was about 25 ft. down to the deck of our ship by way of a ladder. I left Walter on the dock while I went for help to get him down. When we got back on deck, there he was. How he did it, I'll never know.

On February 19th I had a chance to go home for a couple of days. It was a cold snowy trip, but well worth it. We went back to the ship on the 22nd.

On the 24th they sent me aboard the Camrose, to flash up a boiler and get her ready for sea. She was a mess and stone cold, so it was quite a job. We did it and went to sea the next day at 10:00 a.m. There were 5 of us and we did 6 and 6. We got steam up in #2 at 2:00 p.m., arrived in Lunenburg at 6:00 p.m. after a miserable trip. It was rough and cold. We left the Camrose there to complete her refit. We started

for St. Johns. We went by bus, train and ferry and arrived at our ship the next day to find the crew on L and C. We tested #2 boiler on March 1st, it still leaked so no more could be done. The weather was getting warmer. Tom McKonkey was back off leave and living with us.

On March 2nd I had the chance to play the banjo over C.H.S.J. I had stage fright, but did okay.

On March 10th the ship was put in dry dock at 2:00 a.m.

On March 17th I caught some kind of bug, and the next day was in the hospital. I got out on the 24th and went straight to a phone. I had a chance to go home the next day. Arrived at home at 6:30 and went right to the hospital. It was a boy, 8lbs. 3 oz. Grace had a bad time of it. We called him James David. I felt rotten the whole time I was home. Went back to the ship on April 1st.

We took the ship out for trials on April 4th. The Arvida had undergone extensive refit. Her forcastle had been extended back to aft of the funnel. It made her look different and was to make a big difference at sea. She was finally finished and we took her to Halifax on April 8th. There was no time to go home. We took on stores, had gun practice and joined a convoy for Newfoundland. The weather wasn't too bad, most of the crew was new and experienced sea sickness. We arrived at St. John on April 14th at 0800. We took on oil and supplies and left again. We arrived at an American base at 0930. We left on the 16th in a blinding blizzard. We joined the main convoy on the 18th. It was a 10 knot convoy and was considered fast for cargo ships.

By April 20th it was really stormy. The seas were piling right over the ship. We lost the doors off the boiler room again. On the 24th we got a report of subs in the vicinity. We had orders to wear our life jackets at all times.

It got rough again, but we made it with no action and arrived at the tanker on the Foyle River at 1630 on the 26th. We took on oil and continued up the river to Londonderry.

Londonderry was an American base. We had some repairs done and the ship was painted to look like an iceberg. It turned out that Derry was to be our Eastern base. We got to know our way around and liked it very much. The weather was beautiful and we were well treated. Some of us managed to go to Belfast a few times. I met Bill O'Brien in the park one day. Small world eh?

We got into the habit of going to the same pub. It was run by a widow and her 2 daughters. They lived upstairs and had a piano. I had my banjo with me and so we spent many nice evenings there.

We left on the 5th of April for sub trials. We were in and out for practice until May 7th when we joined another convoy. We almost had a bad accident on the 8th. One of the stokers put a burner in the wrong way and it back fired and burned him badly. I escaped being burned by tumbling backward. I got up and closed the oil valve, it was a near miss.

The weather was good. One of our stokers had to be put on board a Yankee cutter, where there was a doctor, because of an appendix attack.

May 11th was a nice day. We had orders to wear our life jackets at all times. There were subs shadowing the convoy. It was all routine and after supper we had music on the upper deck.

At 2000 I went on watch. Action Stations sounded at 2300. Two ships had been torpedoed, and then another one at 2400. The whole sky was lit up with star shells. There were as many as 30 up at a time. It was more like a 4th of July thing than anything else. The ships were burning and the men were in the water. That was awful. We picked up survivors and got 28. One fell back as we tried to pull him over the side. He was killed as he was caught in the wheel. Some were hurt badly and they were all nationalities. I was relieved at 0500, but couldn't sleep so I went up to the deck to wait for breakfast. The bells went again and back I went to the stoke hold. We dropped two charges but got no results. I was relieved at 1200. At 1300 we put the Greeks on board another ship and their injured on board a U.S. cutter. The gunners from the last ship stayed with us. I fell asleep at 1400 and woke up at 1730. We knew the subs were still around.

There was more action at 2200. Another ship went down. We saw the sub but he got away. At 2400 another ship went up and then it was quiet for the rest of the night. At 0600 we started to look for survivors. At 0900 we picked up 3 boats of survivors and that was scary. We chased another sub, but it got away. We dropped charges, but had no results. At 1200 we picked up 2 more men from a boat filled with water and learned that the subs had gotten 3 more ships. At 1500 we headed for Newfoundland escorting the rescue ship, with 186 survivors. I came off watch at 2400 and finally had a nights sleep with all my clothes on. We ran hard all night. I did the 8-12 watch, had dinner and laid down for a nap when the bell rang again. I swore that I would throw out every bell in the house when I got home. We dropped another

pattern of charges, but missed again. The wind was coming up and getting rough. It was now Friday and had been rough all day and night. Now it looked like the weather would clear. More subs were reported but there was no more trouble. We were looking forward to getting in.

We arrived at St. Johns on May 16th. There was a big to do when we came in, there were ambulances and big shots all over the place. They sent 2/3 of the crew to rest camp. They took pictures, one of me is in the book "Canadians at War". I could have used a rest, but didn't get one.

We were glad to see St. John where we could get a hair cut and have some laundry done. There was a pile of mail. We did boiler clean up and did a lot of work in the engine room.

One day while I was ashore I met Harold Graven and spent an evening with him. He is a minister. It was a pleasant time. The weather was nice, I had a parcel from Grace. I learned on May 25th that Frances had died. We were there until May 31 when we left at 0600, I had a big head. It was rough, a lot of boys were sea sick. It was a slow convoy, but it was a perfect trip with no action. We arrived in Londonderry on June 11th. The shore gang started remodelling our mess the next day. We left on the 18th and I was glad to go. It was a 9 knot convoy with 30 ships. It was rough and foggy. Our relief escort arrived on the 28th and we left for Newfie with one disabled ship. We got in on June 29th, got oil at 1600. I was dressed and on the train for home at 1700. Got home at 2100 on July 1st. They were surprised to see me. Grace wasn't well. T.H. was still running the mill and having trouble as usual.

I started back on July 3rd. I arrived at the ship on the 6th. I had my finger prints taken, got paid \$95.00 and a \$19.00 ticket refund.

