

**“HOSTILITIES ONLY”
A STORY OF CANADA’S NAVY DURING WORLD WAR II
BY DOUGLAS E. MURCH, CODER, V-40131, RCNVR**



**This is only my
story. There are
many thousands
of others.**

**In the telling of
it I have re-lived
it a little and if
anyone reads it,
I hope they will
understand a
small part of
what it was like.**

**I will never
forget it.**

**DOUGLAS E.
MURCH
Coder
V-40131
RCNVR**

“HOSTILITIES ONLY”
A STORY OF CANADA’S NAVY DURING WORLD WAR II
BY DOUGLAS E. MURCH, CODER, V-40131 , RCNVR

I am one of approximately 90,000 World War II Naval Veterans. Our ranks are rapidly thinning. Our average age is now around seventy, so this is understandable. We are kind of proud of having served in what was then the third largest navy in the world. Having been asked to recount some of my own personal World War II experience, I set down herewith the following outline of what happened to me and drastically shaped my entire destiny. A war such as this, though such a tragedy for many, did provide those who were fortunate (like myself) with an experience which is impossible to fully describe to those who were not part of it. However, I'll try to recapture some of the drama in the following pages. In August, 1990 my wife and I returned to old Halifax for the first time in 45 years. We witnessed the departure of the Persian Gulf Task Force. I went aboard HMCS Sackville many times, very emotional to me because Sackville was one of my own Escort Group during my sea-time. We visited the house where I stayed while based ashore in Halifax, also the house where my wife lived while working for the Civil Service in the Naval Dockyard. All this has served to bring those memorable war years very much to mind.

I am not sure when the Navy first attracted me but with the advent of war it became obvious that there was an opportunity to get in my "licks" for my country and become a sailor at the same time. I would be less than honest if I did not admit that the "round-rig" uniform (bell bottoms, etc.) was a pretty large part of the attraction. It is to me and always will be, the smartest uniform of all - but more about that later.

THE NAVY RECRUIT



Preston, Ontario,
June 26, 1941.

Department of National Defence,
Naval Division,
Ottawa.

Dear Sirs:

I would like to join the Navy as a writer,
for the duration of hostilities.

My education consists of five years high
school. I have my diploma for a three-year commercial
course, as well as two years of matriculation.

I can take dictation in shorthand at one
hundred words per minute, and type at forty. Along with
this, I have a good knowledge of bookkeeping, filing, and
other office practice.

For the past year and seven months, I have been
employed as an office worker with a large concern.
I am twenty years of age, and would really like to enter
the Navy as a writer.

My box number is 654. Would you please send
me some information on this.

Yours very truly,


Donny March

/DM

September, 1941

There were two of us in September 1941 from our small town who proceeded to HMCS "Star", the Hamilton Naval Division to enlist. Knowing no other trade, I applied for clerical work as a "Writer" (Naval terminology for Clerk), this being in line with my experience and qualifications. However, this was not to be, as no vacancies existed in this branch at that time. There was however a new rate of Coder, which was just coming into being. This rate was explained to us as dealing with codes and cyphers most necessary to wartime communications and would we be interested? Indeed we were, we signed on and in that breathtaking moment became members of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, "Hostilities Only". This is separate and distinct from the RCN which was "Permanent Force".





My "entered apprentice" rate was "Ordinary Seaman for Coder" (I still had not the slightest idea of what this job entailed, nor did anyone else in "Star" it seemed).

After all "Star" was a basic training establishment and our eventual disposition would be to Signal School. Actually the way it turned out, I could not have made a better choice. We were among the first to know about what was going on, the work was interesting and pleasant although the working conditions (aboard ship) were at times not quite so pleasant. Also, although I had no way of knowing it, as a "Writer" I would probably have entirely missed the seagoing experience. As a Coder, sea-time was pretty much a certainty.

We started with three months of "Divisional strength" (two nights per week of basic training at "Star" while still living at home). This came to an end on January 1, 1942 when we went "active service" and left home "for real" as full-fledged naval ratings. The next two months would be crammed with parade and rifle drill, manual of seamanship, P.T., knot-tying and various activities relating to the Seaman Branch. Interestingly, my friend and I, as the only two future coders in our whole ship's company of 80, were exempted from the daily "school-work" class and were given two Algebra books to study entirely on our own. My previous school experience with this subject was not good, but luckily for me, my friend was a "whiz" at it, and with his help, I did rather well. These two months proved to be an exciting and wonderful experience. We were all very new to this and ahead lay the prospect of going to sea in wartime. I am sure we all listened with apprehension to accounts of torpedoings from the North Atlantic convoys and wondered what lay in store.

On Active Service From South Waterloo



ROBERT AND WALTER TAYLOR

ROBERT AND WALTER TAYLOR

Robert and Walter Taylor, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Taylor, 3 Murdock avenue, are both on active service. Pte. Walter Taylor, whose wife and son live at 144 Wellington street, is overseas with the 1st Bn. H.L.I. of C. and Sgt. Robert Taylor, whose wife is living in Toronto, is in Canada with the R.C.A.F. as a wireless-air gunner. Robert was born in Preston and Walter in Galt. Both attended Central school and the Collegiate. Before enlisting in Sept. 1940, Walter had been with Newlands and Co. in Galt and Brantford, and Robert had been with the Lightning Fastener Co. at St. Catharines. They attended South Water street Baptist church. Robert used to play Intermediate baseball and also softball in Galt and Walter played hockey in the Industrial league. He was also a member of the Lions Club band.

DOUGLAS MURCH

Ordinary Coder Douglas Edward



DOUGLAS MURCH

Murch, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Murch, 524 Vine street, Preston, enlisted with the R.C.N.V.R. in November 1941, and is now stationed in Quebec. Born in Preston on October 12, 1920, OC Murch attended the Preston public and continuation schools. Prior to his enlistment he was a member of the office staff of Eastern Steel Products. Douglas Murch is a member of Knox Presbyterian church, Preston. Since April, 1942, he has been on special duty in an Instructional Production office.

ARTHUR CULLATON

Pte. Arthur Cullaton is on active service with the 2nd-10th Dragoons. His wife resides at 94 Pollock avenue and he is a son of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Cullaton, 6 Brook St. Born in Galt, Pte. Cullaton attended St. Mary's school and the collegiate and before enlisting he was a foreman at Narrow Fabrics Weaving and Dyeing Co. His religion is Roman Catholic. Pte. Cullaton trained for two years with



ARTHUR CULLATON



ALFRED GUISSO

the 2nd (R) Bn. H. L. I. of C.

ALFRED GUISSO

Stoker Alfred Jos. Guisso, son of Mrs. Elvira Guisso, 100 Beverly street, enlisted last September with the R.C.N.V.R. He was born in Galt and he attended St. Mary's school. Before enlisting he was a moulder at Sheldon's Ltd. He trained with the H.L.I. of C. for three years, holding the rank of corporal. His religion is Roman Catholic.

REID BEECHEY

Pte. Reid Beechey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Beechey, 59 Water St. S., is overseas with the Canadian Army Pay Corps. He enlisted last July with the H.L.I. of C. but was transferred later. Two brothers are overseas with the H. L. I., Edward and Jim, and another, Ron, was invalided home last June. Reid Beechey was born in Galt, and worked for B.W. and G. M. before enlisting. He is a member of Wesley United church.




REID BEECHEY

Finally some leave and return to "Star" for outgoing draft. The majority of our "Ship's Company" were destined for HMCS Stadacona in Halifax, whereas eight of us, three signalmen, three Telegraphists and two Coders would go to a hitherto unheard of place in Quebec, namely St. Hyacinthe "south of Montreal", where the Navy's Signal School was located. Thus did we say our goodbyes and depart for the unknown around the first of March, 1942 in beautiful spring weather in a state of excitement and expectancy. Well, we arrived on the following day at the St. Hyacinthe railroad station to be met by a Naval transport lorry and a very "salty" looking rating attired in a grey duffel coat who immediately whisked us out to the Signal School! Totally unprepared we stared in shock at what appeared to be a rather bleak looking converted Army barracks, huts surrounding a parade-ground, enclosed by a high wire fence and all of it partially blotted out by a howling sub-zero blizzard. One of our party who years later survived the sinking of HMCS Athabaskan, took one look and exclaimed "Good God!" I think that expressed our feelings pretty well! I think we all expected something that looked a bit more sophisticated.

However, like many first impressions, it wasn't bad at all. The two-tier beds in the huts were comfortable enough, the huts were cozy and warm from the pot-bellied coal-burning stoves capably tended by Stokers who were probably as surprised as us to find themselves in this role.

