

REMINISCENCES

PART V

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(Retired)

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REMINISCENCES

FOREWORD

"REMINISCENCES" is a rather rambling narration of my life, written to satisfy the not infrequent queries of my three sons and gentle prodding from my wife, Paula. I was tempted to give it the title "The Sky Was Always Blue" but as that is the title of a book by Admiral Sir William James, C.V.O., R.N., I resisted the temptation to plagiarize and settled on "REMINISCENCES." Looking back through the years, however, while necessarily there were "ups" and "downs" it seems that indeed the sky generally was blue—the "ups" stand out; most of the "downs" have drifted into oblivion. Perhaps it would be fair to say that rarely was there a time when there was not a silver lining. In any event—at least in my more mobile days—it was a very active life and I ever found that there were too few hours in a day, or days in a week. Come to think of it, I still do.

(DGK)

PART V - SECTION 5

March 1944 - November 1945

H.M.C.S. STETTLER
NEW YORK AND BERMUDA
SUPPORT GROUP EG-16
GASPE AND A BRUSH WITH A "GNAT"
LOSS OF H.M.C.S. MAGOG
HALIFAX - U.K. WATERS
GIBRALTAR CONVOY
END OF THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC
MORE GIBRALTAR CONVOYS
RETURN TO CANADA

H.M.C.S. STETTLER

I turned over command of ARVIDA on 16 March 1944 to Lieutenant D.W.G. Storey, R.C.N.V.R. The signal that I had received indicated that I should proceed with all despatch to Montreal, reporting en route to Captain G.L. Roome, R.C.N., the Superintendent of Contract Built Ships, in Ottawa. I assumed therefore that STETTLER was almost ready for commissioning and I proceeded with Daphne as expeditiously as possible. Captain Roome, however, was surprised to see me and told me that the ship was not due to be commissioned until 7 May. Apparently there was a communication gap between the Contract Built Ships Department and the Personnel Branch, which had sent the signal to me. I was, however, very glad to be present during the few weeks before the ship was completed.

After arrival in Montreal on 20 March, I called on the Resident Naval Overseer, Commander (E) Cuthbert A. L. Harrison, R.C.N.V.R., who introduced me to the people I should know in the plant of Canadian Vickers Ltd., where STETTLER was being built.

The ship had been laid down on 31 May 1943 and had been launched on 10 September 1943, the christening ceremony being performed by Mrs. D. W. Ambridge, the wife of the Director General, Naval Shipbuilding Branch of the Department of Munitions and Supply.

STETTLER was fitted with vastly superior equipment to that of the early corvettes, such as gyro compasses, HF/DF, modern ASDIC and radar, and LORAN—a new piece of navigational equipment.

The specifications of Frigates were as follows:

Length overall	301' 6"
Beam	36 ' 7"
Mean draft, loaded	12 ' 4"
Displacement on above draft	1960 long tons
Steam reciprocating engines	with twin screws
Maximum speed	20 knots
Main Armament:	Twin 4" low-angle/high-angle guns forward with additional light armament fitted later. Two depth-charge throwers each side of the main deck with rails aft. Later fitted with "Hedgehog," an ahead-throwing anti-submarine weapon.
Complement:	Approximately 160 officers and ratings.

Bearing in mind the difficulties that had been encountered with ARVIDA when being built by the small and inexperienced Morton Engineering and Drydock Company, I had hoped that Vickers would be a great improvement. Vickers indeed was better than Morton, but again poor workmanship caused delays and also some troubles that occurred later. Commissioning was scheduled for 7 May and in fact the ship was commissioned on that date, but before final acceptance, which was delayed until 15 May!

Lieutenant Maurice Gagnon, R.C.N.V.R., had been appointed as my First Lieutenant on 20 March. By the time STETTLER sailed for Quebec after acceptance trials on 15 May, the following additional officers (all R.C.N.V.R.) also had joined:

Lieutenant Armand Ouimet
Lieutenant (n) Clifford F. Brown (Navigating Officer)
Sub-Lieutenant Harry M. Brown
Sub-Lieutenant Douglas Stark
Sub-Lieutenant Allan M. Torrie
Paymaster-Lieutenant James W. Simpson
Sub-Lieutenant (E) William I. Phemister (Engineer Officer)

Sub-Lieutenant Phemister's appointment as Engineer Officer was of a temporary nature, and Lieutenant (E) John P. D. Rogers, R.C.N.V.R., was appointed on 21 May.

STETTLER was named after the town of that name in Alberta and as in the case of ARVIDA the ship was "adopted" by the town. Therefore while the ship was building, arrangements were made for me to visit the town of Stettler. There I found myself the guest of the Mayor and his wife (Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Kirby) and their two charming school-teacher daughters. A busy itinerary had been arranged, including attendance at a ceremony for burning the "mortgage papers" for the town's new sewer system. This involved an interesting—if at times odoriferous—tour of the entire plant. The town had managed to defray the whole cost of the plant by the production from it, and the sale, of Milorganite.

The town was rightfully proud that it had the highest rate of enlistment in Canada, but it mourned that it suffered heavy casualties at Dieppe.

Before undergoing "Acceptance Trials" under the scrutiny of naval specialists, STETTLER was required to have "Shipbuilder's Trials." During the latter it was necessary for the ship to proceed to Quebec City and return under the command of a civilian captain. I offered my services. These were accepted, and wearing civilian clothes for the occasion, I was paid \$200.00 by Vickers—a very welcome addition to the exchequer.

After Acceptance Trials and completion of still outstanding items, STETTLER proceeded to Quebec City for ammunitioning and additional storing, then sailed to Halifax, arriving on 28 May 1944. In Halifax additional equipment was fitted and items that were not properly completed by Vickers were taken in hand. In the meantime, training programmes for officers and ratings were arranged.

NEW YORK AND BERMUDA

On 16 June, STETTLER sailed from Halifax for New York City where additional equipment was to be fitted and special calibrations were to be undertaken. Not yet being "in all

respects ready to meet the enemy," STETTLER was routed through the Cape Cod Canal and the "inland waterway," arriving at the City Island entrance to the Port of New York just before midnight on 17 June. On entering the port, I was required by U. S. authorities to take a pilot.

