

My name is Sid Dobing, and I joined the Royal Navy as a Boy Seaman in May of 1939 and was sent to HMS Mashona, Tribal Class Destroyer of the Royal Navy. My first action in that ship was during the Norwegian campaign when we landed British troops in Norway and a couple of weeks later they were overrun by the Germans and we evacuated the same troops. May of 1941 we were in company with the British battleship HMS Rodney, escorting her part way to North America when we were informed by the Admiralty that we were to take the Rodney and leave and try and find the German battle cruiser Bismarck which had broken out from Norway, had sunk HMS Hood with a terrific loss of life, damaged HMS Prince of Wales, and was now trying to get out into the Atlantic. She was eventually torpedoed by some aircraft, which slowed her down, and we, in company with the Rodney, were able to overtake her, and during the engagement the Mashona was given the job of convoying and escorting the Rodney to see she wasn't interfered with by German U-boats. During this action I had the good fortune of being on the bridge of the Mashona with a pair of binoculars so I had a first-class witness of the battle and the final sinking of her. The next day we were heading for Plymouth. We were very low on fuel. And we were in company with one other destroyer, HMS Tartar, when the German Air Force located us. They had left their bases and looking for the British fleets, and found two lonely destroyers, carried out some heavy attacks and eventually we were straddled by bombs and we lost 47 men, and we were ordered to abandon ship. We were picked up by HMS Tartar after a period of time. She was still under attack, and then the Germans had to go back to base and get some more planes and bombs and during that lull we were picked up and then we came under heavy attack again, but eventually made our way by the Tartar to Greenwich on the Clyde, and from there we were sent on survivors' leave, and then back to another ship. Then in June of that year my parents requested that I be sent back to Canada because I was still only nineteen years of age and I was sent back and joined the Canadian Navy. And after a period of time and a completion of a torpedoman's course, I was sent to HMCS Ottawa, a destroyer, and we were engaged in the North Atlantic convoy routes until September of 1942 when we were escorting a convoy from Britain to Canada in company with four other ships, and we came under a heavy attack by U-boats, estimated at the time to number about fourteen. We lost quite a number of merchant ships. We had over twenty-some survivors on board that we picked up. And then on the night of the 13th of September, I was fortunate once again in being on watch on the bridge when we were investigating a radar echo ahead of us, which turned out to be a British ship coming to help with the escort, and once the identification was complete we altered course to rejoin the convoy, and during this period we were torpedoed by a German U-boat, right in the bows, and blew the bows pretty well off. I was on the bridge and escaped everything but a soaking from the water, which cascaded over the bridge. A captain decided to try and get the ship going again. He asked me to phone the engine room - or told me to phone the engine room and see if they could go astern. The engine room said they couldn't do that. And the captain said, "Well, we're probably going to get a second torpedo." Ten minutes after the first struck, the second one struck and hit us amidships. By this time we had loaded a lot of wounded into the ship's boats including a man who'd had his appendix removed by our doctor, and a merchant seaman who had had considerable surgery after he was picked up, and these men were in the boat along with the doctor and medical assistant when the second torpedo struck right below the lifeboat, killing everybody in that boat, and finishing off our ship. She went down bows first and the after gun tore away from the deck because of the weight as the ship was sinking. The most horrible part of the whole thing was three men were trapped alive in the sonar compartment in the ship, and when the torpedoes struck it bent the frames and the door couldn't open. And every effort was made to get them out in the nine minutes we had, and we could hear them shouting, crying, and the three men were alive down there, you know. They must've suffered a tragic end. So those were some of my memories of that.

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