During the brief interval before the six-week Coder course, two or three of us were assigned as Chiefs and Petty Officers' messmen. Our job was to assist the Cook in preparation of the meals and "stand easy" periods (morning and afternoon coffee-breaks). We would peel potatoes, take in stores, set tables, sweep up, empty the "gash buckets" (garbage) etc. We especially enjoyed the mornings after breakfast was served and the Chiefs and P.O. 's had gone to their classrooms to instruct . We would sit around eating toast and marmalade and drinking great quantities of milk. What a life! I recall one terrifying moment when I accidentally spilled something hot on one of the Chiefs while serving dinner and still marvel at his very decent and gentlemanly reaction!





I should mention that even up to this point I had very little idea as to what this "Coding" business was all about, but was soon to be enlightened. So we were assigned to a small class of eight ratings. Our instructor was a veteran Yeoman of signals, a very likeable chap and we soon became a "happy family". He gave us our first hints of what corvette life was really like. It was said that he was lost years later in the Athabaskan sinking but I never was able to confirm this. Our six weeks' course flew by and all eight of us worked, studied and passed. We were overjoyed to have made it!

Now about the duties and responsibilities of Coder and our "raison d'etre": The necessity of coding communications in wartime is obvious as the convoy movements and disposition of naval forces must be kept very secretive. The coding and decoding of messages, hitherto the responsibility of telegraphists and signalmen (I believe) became so substantially expanded by the exigencies of war at sea that the need for a supplemental branch became apparent - thus the Coder. Communications branch involved three separate functions:

- 1. Visual signalman (Sig. or V/S)**
- 2. Wireless Telegraphist (Tel. or W/T)**
- 3. Coder (Cdr.)**



K223

The duties of the Sig. were, as the title implies, of a short-range nature, sending and receiving by Aldis lamp and flag hoists (many different messages were conveyed by a simple flag hoist). In this application, coding was not used. As far as I know, semaphore, though part of our course, was not used on the smaller escort ships. The Sig's location was on the bridge. The Tel. and Coder, however worked side by side in a small W/T office located at the rear of the wheel-house.

The function of the Tel. was to monitor all signal transmissions and copy down those applicable to that particular convoy and escort group as well as general messages of interest to all ships at sea. Thus the Tel. stood his watch with earphones on at all times. These messages arrived in a coding formula known as "Naval Code", a two-stage encoding procedure of numbers and letters, the second stage of which was changed daily to ensure no breakdown of the code by the enemy. Messages (in code) were therefore intercepted the Tel. and passed to the Coder who was seated next to the Tel. with the necessary code books and decoding tables. After decoding, the message was immediately handed to the Captain for appropriate action. This type of signal traffic was of a long-range nature usually originating from shore authorities, and did not usually require a reply. Breaking W/T silence at sea was strictly forbidden as the Convoy's position would be revealed to U-boats or hostile aircraft. Communication between ships of the convoy and escorts was a local affair usually by Aldis lamp and not a security risk.





May, 1942

Our course dealt with several different types of coding procedures, but in my convoy escort experience, only the two-stage "Naval Code" was used. The care and custody of code books was of prime importance and it was absolutely vital that this material never be allowed to fall into the wrong hands. Indeed, in the event of a ship being disabled by enemy action, the code books already appropriately weighted, must be immediately jettisoned. Although somewhat ahead of my story, this was of what our Coder's course consisted, and we now had some idea of our impending duties.

Having passed our course, we could at last sew on our Coder's badge - crossed flags with "C" below.

CODERS

QUALIFICATIONS FOR, AND DUTIES OF, THE RATES.

ORDINARY CODER.

1. Entry requirements: Grade X, or equivalent standing, and preferably with office experience. Must have high learning ability and be able to maintain interest in repetitive work.
2. Naval training:
 - a. Period: Two months.

EXAMINATION FOR ORDINARY CODER

D A T E		BUZZER	PR. COD.	COD. INST	P or F	EXAM. OFFICER
MURCH, D. E.	% REQ'D	75	75	75	---	---
8th May, 1942.	% OBT'D	90	91	87	Passed	

- (iv) Practice in typing and in teletype work.
- (v) Sorting, distributing and filing messages.
- (vi) Coding instructions: Care and custody of code books; initiating and drafting messages; prosigns and precedences (initial identifying call signals); form of a W/T (Wireless Telegraphy) message; preparing a message for despatch by V/S (Visual Signals) and W/T; message organization; call signs; systems of transmission; selection of code to be employed; phonetic alphabet; messages for general promul-



The uniform - only naval ratings can appreciate the importance of this. No longer was the standard issue good enough. We had to go to the Tailor (usually Bond's) and be measured up for our "tiddely" (custom uniform).

Every item of dress was customized from head to toe - wider bell bottoms, Wellington boots, dressy "dickie fronts", longer tapes, sky-blue collars, etc. It was ridiculous, but it sure was fun. The "round-rig" uniform, so steeped in Naval tradition, has long since been sacrificed to the controversial "service integration". It has gone, and with it much of the pride and individuality enjoyed by Canada's World War II Naval ratings. It does, however, live on in the British Navy and also most fondly in the hearts and minds of those of us who so proudly wore it.

After Hamilton, St. Hyacinthe seemed far away indeed, which it was in those days, and the prospect of getting home on leave was an inviting one. It was possible on a weekend but with severe limitations. I undertook it once or twice and it went like this: Saturday morning was devoted to scrubbing down the huts and mess-decks, it was impossible to get away until noon. We would get cleaned up and catch the "Liberty Boat" (a much-hated procedure of falling in for inspection by the Officer of the Day and the Master-at-Arms). These people looked you over for unshined shoes, untidy uniforms etc. and if OK, grudgingly let you out through the gates. Routinely, all leave from barracks was subject to this procedure. Then, a train to Montreal, a train to Toronto and a train to Galt. This got you home about 11:30 p.m. on Saturday. A quick visit before getting some sleep and a bit of Sunday morning at home before a rush to the station Sunday noon for the return trip. A round trip of over 1,000 miles. Worth it? I wonder? The good part was that it cost \$12.00.



Saying goodbye and boarding the train



After "passing out" for Coder, our little class of eight almost immediately entrained for Halifax. But this was not to be for myself and one classmate. Clerks were needed, and being a pretty fair typist, I found myself with a job in the "Ships' Office" typing examination test papers for the various instructors.

I soon settled comfortably into this routine and was privileged to go on "Lodging and Compensation", whereby you obtained lodgings ashore and reported for duty each day. Time passed quickly and several months went by after which my former classmate and myself appeared before the Executive Officer to make the necessary application for advancement to "Trained Operator Coder".



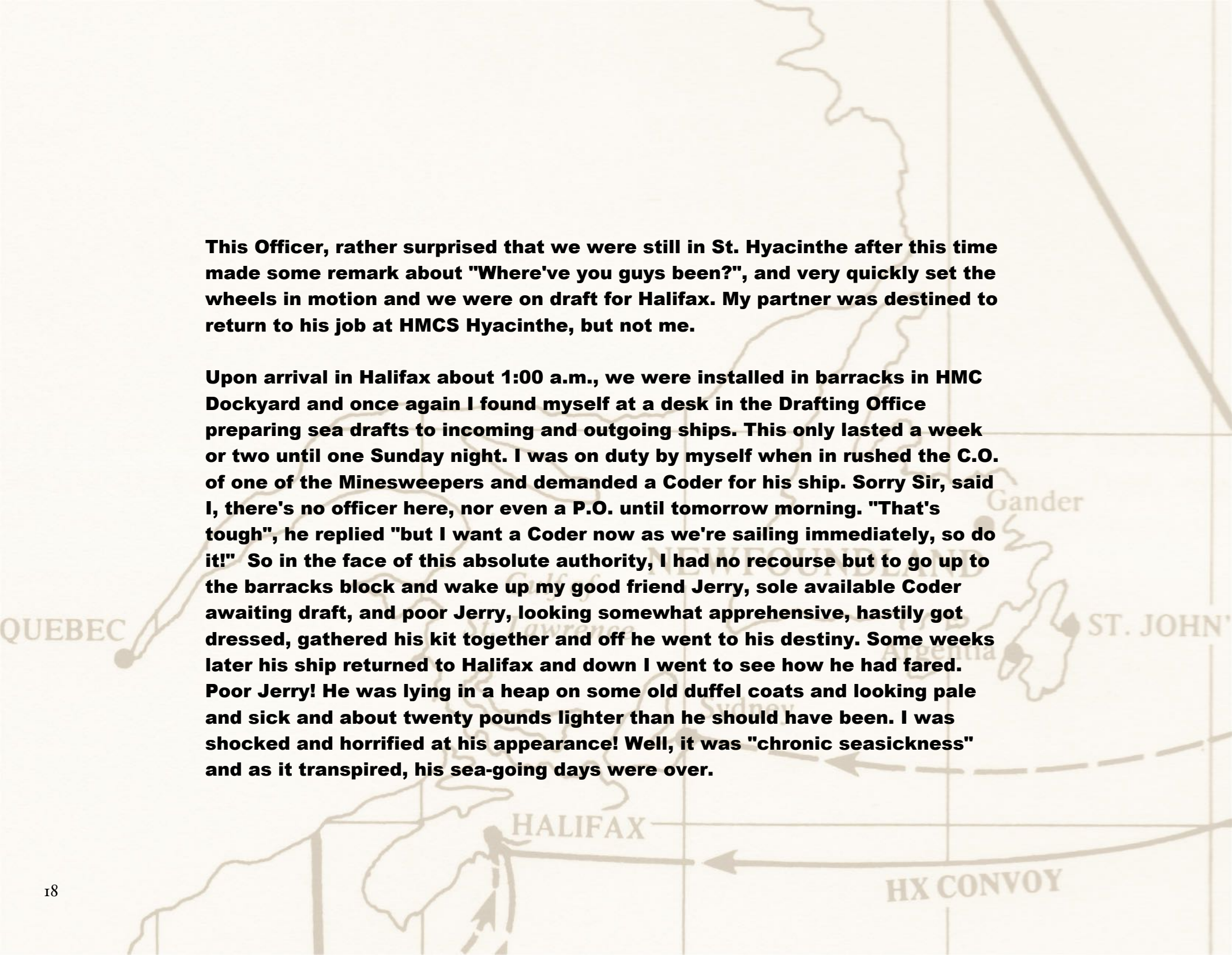
PRINTED IN CANADA—(1-45)