We went to sea on July 8th with a fast convoy. The weather was good, I was on 12-4 watch. July 12th we saw a sub on the surface, but he got away. 7 subs were reported in the vicinity on the 13th, but the escort did a good job. We were going along at 150 - 179 revs. We arrived at the tanker on the 16th and in Derry the next morning. It was a good place to get work done, and when we left we were in good shape. It rained nearly all the time we were there. We left on the 26th and arrived in St. John on the 6th of August. It was a good trip, we did the last 20 hours at full speed. Ferguson and McQueen went on leave. We did boiler cleaning. On August 12 we went out on trials. We left St. John on the 14th at 1715. We had gun practice and we were on our way. It was a quiet trip. August 23rd the St. Croix picked up a boat of survivors and took the boat in tow. We arrived at Mobile on the 25th. The tanker was the

Empire Dauphin. The next day we moved to Londonderry, and tied up at the Yankee base. I got leave and left for London on the 5:00 o'clock train.

I went to Brighton to see Jim Spence. He was looking good, but was lonesome for home. I came back to London the next day because Jim was busy. There was an air raid while I was there and it is something I will never forget. I enjoyed the sights of London. The city had taken a beating, but there was still lots left. The Beaver Club was a great place and I met quite a few people there that I knew. I started back to the ship at 1650 and arrived there at 1630 the next day, September 1st. Coming across the channel I met an Air Force girl who had an uncle from Springhill. Small world.

We left on the 4th and arrived at the tanker at 0900. We were low on water and we spilled oil on the deck. Everyone was mad at everyone. We finally were going and joined a fast convoy. The weather turned sour and we didn't make good time.

Luck ran out on September 10th, we lost 2 ships, a tanker and a freighter. The freighter broke in 2 and had to be shot down with gun fire. We dropped a pattern of charges but the sub got away in the convoy. I got off watch on the 11th at 0830. The convoy was getting small. We had lost 9 ships in one day. There was no rest. I thought we had had it when I saw 3 torpedoes come straight at us. The sub was diving at the time and we went right over him, we dropped a pattern at the same time. There was a terrific bang, but we never turned around.

Two of the ships were still afloat. A snow flake flare exploded prematurely and landed among the charges, and 2 stokers were burned, throwing it over the side. We were nearly hit from a shell from one of the freighters. They thought we were a submarine and fired at us. The shell went through the wheel house without exploding.

It was Sunday the 13th. We have had action stations 21 times. We had lost 11 ships, damaged 2 and were still going. We had 140 survivors on board, but only 1 was hurt. They were quite a mess. There was 6" of oil on the water when we picked them up at 0300 on the 12th. We were nicely on our way when a sub surfaced 50 yards off our port bow. We tried to ram it, but he got down and scraped our bottom as we went over. We dropped 6 charges as we went over him. Additional escort was expected, the crew was nearly dead from lack of sleep. Some of the crews on the ships that sunk went down, they didn't stand a chance. 50 depth charges had been dropped, we had 18 left. We lost 17 ships and the Lord knows how many men.

The Ottawa got it on the 13th, there were only 69 survivors out of a crew of 175, plus 50 that they had picked out of the water. She was hit in the mess deck and in the boiler room. She broke in 2. The halves stood on end and went straight down. Since the 10th, action had not stopped. The other escort came and the convoy was still taking it when we left. We left because of an oil shortage. We picked up what was left of the Ottawa's crew. We got 22, the Celendine was our rescue ship and she got 47. There were 172 survivors on board, besides our crew. There was no food, oil or water left. Many of the survivors were badly hurt. Doug Fisher worked for 2 days and nights on them. The doctor from the St. Croix came to help out.

It had been a terrible time and was awful to see the men drown right along side of our ship. It was pitch black and we didn't dare use a light. Many of the crew jumped right into the water to tie ropes to those who were floating there. Dusty Miller and Frank Robinson were gone, Leslie Russell my landlady's brother was gone. I am very proud of our stokers and surprised at myself. I don't remember being scared and I should have been. We got to Newfie on September 16th, there was another big to do. We were too tired to care, they inoculated the works of us. God knows why. To top it off 2/3 of the crew were sent to rest camp, and I wasn't one of them. We had to have a boiler cleaning. I was sick and in bed the next day. I had to get up to close up #1 boiler and fill it. The work was finally done and we were rested. My action station was in the boiler room, so I had been down there the entire time. I even ate down there.

We were in St. John's until September 22nd, when we left

with a slow convoy. I was on the 12-4 watch in the engine room. We had 2 new stokers on board, 1 was sea sick. The night of the 24th was beautiful, we could hear gunfire but weren't sure what it was. It got rough on the 25th but by the 26th it was pretty bad. It was an uneventful crossing and we reached the tanker in the Foyle River on October 4th. We went to Derry on the 4th, and on the 7th I made a trip to Belfast. Rain spoiled the trip, but I did buy a linen table cloth and napkins for Grace. We left Derry on the 9th and moved down to Moville where we took on oil and then went to anchor. It was windy, we left on the 11th to meet the convoy.

It was a 9 knot convoy, the sea was heavy and I didn't feel too good. By the 13th the Captain was worried about oil again.

23 subs were reported in the vicinity. It was rough as the devil and we were barely moving. On October 18th a tanker got it. It was bad, the rescue ship went back to pick up survivors, but she only got 8. We were with her, as an escort. The Bury took a beating. You can swear all you like at a Corvette, but I'll bet they are the best ship to take the rough weather. You just can't move or stand unless you have a good hold.

By October 20th, oil was scarce. It was a little smoother. 2 ships had gone to the Azores, the Bury had sent for a tug. We were somewhere off the coast of Spain, heading for St. Johns, with about 900 miles to go. On the 23rd we were taken in tow and arrived in St. Johns at 0900. We had 35 miles to go and we went dry.

On October 27th, I took a trade test for E.R.A. The test took 3 days. I was made E.R.A. 4th class officially on November 13, 1942.

On October 30 we left at 1300 after we fixed the circulation problems. Joined the convoy on the 31st, a 6 1/2 knot group. We had several mine sweepers with us. We had new crew and 2 new E.R.A's with us. McKonkey was new Chief. November 1st the weather was still good, we had action at 2030, I was on the 4-8 watch. There was action all night. By 1000 the next day we had lost 10 ships, we had 60 survivors on board. The Amhurst had about the same and the rescue ship had about 200. The officer on board saved our bacon when he heard a torpedo coming at us. We went full ahead and were missed. We had 1 dead man on board, he was buried at sunset, with full honors.