As the pilot embarked, it was obvious that he had been imbibing unwisely and our passage down the harbour to Pier 9, Staten Island, was more than adventuresome. Throughout the passage, while I dodged all manner of craft, from ill-lit tugs with barges to large merchantmen, the pilot regaled me with an unending and unstoppable flow of information about the buildings of New York City as we passed them. As we neared our destination, the pilot suddenly called on his walkie-talkie for a tug. I had told him on his arrival on board that I wished no assistance from him or a tug when berthing. I told him so again, most emphatically, ordering him to cancel the tug and to go below. He went to the back of the bridge and I thought had followed my orders.

An aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. MISSION BAY, was berthed on Jetty 9, with a small destroyer or an escort vessel secured on her starboard side. From what I could see in the darkness, the dimly lit berth appeared to be rather tight—immediately ahead of the carrier and ending abruptly with a concrete wall. I planned to make a normal type of landing when faced with a tight berth and an on-berth tide of unknown strength, i.e., to approach at a suitable angle, then manoeuvre the engines so as to stop a short distance from and parallel to the jetty, drifting alongside with the tide.

Unfortunately, my plans went swiftly agley when I heard a voice order: "Full ahead!" The pilot had returned to the bridge! At the same moment as he gave the order, there was a heavy jolt caused by a tug that had emerged from the darkness and was attempting to secure to my starboard quarter and as it did so was pushing my stern towards the destroyer. My quarterdeck officer was shouting at the tug with a megaphone to keep off. As swiftly as I could, I countermanded the "full ahead" with "stop both engines," then bellowed to the quarterdeck officer to fire at the tug with a Sten Gun unless it moved off at once. At the same time, I shoved the pilot away ordering him to "get the hell below," and told the Officer of the Watch to "make sure the bastard stays below!" I give my

engine room crew—and my Coxswain who was on the wheel—full marks for their accurate responses to my numerous orders given in the next few moments.

Thanks to the efforts of the tug, I now found the ship almost parallel to the destroyer and uncomfortably close. I missed it by what seemed a few feet and thought that I was going to be able to clear the carrier. She had the usual large overhang, but unluckily, a number of aerals extended outboard from it. These were carried away by my mast and, together with the top portion of the latter, draped themselves over the bridge, fortunately not striking anyone. With more than a little bit of luck, I managed to slip into my berth without a bump and without touching the hull of the carrier. The concrete wall, however, was unpleasantly close to my bow. I estimated that the berth that had been assigned to me was considerably less than 400 feet in length.

It was now about 0130 and MISSION BAY had come alive. I went aboard immediately to be met by the Captain who greeted me by moaning: "Oh! My new aerals!" He offered me coffee, but I asked to come aboard for a drink instead.

The following morning I called on the Canadian Naval Liaison Officer, Lieutenant-Commander J. F. D. Pemberton, R.C.N.V.R. He listened to my story and smiled when I told him that I should like to have legal action taken against the pilot. He told me that this sort of thing was commonplace and that pilots were "untouchables." He assured me that no "Collision Report" was required from me and that he reported such incidents by signal to NSHQ under a "knock-for-knock" agreement between Canada and the U. S. I gathered that if a U. S. ship damaged a Canadian ship in Canada, Canada assumed the cost of repairs to both ships, and vice versa. In my Report of Proceedings, I mentioned the incident but I never heard another word about it. My mast was repaired in short order by some very competent people, as were the aerals of MISSION BAY.

All the required work was completed on 22 June. The following day, STETTLER sailed for H.M.C.S. SOMERS ISLES, the RCN working-up base in Bermuda, arriving in Grassy Bay on the afternoon of 25 June. For nearly a month, together with several other RCN ships, STETTLER

underwent intensive training. This included anti-submarine exercises with a "tame" submarine, high-angle/low-angle shoots, fleet manoeuvres and a multitude of evolutions designed to bring the ship up to the highest possible state of fighting efficiency.

On 20 July, STETTLER passed inspection by the Training Captain with flying colours. The following day, she departed for Halifax in company with the frigates H.M.C. Ships SPRINGHILL (Commander W. Charles Halliday, R.C.N.R.), CHARLOTTETOWN (Lieutenant-Commander John Harding, R.C.N.R.), LONGUEUIL (Lieutenant-Commander Mervyn J. Woods, R.C.N.V.R.) and MAGOG (Lieutenant Lewis J. Quick, R.C.N.R.).

SUPPORT GROUP EG-16

STETTLER arrived in Halifax on 23 July and on 31 July 1944 was assigned to the newly formed Support Group EG-16. Unfortunately, as all too frequently happened to newly built ships, STETTLER developed main engine trouble as well as some lesser defects, most of which could be traced back to poor workmanship by Vickers. Other ships of the Group also required defects to be taken in hand and it was not until 17 August that EG-16 proceeded on its first operational duty.

EG-16 initially was composed of seven newly commissioned RCN Frigates: SPRINGHILL (Senior Officer), CHARLOTTETOWN, MAGOG, LA HULLOISE (Lieutenant John Brock, R.C.N.V.R.), ORKNEY (Lieutenant-Commander Victor "Starchy" Browne, R.C.N.V.R.), TORONTO (Lieutenant-Commander Henry K. "Hank" Hill, R.C.N.V.R.) and STETTLER.

"Support Groups" normally were not used as a close screen for a convoy, but were employed to support threatened convoys or to carry out offensive sweeps against the enemy. Hopes ran high when it was announced that EG-16 was destined for immediate overseas duty. Unfortunately, U-Boats again were making their presence felt on the Canadian Atlantic Seaboard and the Group was retained "temporarily" for service in Canadian waters.

On 17 August EG-16 proceeded on an offensive sweep not far from Sable Island. While so occupied a couple of days later, EG-16 was ordered to assist a U.S.N. Group, CTG 22.3, a few

miles distant that had reported contact with a U-Boat. This was the first and only time in my career that I received the signal "CHASE." This signal is reserved for an occasion when it is desired that each ship should close the enemy at the best possible speed. This the ships of the Group did, but arrived just after the U-Boat had been despatched by an aircraft from the U.S.S. BOGUE and survivors were being picked up. It was, however, at least a heartening sight.

The Group returned to Halifax on 22 August for refuelling and supplies and the following day proceeded on another offensive sweep, on completion of which on 29 August the Group was ordered to Sydney. For the next two weeks, EG-16 supported various convoys sailing from Sydney. U-Boat activity was again evident in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Group was ordered to work out of Gaspé, Quebec, where the operational base H.M.C.S. FORT RAMSAY was located.