ISSUED BY
CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

ONE 75 Cent MEAL
**THIS TICKET MUST BE PRESENTED
BEFORE ORDERING MEAL**
NOT VALID AFTER 30 DAYS FROM
DATE STAMPED ON BACK


CONDITIONS:-
This ticket is good only in Dining Car
Restaurants operated by the Canadian
National R'y or Canadian Pacific R'y,
except as otherwise
stipulated.
Gen. Pass. Trst. Mgr.

Sailors arriving in Halifax

A faint background map of the Atlantic region of North America. It shows the coastline of Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Key locations labeled include Quebec, Halifax, and St. John's. A dashed line with arrows indicates the 'HX CONVOY' route, starting from the west and moving east towards Halifax. Other locations like Gander and Sydney are also visible.

This Officer, rather surprised that we were still in St. Hyacinthe after this time made some remark about "Where've you guys been?", and very quickly set the wheels in motion and we were on draft for Halifax. My partner was destined to return to his job at HMCS Hyacinthe, but not me.

Upon arrival in Halifax about 1:00 a.m., we were installed in barracks in HMC Dockyard and once again I found myself at a desk in the Drafting Office preparing sea drafts to incoming and outgoing ships. This only lasted a week or two until one Sunday night. I was on duty by myself when in rushed the C.O. of one of the Minesweepers and demanded a Coder for his ship. Sorry Sir, said I, there's no officer here, nor even a P.O. until tomorrow morning. "That's tough", he replied "but I want a Coder now as we're sailing immediately, so do it!" So in the face of this absolute authority, I had no recourse but to go up to the barracks block and wake up my good friend Jerry, sole available Coder awaiting draft, and poor Jerry, looking somewhat apprehensive, hastily got dressed, gathered his kit together and off he went to his destiny. Some weeks later his ship returned to Halifax and down I went to see how he had fared. Poor Jerry! He was lying in a heap on some old duffel coats and looking pale and sick and about twenty pounds lighter than he should have been. I was shocked and horrified at his appearance! Well, it was "chronic seasickness" and as it transpired, his sea-going days were over.



I had a terrible sense of guilt for having actually gotten him into this, but felt much better about it about a year later. I had just arrived in Windsor station, Montreal, for annual leave from our ship and was figuring how to get across town for something or other when I looked around and there was Jerry, plump and smiling, all attired in white belt and gaiters and proudly in charge of a Navy transport vehicle! He had a nice "soft touch" right in his home town driving truck for Divisional H.Q. Proud as a peacock, he bundled me into his truck, and drove me across town while we got up to date on our experiences! No more gut-wrenching horrors of seasickness for Jerry. He had it made!

Well, back to the Drafting Office - the following morning, in came officers from Corvettes Galt and Agassiz (just out of refit) and in need of Coders, and I made out my last two draft orders - the second for yours truly and I had my ship. If there is ever an unforgettable moment for a naval rating, it is when he is heading down to the jetty to get a glimpse of his first ship! HMCS Agassiz, commissioned in 1941, was one of the first "Barber Pole" ships of our Navy, and I understand, lays claim to have travelled further than any other ship of her class during wartime. She looked pretty good to me. She was about two hundred feet from stem to stern and carried a complement of about eighty officers and men. My first recollection was of being "logged in" by the Coxswain, a very severe and imposing C.P.O. who notated such things as religion, grog or temperance, and other details and allocated me to my "watch", mess and action station. The "grog or temperance" was a choice of a daily tot of rum issue or five cents per day in its stead. I chose the rum issue but soon changed my mind. This particular C.P.O. Coxswain who seemed rather awesome to me at the time, later became a very close friend with whom I was to share many happy shore leaves. Communications ratings at that time were billeted in the stokers' mess, a bow compartment immediately below the Seamen's mess-deck. We numbered eleven - three Tel's, three Sig's, and three Coders under the supervision of a Leading Tel. and a Leading Sig. One of my first recollections aboard is chug-a-lugging my first tot of rum in front of the whole mess-deck and their hilarious amusement when the shot took my voice and breath away for what seemed like a full minute!



May, 1943

HMCS Agassiz had just come out of refit and was still undergoing sea trials preparatory to resuming her duties on the "Newfie-Derry run". My first trip outside the harbour gates proved to be a very misleading one indeed! We proceeded to sea for a gunnery shoot or something. It was a glorious May afternoon, cloudless blue sky, warm spring sun, waves sparkling and blue, the ship riding a gentle swell. I recall sitting on a coil of rope, off-watch and thinking how pleasant it was, and far from knowing what was to come only days later!

Sailing orders having arrived to slip and proceed to St. Margaret's Bay for further sea trials, we cleared harbour entrance about 23:00 hours. I was sitting with the guys in the forward mess-deck when the rolling and pitching started and quite unexpectedly this horrible feeling of nausea came over me. I recall someone saying "Quick - give him a piece of dry bread!" In no time I was up the ladder on deck and throwing up over the side. St. Margaret's Bay was just a short trip but such a ghastly experience, I will never forget it! I spent the entire voyage lying in the scuppers under an old discarded greatcoat with bouts of on and off throwing up, wondering what in hell I had gotten myself into and what was going to happen to me! Throughout this nightmare (lucky for me I was off-watch) other ratings were slipping and sliding along the sloping deck stepping over me as if I were just a heap of old clothes! The scary part was that nobody gave a damn! More about seasickness later.



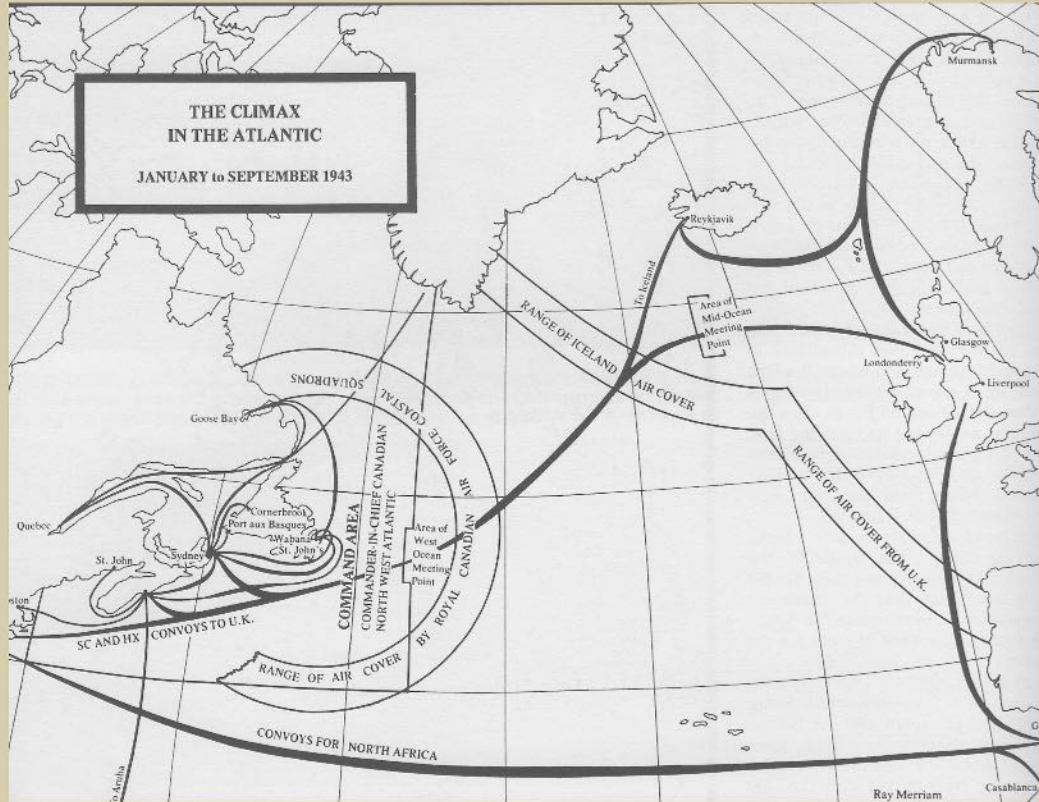
K129, HMCS Agassiz

St. Margaret's Bay was a rather pretty place and a few of us got a couple of hours' shore leave which we spent walking, enjoying the "summer cottage type" environment there.