We lost another ship on the 3rd. We saw the sub on the surface, but he was too far away and went down too quickly. By 2300 we had lost 16 ships. One was an ammunition ship that blew sky high. We dropped 2 charges at 2200 and



minutes later there was a violent explosion. We're not sure but we credited to a sub, as well as one we got the night before. November 4th, we were on our way to Iceland, there was a rescue ship, a tanker, ourselves with 2 Yankee tugs.

The next day was quiet as we steamed for Iceland. On the 6th we put grub over to the tug.

We arrived at Reykjavik on November 7th at 2300. The news on the radio said 23 ships were gone and 2 were damaged, we had started with 40. We went ashore and saw part of the city. The people are 75% blond and the girls exceptionally good looking.

We left on the 9th with 36 survivors, bound for Greenock. It got rough on the 10th, all the survivors were sick. The survivors cursed the Corvette. We arrived at Gourock on the 13th at 0800, the weather was perfect. We moved up to Greenock at 0930.

At 0900, November 17, we started for Merville, arriving there at 1800. The next day we moved up to Derry arriving at 0800, we took on water, had our R.D.F. repaired and left for down the river at 1330.

On November 19 we were back at sea again with a 9 knot convoy and perfect weather. November 20th we tried to take on oil but the hose broke and we had to give it up for the day. We tried again the next day but also gave up because the St. Francis wanted to take oil first. The weather was still good, but the next day it started to get rough. It got rougher! The ship was really pitching and rolling so badly, there were times I really thought we were gone. Eating was out of the question. We lost our port boat. The decks were a real mess, it was a wonder there was anything left. By November 27th the weather eased off. We were expecting to go in for refit and had our list ready.

We arrived at St. Johns at 0700 on the 28th. We took on oil grub and water. We left there at 1800, taking a convoy to Sydney and Halifax. The convoy was very slow; the weather was rough and St. Pierre Island was still in sight at 2000. It stayed rough. We took a hell of a beating.

December 2nd we got underway again at 1700, and arrived at Halifax at noon on the 3rd. That was one to remember, I found a telephone as soon as I could and was it ever good to hear Grace's voice. December 4th was duty watch and I was busy with the defect list and getting the stokers organized.

I got my leave ticket December 5th and also my pay. I caught the 1530 train for home and arrived at 2100. Boy was it good to be home. As you may have guessed, I'm taking all this information from a diary I kept during the war. Grace gave it to me for a Christmas present in 1941. So I am going to copy the next month directly from the diary.

December 6, Sunday: Went to dad's for dinner and T.H.'s for supper. It is sure good to be home.

December 7: Grace and I went to town today. Stayed for the evening and saw a show. Had a good time. Ordered gyprock.

December 8: Started Raymond's room today. Ordered lumber for the floor.

December 9: Finished Raymond's room and started ours. Boy what a mess. Doug, Bob and Roy are helping me.

December 10: Still gyprocking.

December 11: On last bedroom.

December 12: Upstairs is done. Grace has cleaned up, now for the parlour.

December 13: Mum, dad and family were over for supper. Arthur not feeling well, mumps again.

December 14: Started the front room today, those boxes, oh boy!

December 15: Got the ceiling done and a good job too.

December 16: Finished the front room today.

December 17: Working at the hall today, also went into town this morning.

December 18: Finished at last, all but some odd jobs and the lights left to do.

December 19: Had a pleasant day on the couch, slept all evening. Radio good.

December 20: Sunday, Arthur is sick, Ma and Pa over for supper.

December 21: Grace washed, and cleaned the house.

December 22: Went to the morning show, "Carry on Canada".

December 23: Went to the school entertainment, the boys were good.

December 24: Stayed home and got ready for Santa, had a wonderful time.

December 25: This morning was worth a million dollars. Had a lovely dinner at home, and supper over at Dad's. Went out with Russell and Theo at night.

December 26: Had a terrible headache this morning. Russell and Jen were over this evening.

December 27: Sunday, helped Grace with the work. Had company today, Tom, Fred, Anna, Harold, Mrs McKinnon and Doug for supper. Went down home with Tom.

December 28: Spent the day over at Charlie's.

December 29: Spent another day at Charlie's.

December 30: Went to a show with Grace tonight.

December 31: Went to a party at Lizzie's tonight, got home at 4:00 in the morning.

January 1: Had dinner down at T.H.'s and supper at Daisy's. Tonight we had a Gin party at Russell's.

January 2: Had a good sleep today, just loafing.

January 3: Sunday, packed my things today, sure hated to go. Arrived in Halifax at 10:30.

January 4: Went to the barracks this morning, got drafted in and out. Left for Lunenburg at 4:30 p.m. and arrived at 8:00 p.m.

January 5: Went to L and C today. Found a swell place. The people here are treating our crew swell.

January 6: Just poking around. Weather has been very cold, and we had trouble with freezing pipes.

January 7: Still the same, saw a movie tonight "Iceland", but it sure wasn't the Iceland I know.

January 8: Same thing, still cold, stokers doing nothing.

January 9: The rest of the crew got Make and Mend, but we have to hang around as long as there are men working on the ship.

January 10: Frozen pipes this morning, had intended to go to church, but the pipes ended that. Came home at one, and so it went. On the 12th we got a new stoker, and we also got a jeep.

On January 27th the Chief came back. I was glad to see him. We still haven't been paid.

I went to a card party on the 28th, had ice cream and a good time. Got paid \$21.00 on the 29th.

On February 3rd we tried the main engine. We moved up to the government wharf today. Took a small spin first. Not bad but not the best. We were meant to take trials on the 6th but they were called off. Took on oil. We came off L & C today and are now back on the ship. Those people sure treated us well. Our landlord's name was Rhodenizer. We came from Lunenburg to Halifax on February 8th. Went to the basin and took on ammunition and transferred oil. We finished at midnight.

We went on trials the next day with 7 new stokers on board. We emptied the oil tanks tonight.

On February 12th I wrote for my watch keeping ticket this morning and went home in the afternoon. Arrived at 9:00 p.m. It was sure good to be home again.

February 12: Went to town with Grace tonight. Did some shopping and came home early.

February 13: A real pleasant Sunday at home, I wish it could last forever.

I enjoyed my last few hours at home and got back to Halifax at 10:30 on February 15th. It was cold as the devil. The next morning everything was frozen up. I went to the office and found that I had passed my exam.

We left Halifax on February 20th, headed for St. John. The weather was good, but nearly all of the crew got sea sick. We arrived at West St. John at 0400 on February 22nd. We were in the dry dock at noon on the 25th, finished at 1600.