GASPE AND A BRUSH WITH A "GNAT"

It was a sunny afternoon on 14 September as the Group supported a small convoy near Pointe-des-Monts, on the north shore of the entrance to the St. Lawrence River, that STETTLER obtained a firm ASDIC contact. The ship had just increased speed in the last stages of the attack, when a tremendous explosion occurred about 40 yards astern, a column of water rising about 30 feet in the air. My initial reaction was that a depth charge set very shallow had been released accidentally from the rails aft. This was not so and I realized that this had been a GNAT fired at STETTLER. Luckily, it had been detonated by the force of the stern wash resulting from the sudden increase in speed. The force of the explosion caused the contact to be lost, but a 10-charge pattern of depth charges was dropped on the estimated position of the U-Boat. Contact was not regained. The Group then searched the area for several hours but without success. After the war it was learnt that the attack had been made by U-802, who had not bottomed but had lain under a protective thermal layer in the water. U-802 claimed a kill!

The waters of the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence were notoriously bad for ASDIC, there being thermal layers in the water which deflected the ASDIC pulses, and a U-Boat

could lie below a layer undetected. U-Boats also were known to "bottom" in shallow waters, but where the attack on STETTLER took place the water supposedly was deep. During the search, however, I decided to check the depth with the echo-sounder and found comparatively shallow water where the chart showed it to be deep. The following day I obtained the Senior Officer's permission to undertake a survey of the area. I discovered that there was an extensive uncharted bank on the north side of the Gulf where only deep water was shown on the Chart. I duly submitted my report with reasonably accurate depths and perimeters of the bank. Shortly after the war, I received a letter from NSHQ advising that the bank had been officially confirmed and had been given some nondescript name. I am still irked that it was not designated "Stettler Bank."

LOSS OF H.M.C.S. MAGOG

Exactly a month later—on the afternoon of 14 October—while EG-16 was supporting a small convoy, again in the vicinity of Pointe-des-Monts, MAGOG was struck by a GNAT, 60 feet of her stern being blown off. Amazingly, only three men were killed and three injured. It speaks well for the damage control training of MAGOG that she remained afloat and was towed to port. It was considered, however, that she was too badly damaged to be repaired.

Although the Group thoroughly searched the area where MAGOG had been torpedoed, no ASDIC contact was made. After the war, it was determined that U-1223 who had torpedoed MAGOG also had sheltered under a protective layer in the water.

EG-16 continued to operate out of Gaspé until the end of October, undertaking a number of patrols and supporting convoys as required. There were various "alarums and excursions" but no definite contact was made with the enemy. STETTLER had developed numerous defects and a mini-refit was undertaken in H.M.C. Dockyard, Halifax, from 1 to 17 November.

HALIFAX

On 11 November, my First Lieutenant, Lieutenant Maurice Gagnon, R.C.N.V.R.—who had done an excellent job—was appointed to a course ashore and was replaced by Lieutenant Frederick H.

Toller, R.C.N.V.R. Fred too was an excellent Number One, but it was not for some months that I discovered that he was stone deaf in his right ear. Somehow, he had managed to fool the medical people when he entered the Service in September 1939. I had found on occasions that I had to repeat myself when speaking to him, but I thought nothing of it. Then one day, when he was the Officer of the Watch on the bridge, I came from behind him to his right side, saying: "Good morning, Number One!" Not a word from Fred, so I shifted to his left side and as he saw me, he said, "Good morning, sir!" obviously being aware of my presence for the first time. I sent for him later. He admitted that he had been stone deaf in his right ear since birth but had managed to cover it up until now. He feared that I might have him appointed ashore. I assured him that I would do no such thing, nor would I inform anyone else of his disability. I didn't. Having been deaf in one ear all his life it did not really affect his efficiency as Jimmy-the-One—and I could not have asked for a better one.

For the rest of the winter 1944-45, until the end of February, EG-16 worked out of Halifax supporting convoys and undertaking offensive sweeps. On 20 February 1945, the eagerly awaited signal was received that early in March, EG-16 would be despatched overseas to be placed under the operational control of C.-in-C. W.A.

U.K. WATERS

There had been several changes in the composition of the Group during the winter. The frigate H.M.C.S. ANTIGONISH (Lieutenant-Commander Raiffe D. Barrett, R.C.N.R.) had joined as the replacement for the torpedoed MAGOG. The frigate H.M.C.S. KIRKLAND LAKE (Lieutenant-Commander Norman V. Clark, O.B.E., R.D., R.C.N.R.) also had joined, while ORKNEY and LA HULLOISE had left. The Group, now five strong, therefore consisted of: SPRINGHILL, Senior Officer, ANTIGONISH, CHARLOTTETOWN, KIRKLAND LAKE and STETTLER. It was interesting that I was the only R.C.N.V.R. Commanding Officer, the others all being R.C.N.R. KIRKLAND LAKE was second in command by virtue of the seniority of the Commanding Officer. The C.O.s of ANTIGONISH, CHARLOTTETOWN and STETTLER were Lieutenant-Commanders

of the same seniority. Under the "rules," however, an R.C.N.R. officer with the same seniority as an R.C.N.V.R. officer would take precedence over the latter, just as an R.C.N. officer would take precedence over an R.C.N.R. officer with the same seniority. I therefore was the low man on the totem pole. They were most congenial officers, however, and we enjoyed a happy rapport. The Group, with a fine leader in Commander Halliday, worked together most efficiently.

EG-16 departed from Halifax for Londonderry on 7 March 1945. En route, the Group was detailed to support Convoy CU-61. Arrival in Londonderry was at 0800 on 19 March. EG-16 remained in port for the week after its arrival. The weather had been too bad in Halifax to paint, so advantage was taken of the fine weather in Londonderry and ships were spruced up. Minor defects were taken in hand and full use was made of the excellent training facilities ashore.

On departure from Halifax for overseas on 7 March 1945, there had been many changes in my officer complement. As mentioned earlier, Fred Toller had replaced Maurice Gagnon as my First Lieutenant. Only my "pay-bob," James Simpson, and Armand Ouimet remained of the officers when the ship commissioned. The rest of my officers, all R.C.N.V.R., now were: Lieutenant (n) George G. Brown (Navigating Officer), Lieutenant (g) Dean Alan Parrott (Gunnery Officer), Lieutenants Alfred G. Dalton, Frederick Allan Francis, John W.D. Robinson, Sub-Lieutenant Duncan S. Menzies, Lieutenant (E) John Peter Rogers (Engineer Officer) and Electrical Lieutenant (R) Hubert F. Quinn.