Our ship being anchored off-shore, we got back to the little dock to catch the liberty boat back. We were in for a shock! The rating in charge of the boat informed us we were "adrift" (AWOL)! We thought he was joking but he was not. Some misunderstanding of our leave expiry had occurred and we were in fact adrift and we must report to the Captain. I was pretty worried standing there in the Wardroom in front of the skipper trying to convince him that it was just an accident. Our Captain, himself just new to this ship, was stern but fair. He just said "OK, don't let it happen again!" This Lt. Comdr., a former Merchant Navy man, proved to be a most capable and experienced C.O., and under his command Agassiz would safely deliver many trans-Atlantic convoys to their destination. At that time convoy escort fell into two categories:

a) Triangle Run - (local runs to Halifax, Sydney and New York) These ships, for example, would escort a Halifax or Sydney convoy to a "Western Ocean Meeting Point" where it would be turned over to a "mid-ocean (trans-Atlantic) escort group.

b) Newfie-Derry Run - ("Mid-Ocean Escort") These ships, based in St. John's, Newfoundland, made the full crossing from St. John's to Londonderry, taking over the convoy where the Local Escort left off. The convoy would be relinquished to a U.K. local escort and would proceed to its British destination while the escort group would be routed to Londonderry for a brief layover and a return convoy.




Doug on the Agassiz in 1943



Agassiz, along with Corvettes Galt, Sackville and HMS Celandine (British) were Mid-Ocean under the command of a Senior Escort Ship. This "Senior Officer" was for a time, HMS Itchen (British Frigate) and later HMCS Assiniboine (River Class Destroyer). It should be mentioned that Itchen was lost with all hands in September 1943 along with 80 survivors from HMCS St. Croix, only just rescued.

Now, my first convoy and some explanation of the seasickness which plagued so many. First let me make it clear that it is no joke and nothing to be ashamed of. History tells us that Lord Nelson himself suffered from it. The seasick rating just had an additional burden to carry. It is a sensitivity in the inner ear which can be relieved by a pill. But at that time we had no pills.



Many sailors suffered from seasickness in varying degrees, some so severely that they were drafted ashore incapable of sea duty. I can only speak of my own experience with it which consisted of abject misery for the first two days of each and every trip. I observed some cases where a man seemed to get it on his first day at sea only, and this I just cannot understand, as I had to go through it after each lay-off ashore . This is what I had to deal with and you had to stand your watch regardless. Nausea and vomiting being non-stop, you carried a bucket - soiling the mess-deck was an absolute no-no! So the bucket took care of that. By the way, there was no sympathy - only a grudging tolerance of the seasick rating.

I found that I developed a super-sense of smell while sick which made the stale air of the mess-deck intolerable, and what was even worse for me, oil fumes from the engine room. These odours, normally quite acceptable, just turned my stomach inside out! My way of dealing with this was to spend my off-duty hours wedged into a remote corner of the rail by the wheelhouse, with the salt air and spray in my face, which brought a measure of relief. However, after two days of this, a miracle occurred! Your appetite and ability to eat somehow returned and you were OK except in extremely violent weather, when the nausea would return to some degree. I would say this - life aboard a corvette was tough, but if you want "real tough", take life aboard a corvette while seasick!

By the time of my first convoy trip, we Communications ratings were billeted in the miscellaneous mess-deck just abaft of the stoker's compartment.

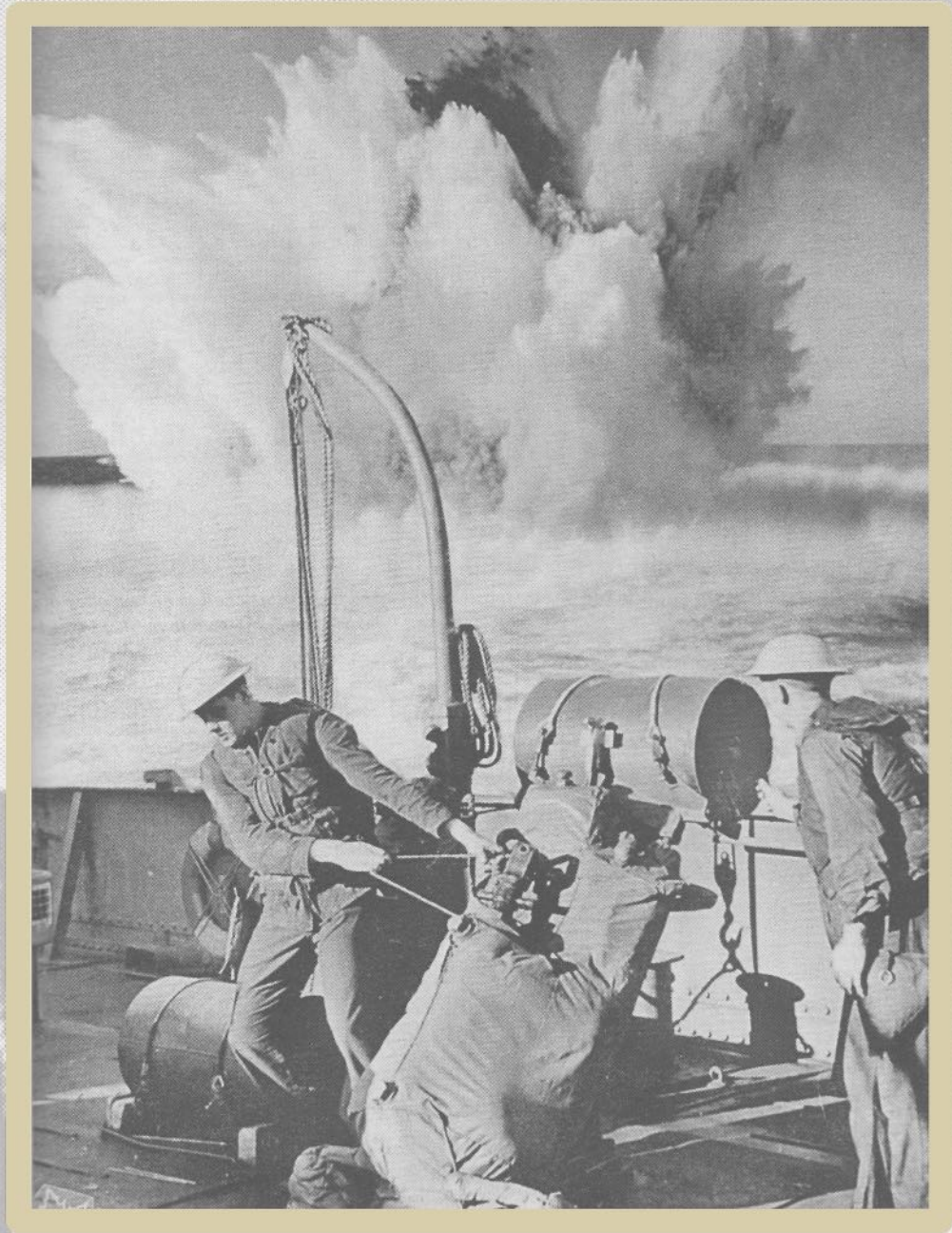
The stoker's compartment was accessible from the open foc'sle through a narrow doorway and down an almost perpendicular flight of steel steps. This compartment accommodated eight Communications ratings and an equal number of miscellaneous such as cooks, steward, supply, radar, HSD, LTO, and Buffer. There were one or two bunks, but hammocks were slung by those fortunate enough to find adequate space. The rest simply "flaked out" on the lockers or even on top of the hammock storage bin. I should explain that there was seating along the bulkheads which did double duty as locker storage, as the benches on which you sat were hinged lids. Immediately in front of this seating were the bolted down mess-deck tables with raised edges (a most necessary feature). As to the cushioned locker tops, they were a splendidly quick means of catching some needed sleep.

