

2 OF 8 CORVETTES SUNK BUT HARBOR UNITS SAFE

By FRANK LOWE

London, Oct. 17—(CP)—Those two portable harbors, each as big as Dover, which were towed across the English channel this summer to make possible handling of millions of men and shiploads of supplies for the Allied armies of liberation in France, got there because of eight veteran Canadian corvettes.

Jig-Saw Puzzles

When it was first decided to take these enormous jig-saw puzzles of cement and steel to France, high-ranking naval officers realized they would have to be well protected when they made the hazardous channel crossing. So they asked for these Canadian corvettes: Regina, Camrose, Alberni, Prescott, Mayflower, Calgary, Rimouski and Drumheller. All were old-type corvettes and all too had years of convoy experience. They needed every bit of skill, courage and stamina their crews possessed for this particular job.

The huge sections of steel and concrete which made up the floating harbors had to move slowly—at a tedious three knots, which is just a brisk walking speed ashore. This left them extremely vulnerable to attack.

The Canadian ships got them through, although the price was heavy. The Regina was the first to go, with the loss of most of her crew, and the Alberni followed soon after, sinking in something like three seconds. But not one section of the floating harbor was lost.

Raced for Attackers

Lieut.-Cmdr. W. J. McIsaac of Charlottetown said the trips consisted of feeling their way slowly and carefully like strangers in a blacked-out city. But things speeded up, he added, whenever attack threatened. On several occasions the sturdy corvettes raced full out to fend off attack from German E- and U-boats. On other occasions they bucked and dodged at

high speed while throwing anti-aircraft fire at German planes.

Helping the Canadian corvettes through the operation were Canadian minesweepers, including the Milltown, Minas, Malpeque, Wasage and Blairmore.

The main trouble, according to the crew of the Prescott, was finding where the harbors were to go. It is easy enough to sail into a harbor on a strange coast, they explained, but it is a different matter to bring harbors themselves to foreign shores.

But the Prescott and the others managed to deliver the goods, although the Prescott, wishing to dump her awkward charge on the first trip, signalled an American cruiser: "Do you know where the port authorities are?" and received the reply: "No, I'm a stranger here myself."