On 27, 28 and 29 March, A/S exercises were carried out with a "tame" submarine off the entrance to Lough Foyle. On the evening of 29 March, course was set for the Group Exercise Base, H.M.S. PHILANTE, in Loch Alsh, on the west coast of Scotland, arrival being made at 0800 the following morning. Here the facilities of the base were placed at the disposal of the Group, including a submarine for A/S exercises. PHILANTE's staff was most co-operative and the Group benefitted from the three days of exercises.

EG-16 departed from Loch Alsh on the evening of 2 April, arriving in Moville for refuelling at 1000 the following day, then sailing to give support to convoys in the Irish Sea. During the next few days, all ships obtained a number of ASDIC contacts, mostly on the bottom, all of which were classified as non-sub. SPRINGHILL attacked one bottomed contact, believed to be a U-Boat. The attack was accurate, but the true nature of the target was revealed when heavy fuel oil, lumber and ship's life buoys rose to the surface. The Group was supplied with "Wreck Charts" but they were not always accurate or up-to-date and some wrecks were omitted, their location never having been determined. The Group proceeded to Belfast on 11 April arriving in the early evening. STETTTLER secured alongside the oiler SS SCOTTISH MUSICIAN, shifting to a berth alongside after refuelling.

On the evening of 12 April, I dined with Commander Halliday at the Grand Central Hotel, after which we joined the other Commanding Officers at the Officers' Club where they had dined. All of us then went to the U.S.-operated Embassy Club for a nightcap.

There were many American officers of several Services dancing in the Club. We sat in a corner sipping our nightcaps when the music suddenly stopped, and after a moment it was announced that President Roosevelt had died. We sat in shocked silence but were astonished at the reaction of many of the U.S. officers—some whistled, others "cat-called" and it seemed to us that the announcement was met with general jubilation. Within a moment or so, the music and the dancing continued. We crept away, rather disillusioned, and returned to our ships, mourning the death of a valued partner in the conflict.

EG-16 departed from Belfast the following day and proceeded as ordered to the Portsmouth Command (C.-in-C. NORE) where it was directed that the ships of the Group should be employed covering different sections of the Command, sub-divisions being as follows: SPRINGHILL, Dover; KIRKLAND LAKE and ANTIGONISH, Portsmouth; CHARLOTTETOWN and STETTTLER,

The Downs. This was a flexible arrangement, with ships proceeding to support convoys as required. It was arranged that, if possible, one ship at a time should have overnight leave in Dover.

During 15, 16 and 17 April, various convoys were given support. At 0340 18 April, SPRINGHILL was ordered to join STETTLER by 0445, off the South Falls Buoy, in support of a two-column convoy, TAM-42. The Senior Officer of the close screen in H.M.S. SHEERWATER requested that SPRINGHILL and STETTLER take station about 5000 yards ahead of the starboard and port columns, respectively.

At about 0600, SHEERWATER signalled that the convoy had been attacked. SPRINGHILL and STETTLER raced back at best speed to the area of the torpedoing to find one ship sinking and another damaged but still afloat, although the crew was taking to the boats. The waters being shallow, it was believed that the U-Boat would have bottomed after the attack and the area was thoroughly searched. Numerous ASDIC contacts were obtained—all on the bottom—and swiftly attacked. All, however, proved to be non-sub. SPRINGHILL and STETTLER were joined shortly by H.M.S. RETALICK, the Royal Netherlands Frigate RAENOAL and the Polish escort KARAKOWIAK. A continuing systematic search was undertaken. The three additional ships left in the evening when CHARLOTTETOWN joined. She had been in Dover on her day off.

From past experience, C.-in-C. NORE believed that the U-Boat was still in the area, and the search was continued for the next three days. When his signal "Hunt to exhaustion" was received, I could not resist signalling to the Senior Officer: "To whose exhaustion?"

Searches of this nature were fraught with difficulties. Wrecks abounded in shallow waters and wreck-charts were not reliable. Whenever possible, when an ASDIC contact was gained, with no movement, the echo sounder was used to try to determine the outline of the object. The tides were swift, making this procedure of dubious value except at times of slack water. Many depth-charge and Hedgehog attacks were carried out on bottomed contacts by all ships, but proved to be non-sub. It

was not uncommon for flotsam and jetsam from wrecks to rise to the surface. One bottomed contact was held by SPRINGHILL for several hours before it was definitely determined to be non-sub.

Such searches were common in the Channel and always were continued for a considerable period of time in the hope that even if a U-Boat was not detected on the bottom, it eventually would be forced to surface from exhaustion. U-Boats, however, had been known to slip away along the bottom, undetected. This presumably was the case on this occasion. C.-in-C. NORE ordered the search to be abandoned on the afternoon of 21 April. STETTLER returned to Dover for refuelling and overnight, proceeding again at 0630 on 22 April for an assigned A/S. patrol. STETTLER returned to Dover at 1600 23 April to land local confidential documents, then proceeded to Portsmouth to rendezvous with the rest of the Group for topping-up with fuel and overnight. Shortly after noon on 24 April, EG-16 departed from Portsmouth for Londonderry, arriving on the afternoon of 26 April.

I took a few days "local leave" starting 28 April, spending the first night in Belfast at the Belgravia Hotel to enable me to take a military flight to London the next day. This was a U.S. "leave" flight and took off from the U.S. Valley Airfield not far from Belfast, arriving at the U.S. Bovington Airfield, about 30 miles northwest of London, in the mid-afternoon, with stops at Anglesey and Liverpool. I cannot remember the type of the aircraft, except that it was twin-engined and carried about a dozen passengers. Before take-off, a spirited discussion took place between two U.S.A.F. pilots to determine who should be the pilot and co-pilot. The senior insisted that as a fighter pilot, he had no knowledge of this type of plane at all. The junior finally admitted that he had flown a similar-looking aircraft once, some years before. He was elected as Pilot. The landings in Anglesey and Liverpool were rather hair-raising but in Bovington only moderately uncomfortable. I think that all the passengers were a little relieved to arrive in Bovington in one piece. I took a bus to London.