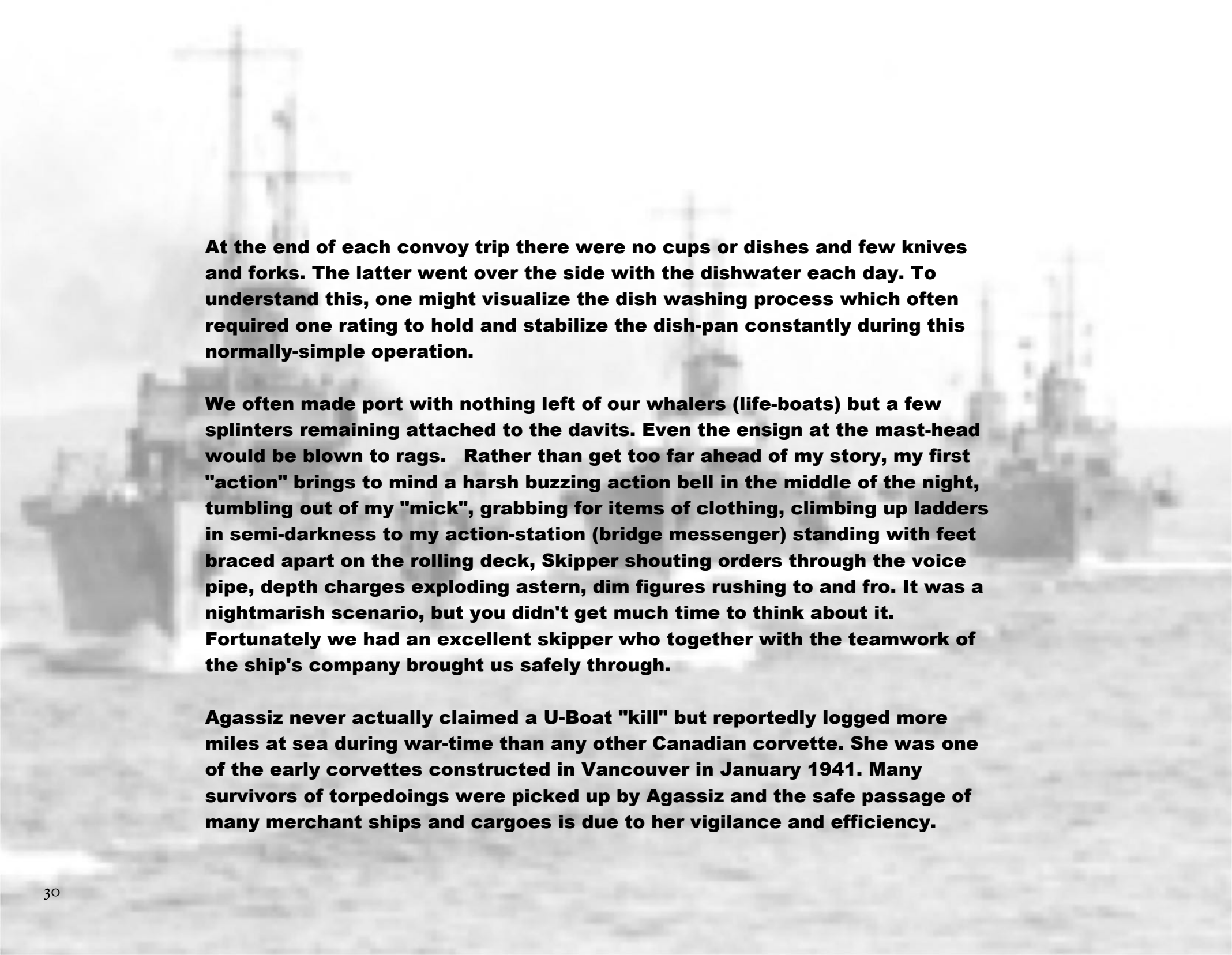
Hammocks were slung of necessity right over the mess tables – in fact you ate your meals with your head practically in contact with someone's hammock-encased posterior, swinging to and fro with the constant pitching and rolling. During sea watch-keeping these hammocks usually remained slung.

Watch-keeping at sea consisted of four hours on and eight off, except for the "dog-watches" which were 16:00 hours to 18:00 and 18:00 to 20:00 hours. Action stations were independent of this, of course.

If you were fortunate enough to be already on watch when the action bell went, your normal "sleeping time" was undisturbed. Otherwise, you tumbled out of your "mick" almost fully dressed and got to your "Action Station" fast.

It is difficult to describe the heaving, rolling, pitching and staggering chaos that is a corvette mess-deck in rough weather. The constant swaying of hammocks, the clatter of smashing crockery in the cupboard (if not already smashed, it soon would be), the creaking and groaning of bulkheads and equipment, the spilled food on decks and in cupboards and drawers, ratings wearily going on and off watch or rushing madly to Action Stations for depth charge attacks. All in the eerie dim blue lighting which was the only illumination provided.





At the end of each convoy trip there were no cups or dishes and few knives and forks. The latter went over the side with the dishwater each day. To understand this, one might visualize the dish washing process which often required one rating to hold and stabilize the dish-pan constantly during this normally-simple operation.

We often made port with nothing left of our whalers (life-boats) but a few splinters remaining attached to the davits. Even the ensign at the mast-head would be blown to rags. Rather than get too far ahead of my story, my first "action" brings to mind a harsh buzzing action bell in the middle of the night, tumbling out of my "mick", grabbing for items of clothing, climbing up ladders in semi-darkness to my action-station (bridge messenger) standing with feet braced apart on the rolling deck, Skipper shouting orders through the voice pipe, depth charges exploding astern, dim figures rushing to and fro. It was a nightmarish scenario, but you didn't get much time to think about it. Fortunately we had an excellent skipper who together with the teamwork of the ship's company brought us safely through.

Agassiz never actually claimed a U-Boat "kill" but reportedly logged more miles at sea during war-time than any other Canadian corvette. She was one of the early corvettes constructed in Vancouver in January 1941. Many survivors of torpedoings were picked up by Agassiz and the safe passage of many merchant ships and cargoes is due to her vigilance and efficiency.



NAVAL MESSAGE					
Bn 436		Telegraphist - H. J. Farrell			
		Coder - D. M. Munn			
H.M.C.S. "Agassiz"					
Instructions: (Indicate direction of Priority, etc.)					No. of Groups: 52
I.G. #1 · 583A B5				FROM: Admiralty	
Following received from					5
C. in C. Mediterranean Fleet:					10
Addressed Admiralty					15
Begin:—					20
"Pleased to inform their Lord-					25
ships that the Italian Battlefleet now					30
lies at anchor under the guns of the					35
fortress at Malta."					40
1111920A					45
					50
System	P/L Code or Cypher	Time of		Operator	Date
107	J	Receipt	Despatch	H.J./DM	11. 9. 43
		2149			

A Naval Message decoded while enroute from Londonderry to St. John's September 11, 1943

NAVAL MESSAGE

RESTRICTED
INTERCEPT

From:
ADMIRALTY

U-BOAT PROCEED NOW TO THE NEAREST
CONVENIENT POINT ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING
ROUTES AND FOLLOW IT EXACTLY TO LOCH ERIBOLL
"58 33 N 04 37 W"

BLUE ROUTE 49 00 N 09 00 W
53 00 N 12 00 W
58 00 N 11 00 W
59 00 N 05 30 W

THENCE CONTINUE TO LOCH ERIBOLL

RED ROUTE 53 45 N 03 00 W
59 45 N 01 00 W
59 45 N 03 00 W

THENCE TO LOCH ERIBOLL

SIGNAL -- IF UNDERSTOOD -- POSITION
COURSE AND SPEED AT 1600 HOURS GMT MAY
131310Z

PASSED TO NSHQ

IQ

142230Z/5/45

FAS/MM

I.G. # 303, Destroyers Escorting HX 239.