The men lost no time getting to work on our ship. We left dry dock on March 13th. We got water in the oil and the steam went down to 70 lbs. but we made it. We got leave till 0600. The next day we took on oil and went to Reed's point where we put on our Aztic dome and left at 1800 for Halifax with one freighter. The weather was perfect. We arrived in Halifax at 0400 on the 16th.

I went ashore and called Grace, and she told me she was coming down the next day. She arrived the next evening at 2330. Boy was I glad to see her! I had to work on the ship all day. On the 19th we saw the movie "In Which We Serve". She didn't like it one bit. I had Saturday off to spend with Grace. On Sunday I brought Grace and Irene on board the ship. I think they both enjoyed that.

March 24th was my last night ashore. It was wonderful while it lasted. I said so long to Grace at 0630. I hated that.

The next day we had manoeuvres and then went to St. Margaret's Bay. Our stay there was for a shake down of a new crew. They were awful. The stokers were the only ones worth a damn. We were in the Bay until April 3rd, when we came back to Halifax.

The boys all went ashore, but I was broke and couldn't even get a haircut. On April 6 I went ashore and visited Irene and said good-bye.

We had a stability test and swung compass, then left Halifax early in the morning of April 8th. We were headed for St. Johns in good weather. We were with the Lady Rodney and arrived at St. Johns at 1400 on April 10th. There we took on oil and water. I didn't go ashore. We left St. Johns on April 11th at 1400. It was a bit rough. We joined the convoy on April 14th. The next day we oiled at sea from the American tanker "Sun", and did okay. We did the same the next day, and that too was alright.

On April 17th a Canadian freighter got hit. There were 52 survivors, 6 were killed and 3 were injured. We got the injured aboard the U.S. cutter. The cutter then sank the sub which the Arvida had brought to the surface with charges. Then Dwain, Spencer and the sub fought it out. He killed 2 men on Spencer before a Salvo put him down, 44 prisoners were taken. While picking up survivors, Dwain got a ping and dropped a pattern and brought up oil.

We tried again on the 19th to take on oil, British sytem and it was awful. On April 20th a freighter got rammed and had to be abandoned. The rammed ship carried on with us as an escort. We arrived outside the Clyde at midnight on the 20th. We went in the next morning with survivors and then went to Belfast. We cleaned boilers. Most of the crew had someplace to go, but I stayed with the ship. We were getting a few things done. We left Belfast on May 3rd, had manoeuvres at Moville and then up to Derry at 1600, May 4th.

I visited some old friends at Derry, and we left at 1330 on May 6th, and went to Moville for manoeuvres. We left the next day to join a convoy, time 0530, weather was fair.

On May 8th we had some bad luck, when we burned out a #1 generator. We also took on oil, and so it went. The weather got rough. On May 11th we took on oil and broke a hose, and also got a line around the shaft. It just wasn't our day.

On May 12th Greenland was in sight. There were iceburgs all around us. The weather was good. We got the generator going again. On May 17th a ship ran into an iceburg, but it carried on with a broken nose. We arrived at St. Johns on May 18th at 1600.

Red Young was drafted to the North Wind on May 19th, and on the 20th we got 2 new men, good ones too!

I was drafted off the Arvida on May 21st. I was to go to Halifax on Wednesday. I spent the next morning in the shop, and in the evening I went to a show with Geoff Jones and his wife and a friend. I reported for transport on the 28th. The next morning I reported aboard the Lady Rodney and we left at noon for Halifax. I had to do a 24 hour fire watch, and was pretty darn sleepy. On May 31st at 1800 we arrived in Halifax and I went straight to Irene's. Casey and Cowey were there. I phoned Grace. I was hoping that I would see her soon. The next day I went to the dock yard and was put to work in the machine shop. That was a heck of a note. On June 4th I moved to 321 North Street. It wasn't much, but it was the best I could do. Then I went home, got there at 0830. Grace was down at Gough's.

I got back on the 6th at 2400, and just made it. It wasn't much time at home, but it was worth it. The next day I slept all day. I was on the 2400 - 0800 shift. Imagine that! I was put to work on a Frigate. I found that living ashore was expensive too. I went home on the week-ends, and Grace came down whenever she could.

I went home on June 25th, without telling Grace I was coming. I stayed for 3 lovely days, and started back on June 27th at 2330. The train was late. On the 29th I got paid \$119.00.

I was in Halifax until August 24, 1943. It was a fairly good summer. I got back to Irene's to board, and there were some pretty good guys there. I was still working from the North Machine shop and still working the night shift. It was while I was there that I got quite a scare. Because I was on the night shift, I was in bed on this particular day. There was a hell of a bang, and the door of my bedroom was lying across my bed. In about 5 seconds I was out in the middle of the street in my shorts. The ammunition dump on the other side of Bedford Basin had blown up. It just about ruined Russel's house. The harbour side of the house was caved in, and all the windows were broken. This also happened to 2 other houses on the other side of the hill. I will never forget the happening, or the date, it was July 18th at 1830.

It gave the people of Halifax a terrible fright, because many of them could still remember the disaster that had befallen them during the first world war, when a ship loaded with explosives collided with another ship in Halifax Harbour. It just about wiped out the harbour side of Halifax. There were over 1000 killed and many more were injured. To make matters even worse, it happened on a cold stormy day in winter. In those days too, many of the homes were heated with coal, and that caused a lot of fires. To add to their misery a Flu epidemic was raging at the time.

That epidemic took more lives than were lost in the war. It was practically world wide. A visit to a cemetery would tell the story.

As I said that was a good summer for me. I saw Grace often, she would either come down, or I would hitch hike home on the week-ends.

On August 24th, I was drafted to Hochelaga in Montreal to wait for a new ship that was being built in Port Arthur.



I reported to Hochelaga on August 25th. It was pleasant to be in Montreal, but I was soon sent up the river to Port Arthur, where the Portage La Prairie was being built. I travelled by train, first class. Being in a petty officer's uniform helped a lot. I was drafted to Port Arthur on September 30th, but at the last minute the draft was cancelled. We left the next day at 2000. We arrived at Port Arthur on the 3rd at 2400. We were tired and train sick. We went straight to the Lakeland Hotel.

The next morning we went to the ship. We were paid that afternoon and went looking for a place to stay. We found a nice room. On the morning of the 5th we went to the ship and had a look around. Our stay in Port Arthur was nice. The weather was good and Port Athur is a nice city. Most of the young men had signed up and there was an airplane factory there where hundreds of women worked. The young soldiers really had a hey day. But it was expensive and we were always broke. I stayed at the home of a couple named Ogden.