That evening I had dinner with my Aunt Cecile at the Cumberland Hotel and spent the night at the King George Club at 105 Piccadilly. The following day, I called at the Canadian Naval Mission Overseas in London (CNMO), then visited my Aunt Irma in East Croyden, after which I took

the train to Hove to visit my cousin Phyl Usher (daughter of my paternal Uncle Cuthbert). Phyl's husband Victor, a (wartime) Sergeant-Pilot R.A.F., was then on his way to Burma. He was the son of a retired Church of England clergyman and his wife, with whom Phyl was staying temporarily. I took Phyl to dinner at The Old Ship Hotel in Brighton and spent the night at the Ushers, sleeping on an eiderdown on the floor, covered with several blankets.

1 May was delightfully sunny and warm and after shopping with Phyl, we sat in deck chairs on the beach while her son Michael and Carol (the infant of Phyl's sister-in-law) disported themselves upon the sand. Michael would be two years of age in June, but Phyl already had taught him to swim.

After lunch, I took a bus to Worthing to see my Uncle Walter and Aunt Gertrude. Walter gave me a bundle of documents and other material that he had gathered and produced relating to the family history, enjoining me to continue the work.

This was a rather whirlwind day, for at 1800 I took a bus to Ditchling to see my Cousin Robert (Ball) and his wife Olive, he being the son of my Aunt Cecile. After a bite and a couple of beers at the "local"—which was chock-a-block with Canadian soldiers—we returned to his house and talked until 0230. I spent what was left of the night in "Miss Kitson's Front Room," she being an elderly spinster next door who rented her "Front Room." A few hours later I took the 0800 train for London, had lunch with my Aunt Irma, then boarded the train for Stranraer, a port in Scotland. There being no berth available and having met Lieutenant Diana Spencer, W.R.C.N.S.,* at the station, I sat up all night with her discussing Vancouver and people we knew and getting off at every stop for a "cuppa."

The ferry passage to Larne, across an angry Irish Sea, was far from pleasant. As passengers, the ship had all too many Wrens, WACS and WAFS, all of whom were violently seasick.

* Canada designated officers of the W.R.C.N.S. by ranks such as "Lieutenant" whereas officers of the W.R.N.S. were given ranks such as First Officer.

There was no stateroom available. It was too cold and stormy to stay on deck for more than a few minutes at a time and the stench inside was almost unbearable. I wondered who the unfortunate wretches would be who had to clean up the ship. I arrived in Londonderry mid-afternoon 3 May, back to the security of my ship, more dead than alive.

GIBRALTAR CONVOY

EG-16 was assigned as the escort for KMF-44, a fast convoy bound for Gibraltar on 6 May. There had been some changes in EG-16. SPRINGHILL was due for refit, so Commander Halliday and his staff transferred to CHARLOTTETOWN. SPRINGHILL had returned to Canada, I believe in command of the First Lieutenant. Lieutenant-Commander Barrett in ANTIGONISH had been taken ill and had been flown back to Canada. Acting Lieutenant-Commander J. A. "Hamish" Dunn, R.C.N.V.R., had taken command of the ship. The frigate H.M.C.S. CARL PLACE (Acting Lieutenant-Commander Charles E. Wright, R.C.N.V.R.) had replaced SPRINGHILL.

At 2000 5 May, STETTLER sailed for Belfast Lough to escort the SS HIGHLAND MONARCH to the convoy, joining at 0600 6 May. KMF-44 was a 15-knot convoy of 11 ships. The twelfth, the SS EMPIRE REGENT, had to return to the Clyde with engine defects. In the convoy, the SS SOCTRA was designated as the Rescue Ship. Eight of the ships carried a total of 21,268 passengers. Seven ships were bound for India. The convoy was supported by the ^{RCN} RN Group EG-25 for the first day and a half.

END OF THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

It had been apparent for the past few weeks that the war in Europe was coming to an end, but VE-day on 8 May caught us rather by surprise. We "Spliced the main brace" in accordance with a signal from the Admiralty, but otherwise there was no relaxation in vigilance. It was not known when all U-Boats would surrender or, for that matter, if some might not obey the order to do so.

On the receipt of the news of the German surrender, I tried to analyse my feelings. My notes disclose that I "felt no elation" although I noted that ships could again sail the Atlantic "on their

lawful occasions" without threat. My feelings were reflected in my message to the Ship's Company. We had no intercom whereby I could convey my thoughts so together with a copy of the Admiralty's signals announcing the surrender and to "Splice the main brace," I posted a message on notice boards to the effect that we could take quiet satisfaction for a job well done and that the victory was some vindication for the shipmates and friends that we had lost during the war in all the services. I ended with a reminder that we still had an enemy to deal with in the Pacific.

The Battle of the Atlantic had been won, but the cost had been high. Some notes and statistics on the Battle are given in APPENDIX G.

The passage with KMF-44 was uneventful. The weather was reasonably good and an average speed of 14½ knots was maintained. On the evening of 11 May, having delivered the convoy to other escorts, EG-16 entered Gibraltar Harbour, ships securing alongside an oiler for topping-up and overnight. I called on Commander Halliday in CHARLOTTETOWN. He invited me to dinner and I spent the evening with him and Lieutenant Commander Harding discussing everything from war and peace to the VE-Day riots in Halifax of which we were most disturbed to learn.

The following morning all ships shifted to Jetty 38. STETTLER, still being considered "junior ship" by shore authorities, was given the most distant berth. It was a hot, sunny day. Shortly before noon, Second Officer Peggy Lang, W.R.N.S., called on me to deliver the local orders. Behind a cheery smile, she appeared to be tired and hot. No transportation being available, she had walked from Headquarters to all ships of the Group. I asked her if she would honour me with her presence for lunch aboard, but being aware of the acute shortage of water in Gibraltar, I suggested that I should be happy to vacate my cabin for half an hour if she would like to "freshen up." She accepted gladly and I posted my steward outside my cabin door. In due course, a beshowered and refreshed Peggy Lang enjoyed a fine STETTLER lunch. She was a charming and most intelligent person whom I should always be happy to call a friend.

It was at this time that I made it be known that STETTLER was no longer "junior ship," Wright and Dunn in Carl PLACE and ANTIGONISH being Acting Lieutenant-Commanders. I was delighted with my elevation in the pecking order.