FROM:
O.N. 184

<i>U-Boat surrendered to Bogue's aircraft</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>after being attacked & hit position 076 27 38</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>HMCS St. Laurent now picking up</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>survivors, U-Boat sunk</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>U.S. Destroyer Osmond Ingram and</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Burwell hunting second U-Boat</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>053 ZZ 39</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Position, course & speed 50° 26' N.</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>36° 05' W. 240° 9 knots</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>// 222001Z</i>	<i>50</i>

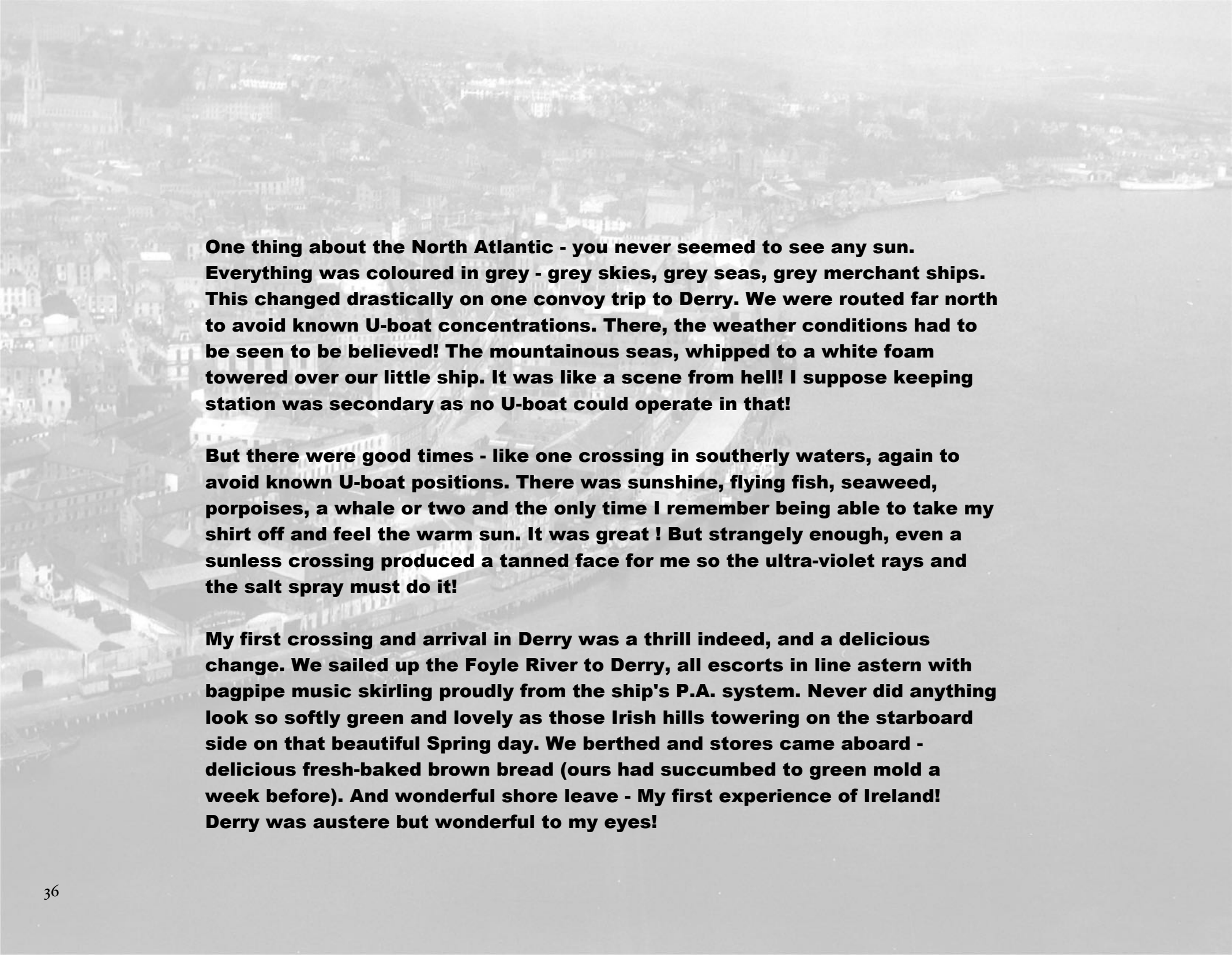
An intercepted message and a decoded message from May 23, 1943

Life aboard a corvette was definitely an unnatural one. Movement was more climbing than walking. You took a few steps toward a destination, but most of the time you climbed; up ladders, through hatchways, down ladders, etc.

In any kind of weather at all, the main deck was awash with rushing foaming water most of the time. Going aft was a carefully-timed quick run on the upward roll. In very rough weather this could be a life and death situation so you learned to be very careful. In some weather, movement on deck was out of the question. Life-lines were provided, and probably saved many a life indeed. I recall sitting on a locker one time, back to bulkhead, feet propped securely against the bolted-down mess-table in what should have been a most safe and secure position, when I was suddenly thrown over the table and slid across the steeply canted deck crashing against the far bulkhead. I almost broke my arm against a couple of pipe fixtures!

One day I was fetching dinner for the mess (it was a tray of pork chops) and we took such a violent pitch that I ended up on the deck with pork chops flying in all directions. I did the only thing left to do - gathered them up and staggered on. I don't recall the outcome of that - perhaps it's just as well! Meals at sea were adequate. The cooks, I thought, were obliged to perform under incredible conditions. There were times when preparation of a meal was impossible and cases of "hard-tack" were broken out. Strangely enough I liked the hard-tack. There was, however, one thing I came to thoroughly detest - cold storage fried eggs. These things, oily and grey in colour turned up most mornings for breakfast. Bread turned moldy after a few days at sea. We simply cut away the mold and used the rest. The "useable" portion got smaller each day until the bread supply ran out.



An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city, likely Derry, Ireland, showing a dense urban area with many buildings and a large body of water (the Foyle River) in the foreground. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

One thing about the North Atlantic - you never seemed to see any sun. Everything was coloured in grey - grey skies, grey seas, grey merchant ships. This changed drastically on one convoy trip to Derry. We were routed far north to avoid known U-boat concentrations. There, the weather conditions had to be seen to be believed! The mountainous seas, whipped to a white foam towered over our little ship. It was like a scene from hell! I suppose keeping station was secondary as no U-boat could operate in that!

But there were good times - like one crossing in southerly waters, again to avoid known U-boat positions. There was sunshine, flying fish, seaweed, porpoises, a whale or two and the only time I remember being able to take my shirt off and feel the warm sun. It was great ! But strangely enough, even a sunless crossing produced a tanned face for me so the ultra-violet rays and the salt spray must do it!

My first crossing and arrival in Derry was a thrill indeed, and a delicious change. We sailed up the Foyle River to Derry, all escorts in line astern with bagpipe music skirling proudly from the ship's P.A. system. Never did anything look so softly green and lovely as those Irish hills towering on the starboard side on that beautiful Spring day. We berthed and stores came aboard - delicious fresh-baked brown bread (ours had succumbed to green mold a week before). And wonderful shore leave - My first experience of Ireland! Derry was austere but wonderful to my eyes!

The River Foyle, Londonderry

A portion of the ships' company received ten days "rotation leave" and a railroad pass to any part of the U.K. The remainder stayed on board and would have their leave at a later time. We could look forward to twelve days rest before returning to sea for another convoy and crossing. Routine was easy; we sat around the mess decks till 12:00 hours. As Coders, we had little to do in harbour. Somehow I inherited the job of updating the KR&AI (Kings Rules and Admiralty Instructions) for which new promulgations, additions and deletions would arrive on an ongoing basis. I went aboard HMS Itchen (Our Senior Escort), and was surprised and a little irritated to learn that this job was handled by the Signal Officer and not by an ordinary rating like myself! Ah well, all is possible in the RCNVR!

Back to sea, and the war was escalating technologically. There were now "acoustic torpedoes" which would "home" on a ship's propellers. Counter-measures were immediate - paravanes which were streamed astern as noisemakers to cause premature exploding of the "tin-fish". Aerial bombs, remotely controlled, were being used against our vessels. I believe HMCS Athabaskan sustained a hit from one of these. Counter-measures such as "frequency-jamming" were rumoured. Another disquieting "buzz" was that U-boats, hitherto concentrating on Convoy tankers and freighters had received orders to switch their priority to escort vessels. Recent corvette sinkings appeared to bear this out. All these things we took in our stride but things were changing.

December, 1943

Increased use of air-power flown from small escort carriers was tipping the balance against the U-boats. These small carriers such as HMS Puncher and Nabob which carried the swordfish aircraft possessed great advantage over escort ships in locating and destroying U-boats. I recall being in the near vicinity of one of these engagements and listening in to the R/T transmissions of pilots and a "blow-by-blow" description of the destruction of a U-boat. This "kill" came from aircraft from Carrier USS Bogue. It was said that three U-boats were destroyed in this area at that particular time. U-boats by this time were using a sophisticated "snorkelling device" by which batteries could be recharged and air supply replenished without the necessity of surfacing and its resultant dangers, especially now from Allied aircraft.