On October 24th, they had a farewell party for us. We left Port Arthur the next day at 1300. The weather was great, but Lake Superior is a fairly large lake, and many of the men got seasick. I could see that they were in for a shock, when we would hit the ocean. We arrived at Sarnia at 0830 on October 27th. We took on oil. Spud James and I were working on a bearing on the star board engine, when he hit my little finger with a sledge hammer. It didn't hurt too much, but when he saw what he had done, he cried. I felt like crying too, my finger was smashed. I was taken to the hospital where they set it. That hurt like the devil. The next morning I had it x-rayed and then it had to be reset. I nearly belted the doctor. I had to stay in the hospital.

On the 30th I went to a show and saw "K225".

On November 4th, they took me by ambulance to London, Ontario, to the West Minister Hospital. There I had another x-ray.

On November 5th, I had my finger reset, and was sick as the devil when I came out from the ether. I felt better the next day, but the doctor said I might lose my finger. They let it heal, but when the cast came off, it just curled up and wouldn't uncurl. So on November 17th, they cut it off. I thought that would be the end of my banjo playing.

I left the hospital at 0800 on November 26th. Bought a ticket and left on the 4:00 o'clock train, got to Toronto at 2100, stayed all night in a hotel. It was raining. The next day I left Toronto at 1600, arrived in Montreal at 2200, left at 2355. Got a sleeper. There was snow on the ground all through Quebec. Arrived at the junction at 0200,

home at 0230, and kept Grace awake the rest of the night. I stayed home that day, and then left the next day for Halifax. I got to Halifax at 0700, it was a terrible day. I found the ship, and did a lot of running around. I bought a ticket and got on the train at 2355, and arrived at the Junction at 0500. It was storming like the devil. Got home at 0800, nearly frozen. I was home now on sick leave. I enjoyed being there with Grace and the boys. They were a lot of fun and really liked having me around.

Cliff and I went to the woods on December 10th, and the next day we shot a moose. After a lot of hard work we got him to our camp. On the 12th we came home and brought a quarter of the moose with us.

On the 14th I went back to the ship. It was storming. We went to the degoussing range the next day. Had duty watch that night, swing compass the next day and went up to see Irene that night. The ship was being put in shape to go to sea. We were doing shake downs and evolutions at St. Margarets Bay.

On Xmas day I caught the morning train, and was home in time for Christmas dinner. I came back to the ship the next evening, after having a lovely time at home. It was back to the evolutions again. On New Year's eve we were duty ship and everyone celebrated. There was no sleeping, and the next day we had a shoot. Just imagine that! It's a wonder we didn't sink the township. So it went back and forth from St. Margarets Bay to Halifax until January 13, 1944, when we left St. Margarets Bay for Portland. It was as rough as the devil and most of the crew was sick.

By this time I was an ERA 3/c and had my Watchkeeping ticket. The Portage was an Algerine mine sweeper, fitted out to do patrol duty. She was a twin screw, triple expansion, with 2 water tube boilers. The cylinders were 15", 25", and 40" in diameter with a 24" stroke. Her power was 2400 H.P. She was about the same size as a Corvette, but the living quarters were much more comfortable.

We arrived at Portland at noon on January 14th. Took on oil and went to a buoy. I had some time off there, so I went to Boston to see Jean and the bunch. I had a good trip.

We left Portland, Maine on January 16, and we nearly tore the jetty down as we were leaving. Our super structure caught a shed that was built over the wharf, and we pulled the whole thing off. The Canadian Navy didn't make much of an impression on the Yanks.

The weather was good and we arrived in Halifax on the 17th. It was a nice trip. My mouth was sore, and I had to get to a dentist and get some treatment for Trench Mouth.

On January 20th we began boiler cleaning, that made a hell of a mess.

We left Halifax on February 1st, with a convoy for St. John. We had a good trip and arrived at 0800, on the 6th. The weather was cold and miserable.

We left again on the 9th and joined a convoy the next day. It was rough. Our relief escort came out on the 13th and we went to Halifax, arriving there at 1500 on February 14th. It was a fairly rough trip. Our ship was on 24 hour sailing orders and there was no chance to get home. I did get a chance to have a day at home on the 19th though. I left Halifax on the 1515 train, arrived at home at 2000, and left again at 0100. It was short and sweet.

On February 25th we went back to St. Margarets Bay, where we had trials and came back to Halifax the next day. We left Halifax again on the 27th, in perfect weather.

The next day we had action stations. We saw a sub on the surface, but he ran away from us. We estimated his speed at 28 knots. The next day things got rough. We arrived at Station Island on March 1st, cold and tired, but we were treated royally in New York. The Yanks sure know how to do things up. They just took over the ship. They brought aboard all kinds of grub, that we had never seen on board a ship. They took over our defect list and did it all. A group of us went across to New York by ferry. We went to the Capitol Theatre, heard Larry Adler, who was the world's best mouth organ player. He played "Over the Waves", and "The Flight of the Bumblebee". Then we went to the Cafe Zanzabar and saw Ethel Waters. We stayed uptown all night. The following day we went to the top of the Empire State Building. There we met a girl from Springhill, who was selling cards. We also saw the Roman Catholic Cathedral, Jack Dempsey's C.B.C. broadcast and then back to the Dempseys. It was a full day. We arrived back at the ship at 0645 on the 4th. I slept all morning. All leaves were cancelled on March 5th, and that made everyone sore, but we all had a good time.

We left the next morning at 0200 with a 9 1/2 knot convoy and didn't know we were at sea until I woke up at 0800. We joined the main convoy on March 7th. The weather was good. Our relief came out on March 20th, and we went to Halifax and did a boiler cleaning.

On March 22nd, I had a chance to go home. I got home at 8:30 to find that Grace had a card party going on at our house. That was no place for me, so I went to Russells for a visit. When I got back home the women were still there. I had had a few, and I put on the skit about how each of the 3

services take a leak. Grace could have killed me.

The next day was wonderful. We went for a drive and saw 15 deer. We spent a pleasant evening with the boys.

We came to Halifax the next afternoon, and got a room in the Governor Hotel. That was wonderful. I took Grace aboard the Portage on the 26th, but I don't think that she enjoyed it very much. The following evening we went to a show, and came home in a snow storm. The 28th was my birthday, and Grace gave me a real nice pen.

On the 29th I had to go to sea, and Grace went back to Springhill. It was wonderful while it lasted. Our ship left at 0900, I hated to say good-bye to Grace.

At first the weather was good, but the fog came in, and we ran into an ice field. It was nasty going and we moved very slowly. We arrived in St. John at 1500 on April 3rd. The weather was nice in port.