This visit to Gibraltar was the first layover in port for many years that was virtually carefree. The weather, apart from the odd shower, was excellent and it was delightful to don tropicals again. I walked around Gibraltar twice—once with Commander Halliday. I climbed to the top of Gibraltar to see the famous apes and explored a tunnel drilled through The Rock by a Company of Canadian Army Engineers—and bearing many of their names. It was on this occasion that my Chief Shipwright when browsing through the Dockyard found some old mahogany boards behind a pile of discarded lumber. He was told by his opposite number in the Dockyard that it was scrap that had been there for years and that if he wanted, take it! From part of it, he made a fine mahogany trunk for me.

It was strange, too, to see Gibraltar alive with lights after so many years of blacked-out ports. There were a number of official and unofficial parties, amongst the latter, one at the Wrennery for Commanding Officers hosted by Peggy Lang, she being the senior Wren Officer.

The highlight of the visit, however, was the entry into port of two surrendered U-Boats on 13 May. Word of their coming had spread and hundreds of people gathered to witness this historic event. The U-Boats had surrendered to a Royal Naval Sloop who with her Ship's Company lined up smartly, led the U-Boats, line ahead, into Gibraltar Harbour. The White Ensign flew proudly above the Swastika on each U-Boat, whose hands were fallen in on deck. But the most moving part of the event, was the complete silence—so silent that from where I stood, the rumble of the engines of the U-Boats could be heard. There was not a cheer, nor a "boo," nor a whistle, just utter silence. This was as it should have been, a tribute to a worthy enemy at sea or, as Captain S. W. Roskill, Royal Navy, remarks in *The War at Sea* (Vol. III, Part II, p.307) when referring to the general attitude of British seamen towards the U-Boats, "...a grudging admiration for the resolution of U-Boat crews....."

This perhaps was recognized unconsciously by the multi-national populace of Gibraltar as well as by the personnel of the Services in the crowd.

Anticipating an early end to the war, NSHQ the week before VE-Day had directed all ships to report to CNMO, London, the number of reserve officers and ratings who would volunteer to remain in the Navy for service in the Pacific. It should be noted that frigates and below were manned almost exclusively with reserve personnel, ratings of the permanent force (the R.C.N.) being spread thinly in these ships and no R.C.N. officers since the early days of the war. The numbers volunteering for the Pacific in the ships of EG-16—which were released to the Ship's Company—were:

<u>SHIP</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>RATINGS</u>
STETTLER	7	94 (65%)
CARL PLACE	8	77
KIRKLAND LAKE	5	49
CHARLOTTETOWN	4	46
ANTIGONISH	NONE	36

STETTLER's 65% was one of the highest, if not the highest, in the Fleet. CNMO's signal acknowledging STETTLER's signal reporting her figures recognized the ship's fine showing: "STETTLER's 112009Z reflects the feeling of many ships whose spirit is high." Both signals were placed on the notice boards, bearing my comment: "Well done!" NSHQ's signal 171522Z received on 19 May in response to STETTLER's enquiry whether those who had volunteered for the Pacific could remain in the ship ended with: "STETTLER's showing is highly commendable." Much credit was due to Fred Toller, who always had done a very fine job as First Lieutenant.

MORE GIBRALTAR CONVOYS

The pleasant days in Gibraltar soon ended and EG-16 was assigned as the escort for MKF-44, another fast convoy of 13 ships. Three ships in it, SARMIENTO, PEGU and UMTATA

carrying only thirty-eight passengers between them, were designated "Rescue Ships." The rest were liners, with 28,948 passengers, mainly troops.

On 17 May, I attended the Convoy Conference with Commander Halliday, after which the Group sailed to meet MKF-44. The weather was excellent, the passage uneventful and the convoy arrived off Holyhead at 2100 on 21 May, the Clyde Section of seven ships being detached at that time with KIRKLAND LAKE and ANTIGONISH. CARL PLACE proceeded independently to Greenock and CHARLOTTETOWN and STETTLER escorted the Mersey Section of six ships, which proceeded independently in the vicinity of Liverpool.

CHARLOTTETOWN and STETTLER entered Liverpool and berthed on the oiler EMPIRE DOLPHIN at 0400 22 May, shifting before noon to Gladstone Dock. In the afternoon, Commander Halliday and I called at Derby House, the Headquarters of C.-in-C. W.A. In the evening we dined at our old friend the Adelphi Hotel, retreating afterwards to the lounge for coffee and brandy and chatting until nearly midnight before returning to our ships.

The following day, 23 May, CHARLOTTETOWN and STETTLER slipped and proceeded at 2100 to rendezvous with the Mersey Section of KMF-45. This was another fast convoy of 14 ships, headed for such places as India, Malta and Port Said. Junction was made with the Clyde Section escorted by KIRKLAND LAKE, ANTIGONISH and MATANE (Lieutenant Francis J. Jones, R.C.N.V.R.) and course was set for Gibraltar. MATANE had replaced CARL PLACE who had returned to Canada.

Again we were blessed with fine weather and the convoy arrived without incident off Carnero Point at 0600 28 May. The Gibraltar Section entered the harbour while the rest of the ships proceeded independently to their destinations. EG-16 entered at about 0800. By courtesy of Peggy Lang, STETTLER was assigned a fine berth next to CHARLOTTETOWN.

Beautiful weather again prevailed during this layover in Gibraltar. I did much walking around the Rock and also to a beach where I suntanned a few times. The Med was cold! There were

several parties, including the Governor's semi-annual "At Home" on the Glorious First,* to which commanding officers were invited. Peggy Lang was there and after the party I invited her and the Commanding Officer of the destroyer H.M.S. VERITY back to the ship for a nightcap. We sipped coffee and brandy for a couple of hours, discussing the problems of the world, the Service, religion, politics—and parted friends!

One evening I took Fred Toller to dinner at The Rock Hotel. A splendid dinner, including wine and "service": one pound, three shillings and sixpence, for the two of us! After dinner we sat on the balcony with our coffee and brandy, gazing at the stars and the lights of Gibraltar and wondering what the future held.

EG-16 departed from Gibraltar in the afternoon of 4 June to escort MKF-45. In escorting this convoy, EG-16 left some marks for historians of trivia. MKF-45 was the last convoy of any type in the European Theatre of the Second World War and EG-16 was the last active Support or Escort Group of any nation in the Theatre.