So the convoys went on and on back and forth. I had by this time made twelve crossings, and one day came the "buzz"! It came from the engine room branch - engines needed overhaul, boilers needed cleaning - we were going into refit! We were routed to Halifax and wonder of wonders, our refit would be carried out at Staten Island, and not Sydney as were many others! One month' s leave for all ship's company and ten weeks in that paradise for servicemen - New York City! We were elated! We were to be converted to a modern corvette with an extended focs'le whereby the "well-deck" for'ard of the bridge would be housed in, even as far back as the stack. Much more cabin space and no more "green ones" (waves) deluging the presently wide open well-deck for'ard of the bridge. We would be transformed into a modern corvette.

This was the standard refit for all original corvettes. The result can be seen in HMCS Sackville, now a Naval Memorial in Halifax.

We arrived at "Pier 9" Staten Island on a beautiful winter's day just prior to Christmas, 1943, and half the Ship's Company, myself included, joyously packed our kit bags for a thirty-day leave. It was wonderful getting home after a year away and I returned to New York with weeks of enjoyment of the City still ahead. It was everything they said and more! Agassiz was a chaos of civilian work crews, welding torches, riveters, etc., so we were barracked with the U.S. Navy. I especially remember the food in the mess hall. Even the breakfast was a banquet . No one dines like the U.S. serviceman. And still, I heard complaints - but not from us!





Well, New York was indeed paradise! The hospitality, the food, the entertainment was limitless - this was New York City in wartime . I cannot describe it, as words fail. We had little to do but hang about in a little makeshift jetty office all morning and, after lunch, take the Staten Island Ferry to Manhattan for yet another afternoon and evening on the town. We had a surprise one day shortly after refit while Agassiz was anchored in midstream. I was below in the First Lieutenant's cabin and had just finished sewing on a badge for him, when suddenly without warning I was thrown to the deck. Our ship had been struck by a huge U.S Navy harbour tug! I got up topside and recall the portside rail all bent out of shape. I don't recall the consequences of this but we did not get any extended stay at any rate.

March, 1944

Well, it had to come to an end and around the first of March Agassiz sailed for Halifax and our sleek modern extended focs'le, so beneficial in many ways, proved my undoing . I had been a "landsman" for ten weeks and violent seasickness was immediate, but with a devastating difference . Our communications mess-deck was now a long distance from the open air. In order to reach it, the whole housed-in focs'le must now be traversed and due to structural alterations my "open-air retreat" when needed was gone forever. The New York - Halifax trip under these conditions was abject misery. I went to the C.O. while in Halifax and asked for a shore draft. He was reluctant. But he sent me to the Medical Officer who gave me some of the newly-developed seasickness pills. I never tried them.

A golden opportunity presented itself and changed my whole destiny! A former Agassiz Coder, presently working in Captain D's Signal Office wished to return to the ship, having heard a "buzz" that Agassiz was to go to Bermuda. He would trade jobs with me. We went to the skipper and in no time it was arranged. The "buzz" was true - Agassiz went to Bermuda, her North Atlantic Convoy days at an end, and I went to my duties in Captain D's Signal Office in HMC Dockyard, Halifax. It was a small cubicle in "H-Block" located adjacent to Operations which dealt with dockyard activities such as berthing, fuelling, ammunitioning, sailing orders, etc. After that nauseous voyage from New York it was a delicious change! Our work hours were easy - just a telephone watch and some filing, and living-out arrangements.



That was the end of my ship-board career, but I was to participate in one more convoy escort operation in a rather unexpected manner!

I believe it was the Spring of 1945; someone told me that if you made certain application through proper channels, you could fly with an air-force mission. It was a "liaison" venture and the naval rating would be logged aboard officially as a Communications crew member. I so applied and it was thus that I found myself at the Dartmouth Air Station in the wee small hours of the morning, and along with a four or five-man crew of airmen, we boarded a Ventura aircraft . We took off at dawn, flew out to sea and after an hour and one-half, made rendezvous with a small convoy and escort ships. It was a most enjoyable experience - we flew at low altitude, the day was sunny and cloudless - we patrolled around the convoy for four hours, flew up and down the ship lanes, waved greetings back and forth at the seamen below and then commenced our one and one-half hour journey back to Dartmouth Air station for a steak dinner in the Air Crew Mess. What a way to go on convoy! The Ventura crew were a happy, friendly lot and we were fast friends in no time. I had been just in the nick of time for this "liaison" flight. They were discontinued shortly after.

Duties in the Signal Office were simple, passing and receiving signals to and from ships in harbour and dockyard authorities. It was pleasant, relaxed and I made many friends just through the medium of the telephone. It was thus that I met the girl who is now my wife, a telephone operator in the Main Coding Office, HMC Dockyard. We enjoyed many happy months together against the backdrop of wartime Halifax and I came to regard it as a second home.

I lived "ashore" in a small upstairs room on Duncan street, and she lived in similar accommodation on Edward Street. Those were happy days and after my return to the responsibilities and stresses of "Civvy life", I many times longed to return to them.

I am approaching the end of my story but a few more momentous events were to occur, the first being the torpedoing and sinking of HMCS Clayoquot, Minesweeper in the very approaches to Halifax harbour on December 24, 1944, and the similar fate of HMCS Esquimalt in the same area. These brought the war very close to our doorstep, and we watched with emotion the many stretchers and ambulances up from the jetty to RCNH.



May, 1945

VE-Day at last and the old city torn apart by rioting, looting and vandalism. I had a "ringside seat" and it is saddening to think that many naval personnel participated in it. I need not comment on it except to say that this rather infamous event is recounted in detail in Stanley Redman's book, Open Gangway.

Lastly, the ammunition dump fire and explosion over at Bedford Basin. This was frightening at times. The ground shook with concussions and I recall sitting out on the porch with the elderly couple where I lived and trying to catch a few winks of sleep on a blanket in the backyard. We were afraid of being indoors during this thing which went on for hours.

It was just after this, my number came up for discharge and I said goodbye to my landlady and her husband, and reported in to HMCS Peregrine for discharge routine. This took a few days and I left that chaotic place with no regrets.

Helen (my soon-to-be wife) having resigned her Civil Service position, was also packed and ready and we took the train for HMCS "Star" immediately. Star had been relocated and was now a modern Naval "Division", so unlike the original, that I felt like a stranger there. Discharge leave was immediate and our wedding took place within a couple of weeks, and we were on our honeymoon when Japan capitulated.

So now there are only the memories, but it was unique, wonderful, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Much of it I have forgotten but some memories will haunt me forever like the bark of a rifle drill instructor at "Star" in the early days, the beautiful trumpet of Harry James coming over the St. Hyacinthe Parade Ground on a lazy summer Sunday afternoon, or the clang of exploding depth charges vibrating the thin steel hull of our little corvette on a dark pitching rolling North Atlantic night.

This is only my story. There are many thousands of others. But in the telling of it I have re-lived it a little and if anyone reads it, I hope they will understand a small part of what it was like. I will never forget it.

Douglas E. Murch, Coder, V-40131



CERTIFICATE of the SERVICE of

Douglas Edward Murch

in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve

Training Headquarters	R.C.N.V.R. Division	Official Number
<i>Halifax, Nova Scotia</i>	<i>Hamilton</i>	<i>V40131</i>
Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Place of Residence
<i>October 12, 1920</i>	<i>Preston, Ontario</i>	<i>Preston, Ontario</i>
Trade brought up to	Religion	Can Swim — P.P.T.
<i>Cook</i>	<i>Presbyterian</i>	Date <i>19</i> Signature _____ Rank _____
P.S.T.	Date <i>19</i>	Signature _____ Rank _____

Name and Address of Nearest
Relative or Friend
(in pencil)*(Father)**Wm. D. Murch
524 York Street
Preston, Ontario
29/10/45*

PARTICULARS OF SERVICE				MEDALS, DECORATIONS, etc.		
Date of Actual Volunteering	Date of Enrolment or re-enrolment	Period Volunteered for	Rating on Enrolment or Re-enrolment	Date of		Nature of Decoration
				Award	Presentation	
<i>Nov 7/41</i>	<i>Nov 12/41</i>	<i>Host.</i>	<i>Ord Cook</i>			