I went to the dentist the next day, and just barely made it. The ship was duty, so I stayed ashore. When I returned to the ship, I discovered that I had been drafted, and I worked to get it cancelled. Doug and Tom were in port, so I stayed with them. Everyday until April 9th I had to go to the dentist. I went to an Easter service at the K of C. We were expecting to sail, but didn't. It was foggy and raining.

We left St. John at midnight on April 12th in the midst of one hell of a storm. We had quite a time getting out of the gate. We met the convoy on the 14th, a long way out, and started to escort them to Boston, we had 1200 miles to go. we arrived at Boston on the 19th of April at 0900. There we took on oil and grub and left again at 1500. The weather was perfect, and everyone was getting a tan. While I was there I phoned Aunt Edith.

The weather stayed beautiful until the 23rd, when it suddenly got very rough. It was quite a change. The next day there was a heavy swell—running but the skies were clear. On April 25th we arrived at St. John at 1145. It was clear and cold, and I was tired.

I went to visit Doug and Tom, saw a show and had a quiet evening. The following day I went to see some friends who took me to a house party. The next day was pay day, and I had duty watch, the boys really whooped it up.

The evening of the 30th, there was a party on the ship, 20 Y.M.C.A. girls came aboard and we had a sing song, and watched movies.

We left St. John at 0500 on May 1st with 12 escort ships and started sweeping for a sub. An airplane spotted it, but crashed into the water. We joined the convoy at 1000 the next day. There were 110 ships going at 9 knots. The weather was lovely. We had action stations on the 5th, but it was only a school of fish. We arrived at Halifax at 0300 on the 6th and did fine. No one woke up. I went ashore the next day to phone Grace. I returned to the ship at 1500. There were 5 wrens aboard. At 1700 we left Halifax. It was a medium convoy of 57 ships, 7 1/2 knots and good weather.

We arrived at Station Island on May 11th at 1700. The weather had been good, but it was sure hot in the engine room. Mack and I went ashore the next day at 5:00 p.m., we got a room in the Times Square Hotel for the week-end. We saw a show at the Roxy. We slept late the next morning, when we got up we went for a long walk, to the Empire State Building and 5th Avenue and Broadway. It was on 5th Avenue that I did some shopping for Grace. I bought her some black lace underwear, and I asked the girl to model them for me, of course she wouldn't! We returned to the ship and stayed there until May 17th, when I went to town with Doug Glover to see "Goin My Way" at the Paramount.

We left New York on May 19th with 6 other escorts and part of the convoy. We picked up some more ships off Boston. The weather was warm. On May 21st we picked up the Halifax group. We now had 136 ships, and there was mail.

The following day I was put on day shift, and that was a welcome change. We picked up some more ships from Sydney. We were a great sight to see. We were relieved on the 24th. It was cold and foggy and things were getting rough. We arrived at St. John on the 25th at 0900. I didn't even go ashore. We left again at 1430 on the 28th. It was very foggy and remained so even when we joined the convoy on the 29th. Soon after that however it cleared up.

We took the convoy to New York and there we had a long stay. We left again on June 18th at 2:00 a.m. That was a hell of a time to be leaving. We took a convoy as far as Halifax. On the 24th I had the chance to get home. Grace was so surprised. I had one day at home and laid linoleum, then it was back to Halifax.

We left again on the 26th with a convoy to Newfie. On June 30th we had to shut down a boiler to repair a fan. We were relieved on July 1st, and headed at 190 revs. The next day we arrived and went to work on the ship right away. There was a lot to do.

We left St. John again at 2:00 in the morning on July 5th. I was up all night, and then slept all day. We arrived at Stanton Island on July 11th. We were there until July 16th, when we left in the midst of a thunder storm. We arrived in Halifax on July 22nd, left again on the 27th, and arrived at St. John on August 1st. We left St. John on August 3rd and joined a large convoy. We were back to Stanton Island by August 9th. It was very hot and unbearable in the boiler and engine rooms. That's the way the summer went, round and round the triangle.

On September 9th, I went home, and it was sure good to sleep in a real bed. I was there for an entire month. It was a time to live and I enjoyed it to the full. I was able to go hunting with Cliff, Tom and Grace. Tom and I both got a deer. The day after we got the deer I had to pack up my things and head back to Halifax. I arrived on October 18th only to find that I had been drafted to the Summerside. She was in Liverpool for refit, and when I joined her on October 20th, she was a real mess. I also found that I had been promoted to Chief E.R.A. and was to be the Chief on the Summerside. Clarence White was the Engineer Officer. It was a major refit and we were there until January 3, 1945.

That was quite a stay. We were on L and C and were staying in really nice boarding places. The people treated us very well. However, the refit crews were not so good, and were constantly quarrelling among themselves.

I got home a few times, and that gave me a break. I had a lot of responsibility now. Clarence went on leave for a month, so she was all mine. She was finally finished and we brought her back to Halifax. I wouldn't sign the release papers until they brought a group of mechanics down from Liverpool to repair the eccentrics. They were hammering like trip hammers. I had to explain to the Engineer's office what the problem was. She was finally in shape and we began the usual shake down and evolutions.

Grace came to Halifax on January 15th and stayed until the 22nd.

On the 24th we left Halifax in a blizzard, but by the next day we were in the Gulf Stream and sleeping on the top of our blankets. It was really rough. We arrived in Bermuda on January 27th at 0800. It had been a nasty trip. We stayed in Bermuda until February 22nd, doing shake down and all kinds of practicing. I did not

like the place. It is British, and is a resort for monied tourists. It is mostly black. Since we were sailors, we were really not wanted there. The weather was good, so was the scenery and the swimming.

We left Bermuda on the 22nd, headed for the Azores. The second day out from Bermuda we ran into violent thunder storms with high winds. The lightning was so bad that it was continuous, and the ship looked like it was on fire. There were tongues of electricity coming off every point on the rigging. It rained in torrents. When it was over there were dozens of flying fish on the deck. We also saw a huge sea turtle.

We arrived at Horta in the Azores on March 1st at 0900. It was a pleasant place, and the boat bums were soon at the ship. They were Portuguese and were selling all kinds of things, including watches. We bought some quite cheaply and sold them in England at a good profit.

On March 2nd at 0900 we left Horta. The weather was good but there was a heavy swell running. We were headed for Gibraltar. We were only out for a day, when we had to stop and renew the kidney pads in the main thrust bearing. The weather was good all the way and we enjoyed the trip. On March 6th we watched the sun come up on North Africa. Portugal was in sight too, on the port bow. We arrived in Gibraltar at 1000.