MKF-45 consisted of 11 liners carrying home 26,559 passengers, mainly troops. Included was the EMPRESS of SCOTLAND, formerly the EMPRESS of JAPAN—an old acquaintance of pre-war Vancouver days. Solely for historical interest, the ships in MKF-45 were: CAPE TOWN, CARTAGE, CILICIA, EMPRESS OF SCOTLAND, HIGHLAND MONARCH, ORION, ORMONDE, ORONTES, REINA DEL PACIFICO, TAMAROA and TEGELBERG.

At the request of the Flag Officer Commanding Gibraltar, ships of the Group, with the exception of MATANE, embarked a number of Naval and Royal Marine personnel for passage to the United Kingdom. STETTLER took the most, one officer and seventeen ratings; ANTIGONISH carried nine ratings; KIRKLAND LAKE, one Royal Fleet Auxilliary officer and seven ratings; CHARLOTTETOWN, four ratings.

* In the Navy the first day of June is known as the "Glorious First." It was on this day in 1796⁴ that Admiral Lord Howe, commanding the British Channel Fleet, won a resounding victory over the French Battle Fleet under the command of Admiral Louis Thomas Villaret.

The weather was excellent and the convoy made good time. On 7 June the Admiralty, now confident that there was no longer any menace from U-Boats, ordered that all ships should be un-darkened. It was rather an unnerving sight after years of escorting ships that at best could be seen but dimly or located by radar. It was perhaps something akin to finding oneself in *puris naturalibus* in public.

At 1500 8 June in position 49° 00' North, 07° 00' West, the Mersey Section detached and proceeded unescorted, and at 2130 the Clyde Section also proceeded independently. The Group then set course for Londonderry, arriving at 0900 9 June after refuelling at Moville.

The Group remained in Londonderry for six days. It was strange to be in 'Derry with a sense of complete relaxation—no training sessions and few defects to be attended to. Opportunity was taken, however, to paint ship for the return to Canada, although as much leave as possible was given to the Ship's Company. I did much travelling, often cycling alone or with friends, exploring or visiting old haunts such as Buncrana, the Fort Hotel in Greencastle, Packie's Bar, Port Rush and the Giant's Causeway. There were a number of shipboard parties, including one by STETTLER for the Wren Officers from the "Operations Room."

It would not be amiss to pay brief tribute to the "Wrens." The officers and ratings of the Women's Royal Naval Service in the United Kingdom (WRNS) and the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service in Canada (WRCNS) were known colloquially as "Wrens." They occupied a myriad of jobs ashore that otherwise would have been filled by male members of the Service. The ratings were employed everywhere from manning duty boats and driving jeeps to secretarial positions. The officers similarly held a wide range of appointments, including sensitive positions in the Operations and Intelligence spheres. In the United Kingdom, Wrens were in the "front line" being subject to bomb and rocket attacks as well as many of the horrors of war (102 members of the WRNS lost their lives). In Londonderry, the officers in the Operations Room of Commodore (D) stood watches around the clock. Their duties included plotting the position of convoys and their escorts as well as U-Boats

when "intelligence" was able to provide this information. Some of them had husbands or other relatives at sea. They were, in their way, kindred spirits who took a personal interest in every ship. They suffered when disaster struck, such as the triple sinking of ST. CROIX, POLYANTHUS and ITCHEN, and they rejoiced when all ships returned safely to port. The many services of the Wrens, performed so admirably, all too often have been overlooked by historians of the War.

RETURN TO CANADA

EG-16 was the last Canadian Escort or Support Group in Londonderry, or for that matter, overseas in the European Theatre. At 1200 on 16 June, the Group departed for Greenock, STETTLER being the last ship to sail down the Foyle, past the waving, cheering Wrens at the Wrennery. In contrast, a little later STETTLER passed the 50 or so U-Boats secured alongside at Lissahally, their crews sullenly idling away their time.

The Group arrived in Greenock at 2200 where each ship embarked a number of Naval personnel for transport to Canada. The following day, 17 June, Commander Halliday and I took a Jeep with driver, he to visit friends in Glasgow, while I dropped off at Paisley to call on Rosemary (Calloway) Gow, she being an old friend from North Vancouver. Her husband, Captain Niel Gow, was the Master of the SS STOCKPORT—the Rescue Ship in Convoy SC-107. Commander Halliday picked me up on his return from Glasgow and we were back aboard our ships by 1700. An hour later, EG-16 slipped and proceeded and course was set for Halifax, the last ships of the Royal Canadian Navy to leave the waters of the United Kingdom.

EG-16 arrived in Halifax on the afternoon of 24 June on which date the Group was officially disbanded, CHARLOTTETOWN and ARVIDA being the only two ships that had been part of the Group when it was formed nearly a year earlier. It had been a splendid Group with a fine leader in Commander Halliday, whom I first met in Esquimalt in 1939 when he was the Commanding Officer of H.M.C.S. SANS PEUR. He had become a very good friend and we corresponded until his untimely death in 1984.

On arrival in Halifax, we heard firsthand accounts of the VE-Day riots in Halifax—a very sad affair. At that time there had been about 13,000 officers and ratings in the Halifax area, of whom about 9,000 were ashore on leave. On the evening of 8 May, a few naval ratings—the "bad eggs," of which there were always some—began to break into liquor stores. They were joined in minutes by civilians. The disturbance rapidly spread, with thousands of ratings and civilians joining in the fray, looting shops downtown. The shore patrols and the police were helpless. Although matters quietened down as the night wore on, trouble broke out again the following day but was about over by evening. It was estimated that about a million dollars of damage was done. In cases such as this, rightly or wrongly, it always is the person at the top who takes the blame. In this case it was Rear-Admiral Leonard W. Murray, C.B., C.B.E., R.C.N., the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North Atlantic, one of the finest Admirals ever to serve in the Royal Canadian Navy.

STETTLER was one of the Frigates destined to serve in the Pacific Campaign and was to be refitted, including "tropicalization." I was to remain in command and as many as possible of the Ship's Company who had volunteered for Pacific Duty would remain in the ship after returning from special "Pacific Leave."

There were many new hands on board who would remain in the ship on completion of refit. The refit could not begin immediately, so the powers-that-be thought that it would be well to have a "shake-down" cruise. STETTLER therefore departed for Bermuda on 10 July, arriving two days later. She left Bermuda after a two-day stay and arrived in Halifax on 16 July.

