

HMCS ATHABASKAN  
By Stuart Kettles, Leading Writer, RCNVR

This is a little story  
That I wish to tell  
Of the last time we left Plymouth  
For the unknown waiting Hell

It was early in the Springtime  
Just a couple of days before  
We had returned to our welcome haven  
Feeling proud, having boasted our score

We slipped slowly away in the evening  
Heading straight for the old French coast  
And little was thought that in the morning  
T'would be Hitler's turn to boast

The boys never thought or worried  
Of the "runs" we were doing of late  
But little we knew of this one  
Was shrouded and guided by fate

There was no mistaking the orders  
"Attack enemy shipping ahead"  
So through these cold Channel waters  
At thirty-five knots we sped

The enemy shipping was sighted  
Destroyers, but that wasn't all  
For Crazy and mad as Hitler may seem  
He had more than that on the ball

Behind some nearby Islands  
Lay E-Boats quite unseen  
Which the Radar Operator  
Could not see upon the screen

The star shell found our target  
The Destroyers not far away  
And at this Crucial Moment  
The E-Boats made their play

From behind their protecting Islands  
These E-Boats made their dash  
Firing their torpedoes  
Which hit us with a Crash

Just aft of the torpedo tubes  
The first one found its mark  
Exploded with a muffled roar  
And flames broke through the dark

“X” and “Y” guns were no more  
Destroyed just like their crew  
The Pom-Pom was a crumpled wreck  
And it was also through

Just after the break of morning  
The second “fish” hit true  
Finding one of the boiler rooms  
And immediately it blew

The shower of sparks and shrap that flew  
Through the early morning air  
Found a resting place in many a man  
Told the rest of us “BEWARE”

We crouched in any protected spot  
With a prayer upon our lips  
And when the din was over  
We’re forced to leave the ship

Some were badly injured  
Others terribly burned  
And as we hit the water  
Our attention to them was turned

Some wanted to give up the fight  
To sleep forever more  
We did our best to give them strength  
Till we hit the distant shore

They seemed to die all around us  
It was pitiful to see  
How can others calmly say  
“Tis the price of VICTORY”

A few got back to England  
About forty-six in all  
While those who hadn’t perished  
Went behind the Atlantic Wall

Now we are “gerfangeners”  
In a German prison camp  
And was we think of loved ones  
Sometimes our eyes are damp

We feel that in the battle  
His life our skipper lost  
A finer man I never knew  
It was a hellish cost

So please do not forget those boys  
Who dressed in NAVY BLUE  
And fought on the “ATHABASKAN”  
And gave their all for you