The following day we examined all the main bearings and put in a real long hard day. We left on the 8th, headed for England at full speed.

On March 12th, we arrived in Milford Haven in Wales at 1000, we left the following day at noon with a 7 knot convoy of 5 ships. We arrived at Portsmouth at 1200 on March 14th. We were granted leave until 0800 and went ashore to see all the sights. We paid for it the next day, with big heads. Portsmouth had taken a real beating from the bombs, but the people were good to us. There was a special place for Canadian sailors, where we could get a bite to eat, write letters or just relax. It was staffed by the kindest, nicest women I have ever met. They served good tea and toast.

There was quite a lot to do on the ship and we were kept busy for a couple of days. We moved out to Anchor at 0800 on the 17th. We saw Nelson's flagship on display in the dockyard. She was no bigger than a Corvette, and it was hard to imagine her as a fighter ship. We left that night with a convoy for the Irish Sea. We saw 2 planes shot down that night by the shore batteries. We were back in Portsmouth the next day at 1000 and were out again at 1230, headed for Sherbrouge in France. We arrived there at 2000,

and left again at 2100, and back at Portsmouth at 0700 and at anchor. We had no leave and had hard work to do on the engines. We left again at 2130, and took a convoy to La Havre, where we dropped the convoy and started back. We sank 2 floating mines with gun fire in the morning. We arrived in Portsmouth at 1800 and left again at 2130, taking a convoy to Pasteur. We dropped charges at 0500 on March 23rd. They were very violent. We arrived in Pasteur at 0700 and left again at 2200. It was a lovely day. We arrived at Sherbrouge at 0630, left and arrived at Portsmouth at 0700. We sank another mine that night. We were back to La Havre on the 25th, and then right back to Portsmouth. We were at Anchor on the 26th, at 0800. We were looking forward to boiler cleaning, but it wasn't to be for awhile. We were out again at 1700, with no advance warning. We anchored at La Havre on the 27th at 0700 and left at 2200, we were back in Portsmouth on the 28th at 0700. We were tied to a jetty at last.

The following morning I went to see Jim at Hedley Down. He was well but fed up, and I didn't blame him.

We came out to anchor at 0900 on March 30th, and left on convoy at 1700. We were back in at 0030, and at anchor all night. It was very windy.

We left Portsmouth again on April 1st at 2100, and arrived at La Havre at 0700 the next morning and left again at 2200, arriving back at Portsmouth at 1200 noon on April 3rd. Then we started boiler cleaning.

On April 5th, I went to London on leave. I returned on the 7th. The ship was a mess. The next day Clarence went on leave, and that was a relief. We were all set to go again on April 15th, and we left at 1930, arriving at La Havre the next morning at 0900. We left again at 2130 and were back in Portsmouth at midnight on April 17th. We left the next day at 1900.

This time we went to Sherbrouge, where we arrived at 0800 on the 19th, we left again at 2100, to be back at Portsmouth the following morning at 0500, and out again at 2130. We were in La Havre at 0730, out at 1200 and back at Portsmouth at 1900 on the 21st. It was certainly getting monotonous. And so it went back and forth.

We didn't go to bed on these trips, because we were in danger from the mines. We wore life jackets all the time. We sank quite a few mines and had a few experiences with planes that were quite scary.

On May 1st, it was rumored that Hitler was dead, but no one was impressed. We dropped charges on something that night, but we never knew on what. We were still going back and



forth, and then the big day came...V.E. day. Wouldn't you know, they sent us to sea again, and anchored us at La Havre. When we got to Portsmouth the next day the fun was over, but the lights were on and the place looked different.

The end of the war wasn't the end of going back and forth across the English Channel. One trip was to Ostend in Belgium. On that trip we had to stop and change the H.P. bottom end.

On May 23rd we got to make a mend and went to see Jim. We had a grand time, and I sure had a sore head. We left Portsmouth at 1300 with a convoy for Milford Haven, there we left the convoy and continued on our own. We arrived at Greenock at 0930 on May 27th, where we went to anchor. We were still at anchor the next day, but I went ashore and sent a telegram to Grace.

We left Grunock at 11:00, we were going to top off with oil and water at Merville and then head home. They decided, however not to take oil, and we were on our way. The next day we sank a mine. We made great time coming across the Atlantic at that time. The weather was good and there was no convoy. We arrived in Halifax on June 9th at 1730.

There was a shock waiting for me when we tied up. A messenger was waiting on the jetty with a draft for me to report to Liverpool, to join a mine sweeper and go back to England. Well, I had a headache and went straight to the sick bay. I was sent to a doctor, then to an eye specialist, and the draft was stopped.

On June 12th I was drafted off the Summerside and reported to Perigrin. I was put on L and C and went to live at Irene's. I was put to work in the clothing store, which involved checking the kits of the discharged men. We didn't give them much of a checking.

The war was still going on in the Pacific, and I was asked to volunteer for service against the Japanese, but I had had enough.

On July 20th I was sent up for discharge. I requested and was granted 28 days leave, beginning the following day. It was a great feeling knowing that I would never again have to go to sea. I was sure treated well when I got home. I still wore my uniform, to tell the truth I didn't have any civilian clothing left. I was proud when Grace and I went to town, and we met our friends and acquaintances.

I also went to the company office to see about a job. When I met Mr. McLeod he shook my hand and said he felt as if I should be hiring him instead of the other way around. Then he told me I could have the job I would have had if I hadn't joined the Navy. The job was operating the electric hoist on the back slope in No. 4 mine. Jack Ward was operating it at the time.

When my leave was up, I went back to Halifax and began the discharge routine. I didn't get much of an examination, I guess everyone including the doctors were anxious to get things over as quickly as possible. That's when I made a monstrous mistake. Nothing was said about my eye, or my back and I should have insisted. There was no one to represent me. The discharge board were all big shot (shit) officers who treated everyone under them in rank, like puppets or coolies. So it was brushed aside. They couldn't deny the loss of my little finger, but they wouldn't listen to my arguments about how much it had meant to me. They ended up paying me \$50.00 and wrote it off. I now know that I should have had someone represent me and put up a fight. But that's water under the bridge now. The loss

of my finger did ruin my banjo playing. I did continue to play, after a fashion, but it was never very good again. I was granted a hurt certificate, but it never meant much. I got my official and final discharge on August 25, 1945. My rank on discharge was Chief Petty Officer, C.E.R.A.

What you have just read is a very very brief account of my part in World War 2. I find it impossible to remember everything clearly or in the proper sequence. The recollection of events and happenings keep coming back to me in bits and pieces. If it could all be told it would make a big book, and I am neither a scholar nor a writer. I just thought that something like this would be nice to leave for my grandchildren and maybe to their children.