NAVAL TRAINING and ACTIVE SERVICE

Year	SHIP OR ESTABLISHMENT	LEDGER		RATING	FROM	TO	CAUSE OF
		Lib	No.				
	<i>Divisional Strength</i>						
<i>1941</i>	<i>H.M.C.S. Star</i>			<i>Ord Cook</i>	<i>12 Nov 41</i>	<i>31 Dec 41</i>	
<i>1942</i>	<i>H.M.C.S. Star</i>			<i>Ord Cook</i>	<i>1 Jan 42</i>	<i>1 Jan 42</i>	
	<i>Active Service</i>						
<i>1942</i>	<i>H.M.C.S. "Star"</i>			<i>Ord Cook</i>	<i>12 Jan 42</i>	<i>9 Feb 42</i>	
	<i>1942</i>			<i>Coder</i>	<i>12 Jan 42</i>	<i>17 Feb 42</i>	
<i>1943</i>	<i>Stadacona</i>				<i>2 Feb 42</i>	<i>22 Feb 42</i>	
	<i>Amaland (Agassiz)</i>				<i>24 Feb 42</i>	<i>25 Feb 42</i>	
	<i>Stadacona</i>				<i>21 Feb 42</i>	<i>13 July 42</i>	
	<i>Virginia</i>				<i>14 July 42</i>	<i>22 July 42</i>	
	<i>Star</i>				<i>23 July 42</i>	<i>24 July 42</i>	
	<i>Discharged demobilized to date 17/7/45</i>						
	<i>gratuity P.C. 44685 of 19/7/45</i>						
	<i>Rehabilitation grant paid</i>						
	<i>Plain clothing gratuity paid \$60</i>						
	<i>27 letters of Service "Canada" 4/4/45</i>						

PROVISIONAL AWARD

H.M.C.S. "STADACONA"
Capt. (D)'s
SIGNAL OFFICE

MURCH, Douglas Edward

CODER

V40131

NAME

RATING

O.N.

SHIP

This Award, which is based on the best evidence available in H.M.C.S. "STADACONA", is provisional only and is liable to withdrawal if check at Naval Service Headquarters shows it to be in error. This Award gives no claim to the Award of the Medal itself.

PRESENT THIS SLIP TO THE NEAREST CLOTHING STORE FOR THE ISSUE OF:

- (a) Canadian Volunteer Service Medal Ribbon.
- (b) Clasp.
- (c) 1939—1943 Star Ribbon.

che
1315114

26/5/44

S. R. Armstrong
c/p

A/Captain, R.C.N.

H.M.C.S. "STADACONA"

DATE:

4 April, 1945

NAME

Murch, Douglas

RATING

Coder

O.N.

V40131

HAS BEEN

Rated
Awarded 1st G.C.B.
Transferred to

to date

12 Jan '45

[Signature]
Lieutenant-Commander, R.C.N.
First Lieutenant.

R. C. N. DRAFT ORDER

ISSUED BY RCN DEPOT D.O.#6	SERIAL No. B-28883	DAY 12	MONTH July	YEAR 1945	ISSUE DATE
----------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------	---------------	--------------	------------

THE RATING WHOSE NAME, RATING AND OFFICIAL NUMBER ARE SET OUT BELOW, IS DRAFTED TO DATE

DAY MONTH YEAR
14 July 1945

FROM H. N. C. S. "STADCOMA"
SIGNAL SHIP

TO H. C. S. "PEREGRINE"
SIGNAL SHIP

H. N. C. S. "STADCOMA"
ACCOUNTING BASE

H. C. S. "PEREGRINE"
ACCOUNTING BASE

OFFICIAL No.	SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAMES	RATING	WON	PUS	CODE
V-40131	MURCH, D.		CODER			

REASON FOR DRAFT

For discharge (demobilized) routine
(Rating serving in Flotilla Signal Office)

*Telephone
33102
P50*

THE ABOVE NAMED RATING WAS RECEIVED ON BOARD

THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE COMPLETED AND FORWARDED THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE SUB-DEPOT WHERE APPLICABLE

THE DAY OF 194

FOR COMMANDING OFFICER

For Official
Use Only

C.A.P. 361
1st Edition

LAND & SEA Emergencies

Promulgated for the Information
of All Concerned

(Signed) L. S. BREADNER
Air Marshal
Chief of Air Staff

H. Q. 570 - 361
SOM (R.C.A.F. Reprint Jan. 44)

Received the sum of £ 7-6 561

for Cablegram To Canada
accepted subject to the conditions printed on the message form.

No. of chargeable words Class

For the COMMERCIAL CABLE COMPANY.

DATE
STAMP.

Form No. 13. (6/42).

5 MAY 1943

No. 2810 **Londonderry Naval Week**
4th Sept.—11th Sept., 1943.

Shooting Competitions

IN AID OF ABOVE

Will be held in S. ORR & SONS' NAVAL WORKSHOP,

Each Night at EIGHT o'clock,

FOR VARIOUS PRIZES.

SUBSCRIPTION, - SIXPENCE.

6d The Receipt of a Voluntary Donation is gratefully acknowledged. 6d

50m-5 46 (1758) K.P. 35770

No.

WEEK

Name MURCH D.

Rating CDR.

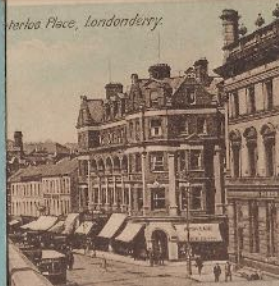
Off. No. V 40131

REGULATING OFFICE

JUL 19

H.M.C.S. PEREGRINE

B	S	D	B	S	D	B
WED.	TUESDAY	MONDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	WED.
S	D	B	S	D	B	S
SUNDAY	SATURDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	FRIDAY	SUNDAY	SUNDAY
FRIDAY	THURSDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	FRIDAY



IF FOUND RETURN TO ANY FOOD OFFICE

R.B.12

MINISTRY OF FOOD

Name and Initials Murch D.

N.R. No. or Service No. V 40131

Week No. or Week ending 26.6.43

F.O. Stamp or Issuing Officer

GRID	MILK

PANEL 2	PANEL 1	R.B.12 MEAT
		Cancel for R.B.12

QUARTER RESERVES	EGGS	R.B.12 MEAT

R.B.12 SPARE TWO	R.B.12 SUGAR

R.B.12 SPARE ONE	R.B.12 CHEESE

R.B.12 TEA	R.B.12 BACON

R.B.12 POINTS X	R.B.12 BUTTER MARGARINE & COOKING FATS

Elh 2012

LONDON TRANSPORT BUSES
ROUTE 17
LONDON STRY.

1	16
2	15
3	14
4	13
5	12
6	11
7	10
8	9
9	8
10	7
11	6
12	5
13	4
14	3
15	2
16	1

NORTHERN IRELAND
ROAD TRANSPORT BOARD,
CENTRAL BUS STATION,
LONDONDERRY.

This Ticket is issued subject to Conditions as published in Board's Time Tables.

This Ticket is issued subject to Conditions as published in Board's Time Tables.
NORTHERN IRELAND
ROAD TRANSPORT BOARD,
CENTRAL BUS STATION,
LONDONDERRY.







CANADA

The Minister of National Defence has pleasure in forwarding the enclosed medals and in expressing on behalf of the Government of Canada sincere appreciation for services rendered.



WWII Medals awarded to Douglas Murch

The 1939-1945 Star was awarded for six months service on active operations for Army and Navy, and two months for active air-crew between 02 September 1939 and 08 May 1945 (Europe) or 02 September 1945 (Pacific).

The Atlantic Star was awarded for six months (180 days) service afloat or 2 months (60 days) for air-crew service between 03 September 1939 and 08 May 1945 (Europe) or 02 September 1945 (Pacific). The Atlantic Star may not be awarded unless the 1939-1945 Star has been qualified for by 180 days' operational service afloat or by 2 months (60 days) service for airborne service. Therefore, the total requirement is twelve months (360 days) service afloat or four months (120 days) for airbourne service.

The Canadian Volunteer Service Medal was granted to persons of any rank in the Naval, Military or Air Forces of Canada who voluntarily served on Active Service and have honourably completed eighteen months (540 days) total voluntary service from September 3, 1939 to March 1, 1947. A silver bar (often called a clasp), a maple leaf at its centre was awarded for 60 days service outside Canada. A silver maple leaf is worn on the ribbon in undress.

The War Medal was awarded to all full-time personnel of the armed forces and merchant marines for serving for 28 days between 03 September 1939 and 02 September 1945. In the Merchant Navy, the 28 days must have been served at sea.









**Having passed
our course, we
could at last
sew on our
Coder's badge,
crossed flags
with "C" below.**

May 8, 1942

C.N.S. 247A
25M-5-42 (4661)
815-9-247

SURNAME <i>Musch</i>	H.M.C.S. <i>Agassiz</i>
CHRISTIAN NAME(S) <i>Langley</i>	PART <i>CP</i>
RATING <i>Coder</i>	PART OF SHIP
G. or T. <i>T</i>	MESS <i>Mess</i>
	RELIGION

Grog or Temperance: a choice of a daily tot of rum issue or five cents per day in its stead.