Certainly there were times in the Navy that were very bad, but there were also good times. Some of the people I met, and the guys I sailed with were simply wonderful. Some of the people really stand out in my mind. At the top of this list would be Ansel and Irene Russell whose home was my home away from my home in Halifax. Running a close second would be the folks I met in Lunenburg, Liverpool, St. John, St. Johns, Londonderry and in Scotland.

Of the guys I sailed with, Clarence White from Calgary, probably comes first, but that's a toss up. Doug Fisher was a stand out, as were Tom McConkey, Don Garrett, Walter McQueen, Spud James, Jack Adams from Cape Breton and Mr. King, our Jimmy on the Arvida, he was from Victoria and had a slight English accent. He was a real man, he was big, about 6 ft. and 200 pounds, with red curly hair.

I remember one episode that involved him and Jack our cook. Jack was also a big man. He was likeable and easy going. There was always a joke and a laugh, but this was one time he didn't laugh. We also had another cook. He was a Spud Islander and liked his booze. The cooks lived in the miscellaneous mess. They slept in hammocks. The Spud Islander's hammock was above Jacks. Spud came back to the ship plastered and during the night he "wet the bed". It ran through onto Jack, and that set off the fireworks. Jack hauled him out of his hammock, lugged him out onto the deck and was going to throw him overboard when Mr. King stopped him.

I was no saint either, and I took on a little too much a few time as well. I recall one such time. We were in Newfie John at the time. I had been instrumental in getting one of the stokers promoted to leading hand. I intended to stay on board that night and write letters, but it turned out quite differently. The stoker was celebrating and he insisted that I too celebrate with him. It was raining that night, and when the boys came back from town they found me flaked out on the quarter deck. They carried me to my bunk, and

boy did I have an awful night. When I closed my eyes the whole world seemed to go round and round, and I hung on to the edge of my bunk for dear life, for fear of falling off. I was sick. To make matters worse the next day we went to sea. I thought I was going to die.

Another funny incident involved Don Garrett. Again we were in St. John and again it was raining. We had gone down to a show and were on the way back to the ship when Don decided it would be nice to have fresh fish for dinner the next day. So he tried to get into one of the fish sheds, but the door was locked. He climbed up on the roof and got in through the sky light. He fell into the large vat with the fish. He did get a couple of fish and when we got back to the ship Don carefully hung up his uniform in the locker. We went to Londonderry on our next trip and again we went ashore to see a movie, again it was raining. You can imagine what came next. Don blamed the smell on those around him and we moved three times.

Another time I remember was during a stop in Greenock. Doug Fisher and I had gone downtown where we met a Scotsman who invited us to his house the next day. So Doug and I filled our gas mask bags with eggs, tea and sugar and went to his house. We stayed all night, and the next morning we had eggs for breakfast. They had a little girl around 5 years old and when she saw the eggs she turned to her mother and said "Mommy are those real eggs"? That was enough to make you cry. The treatment we got there was typical of the way we were treated everywhere we went. People are wonderful!

I had my banjo with me and that gave me a lot of pleasure, especially before I lost my little finger. When the weather permitted we had music and sing songs on the upper deck, around the funnel where it was warm. We nearly always had a mascot. One of them was a goose, it was comical to see him walk around on the hot deck. He spent as much time as possible sitting on some of our laps. There was nearly always someone else who also had an instrument, even if it was just a mouth organ or a pair of spoons.

We spent many nice evenings visiting with people in Newfie John. I can't rememeber any of their names. There were several food places to go to get a nice meal, write letters or just to sit around and relax. Of course there was the usual wet canteen where we went to drink. There were also a few places where we could dance or just sit around and listen. The Cariboo Hut was one such place. The people of St. Johns really went out of their way to make life as pleasant as possible for the sailors. Newfoundlanders know the sea, and they knew what we had to go through out there. The K of C also had a place to dance. The Salvation Army had something everyday for the sailors. The K of C hall was the scene of a tragic disaster when there was a fire that

killed over 100 young men and women.

But Halifax was another story. It was only nice because it was close to home. The Haligonians as a whole, had no time for Navy sailors. It served them right, when there was a bad riot there on V.E. day. But Halifax was good to me. I spent some wonderful days there when Grace would come down and visit me. The Russells were our good friends and if she had the room we would sometimes stay there. We had many nice walks around the town, in the park or on Citadel Hill.

I remember that I felt bad about putting Jack off the job on the hoist, but I had earned it. Jack was a friend of mine, we sang in the choir together and he understood. He trained me and did all he could for me. Of course I was no stranger to a hoisting machine, and I liked the job. It was the highest paid job in the mine for a company hand. It had one draw back, there were no days off. There were just 3 drivers, myself, Lee Blinkhorn and John Metz. We had to work 9 hour days during the week, because by law 2 drivers were required at the hoist while men were being hoisted. Of course that made the pay even better. The only way we could get a day off was to trade shifts. Jack sure came in handy there. There was no extra pay for overtime, just straight time for hours worked. The extra hour made a mighty long day though, especially in the winter. We had no car and it was a mile from our house to the mine.

I had to be at the hoist at 6:00 a.m. when I was working the day shift and that meant getting up at 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. to have breakfast and walk to the mine, change clothes and catch the first man rake down. The weather could be pretty nasty too. Coming home at night was especially bad. We changed clothes in the wash house, and had a shower. It was quite a shock to the system to get out of a hot shower, throw on your clothes and with hair still wet walk a mile up Herritt Road in below zero weather. But I never caught a cold.

The week-end shifts were pretty good. Usually there wasn't much doing except for a few repair men and examiners.

I got permission to take Grace and Joe down one Sunday. Grace was amazed at the whole experience.

The engine was electric drivin by a 2000 H.P. motor. The engine room was all concrete, painted white and lit by electric lights. The driver sat in a swivel arm chair with the telephone at his left shoulder, and he had company..... RATS. Always there were rats, we fed them and they were good company.

The engine room was about 300 ft. up from the 3200 ft. bottom. To get to the engine room you had to walk up the slope about 100 ft. That was the same slope that had been the back slope when that part of the mine was being worked. It was still possible to walk up the slope beyond the engine to the 2600 ft. level. The fresh air came up the fan way, across a head at the 2600 and then down the slope to the engine room. There was a big bull wheel about 75 ft. below the engine over which the rope ran. The rope was a 13/8 inch diameter, plough steel rope. It was a mile long. The drum of the engine was 8 ft. in diameter.