On a hot evening two days later, 18 July—Daphne's birthday—she and I were visiting friends in a room in the Lord Nelson Hotel, when the curtains suddenly swept to the horizontal followed a moment later by a massive blast that shook the whole building. It took only a couple of minutes to learn that an explosion had occurred in the magazines in the Naval Armament Depot in Dartmouth, across Halifax Harbour. I managed to find a taxi and raced down to Jetty 5 in the Dockyard where STETTLER was berthed to find that the Officer of the Day, with the Duty Watch,

was just about to cast off. He told me that further explosions were expected and that all ships had been ordered to proceed to anchor in the outer reaches of the Harbour. The Harbour was alive with ships seeking shelter, most of which had aboard only the Officer of the Day and the Duty Watch. It speaks well for their abilities that there was not a single collision.

STETTLER anchored east of George's Island and remained there for the night. There were a number of lesser explosions, but a reported 50,000 depth charges in one magazine miraculously were isolated through the heroic efforts of Captain Owen C.S. Robertson, R.C.N.R., and his staff. Captain Robertson, under the Commodore Superintendent of the Dockyard, was the Commander of the Dockyard and the King's Harbour Master. He was awarded the George Medal for his efforts that night. There were many broken windows in the Dockyard and civilian homes in a wide area around the Naval Armament Depot, but as I recall, there was only one fatality, a civilian patrolman at the Depot. Had the depth charges exploded, the devastation to Halifax most likely would have exceeded that of the explosion of the ammunition ship in 1917.

On 20 July, STETTLER sailed from Halifax to Shelburne, Nova Scotia, where she was to refit, arriving the following day. From the day of her commissioning on 7 May 1944 to her arrival in Shelburne on 21 July 1945, STETTLER had travelled 60,138 (nautical) miles, 31,073 of which had been steamed from 1 January to 24 June 1945.

The NOIC Shelburne was my old friend Captain "Do" Donald. Our paths had crossed many times since our rugger days in the early 1930s. After seeing the refit get under way, I took my special "Pacific leave," taking a train for Vancouver where I arrived about 2 August. Daphne had returned to Vancouver previously. Looking back, I realize that except for two weeks "marriage leave" that I took in 1942, after leaving H.M.C.M.L. Q-054, I had not had any other leave since the beginning of the war in 1939. (I do not count "local leaves" such as a few days in London, or my enforced stay in Iceland in 1943, when ARVIDA was being repaired.)

The weather in Vancouver was beautiful and I would have given much to have had the MOONLIGHT MIST available. Daphne and I, however, went sailing with Don and Madge in THERO, the twenty-seven-foot cutter that Don had been building before the war. They were now Mr. and Mrs. Roger, having been married in 1940. He had enlisted in the Marine Section of the R.C.A.F. When serving in the Queen Charlotte Islands, he had found a fine young spruce from which he made a mast for THERO. (The name THERO was formed from their two names: THEXTON and ROGER.)

V-J day came unexpectedly on 14 August, putting an end to my hopes for service in the Pacific. The following day I received a peremptory telegram to report forthwith to STETTLER. I left Daphne with her mother and caught the night train for Halifax on 16 August. Someone had erred. There had been no need to recall me from leave. The refit of STETTLER had been stopped and it was necessary for her to be made seaworthy again so that she could sail to Sydney for destoring. It was not until 13 September, however, that she was fit for sea. I simply kicked my heels around Shelburne—and caught up on my reading. Fortunately, STETTLER was still habitable.

On 13 September, STETTLER sailed for Halifax with a skeleton crew, arriving the next day. There were many ships being destored in Sydney and it was over a month before STETTLER's turn came—sailing for Sydney on 17 October. On completion of destoring on 1 November, STETTLER proceeded to Shelburne where she was to be "winterized" (moth-balled), arriving the following day. The passage, however, was not entirely uneventful. STETTLER had no radar or ASDIC, but had retained her echo-sounder. As the southern part of Nova Scotia was neared, thick fog was encountered. I had to resort to the old practice employed by coastal steamers on the West Coast in the days before radar, that is, to sound a short blast on the steam whistle and wait for the echo to determine the distance from land.

Immediately upon arrival in Shelburne I turned over command to the First Lieutenant, as I had received a signal appointing me to the Depot Ship H.M.C.S. PROVIDER in Halifax as of 4

November. It was a sad parting to a fine ship and a host of memories. STETTLER was paid-off a week later, 9 November.

* * *

REMINISCENCES

TABLE of CONTENTS

PART V THE SECOND WORLD WAR

SECTION 1 1939 - April 1941

Active Service	66
Esquimalt	67
Prince Rupert	70
Return to Esquimalt	77
Halifax	78

SECTION 2 April 1941 - September 1942

First Lieutenant H.M.C.S. ARVIDA	82
Long "N"	92
H.M.C.M.L. Q-060	94
Return to ARVIDA	96
Loss of H.M.C.S. OTTAWA	99

SECTION 3 September 1942 - May 1943

ARVIDA in Command	102
Convoy SC-101	103
Convoy ON-137 and SS BURY	103
Convoy SC-107	107
Lunenburg Refit	116
Convoy HX-233	119

SECTION 4 May 1943 - March 1944

Escort Group C-5	123
Convoys ON-182 and HX-240	124
An Unexpected Visit to Iceland	126
Routine Convoys	129
The "GNAT"	133
More Routine Convoys	134
Refit in Curtis Bay	139
Corvette Memories	141
Seaworthiness	141
Conditions Below Decks	142
Disintegration of a Merchant Ship	143
Heroism	144
Petty Officer Stefan Helgason	144
Ordinary Seaman Evans	144
"The Press"	145

PART V - SECTION 2

April 1941 - September 1942

*FIRST LIEUTENANT H.M.C.S. ARVIDA
LONG "N" - H.M.C.M.L. Q-054
RETURN TO ARVIDA
LOSS OF H.M.C.S. OTTAWA*

FIRST LIEUTENANT H.M.C.S. ARVIDA

February and March 1941 became more and more frustrating as I remained a Divisional Officer in STADACONA. I continued to pester those in authority to get me to sea, but it was not until 12 April that I was appointed as the Executive Officer (or First Lieutenant)* of a corvette then building in the Morton Engineering and Drydock Company in Quebec City. This was H.M.C.S. ARVIDA—Pennant Number K-113.

By 14 April, I was ensconced in a fine room in the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. As part of its "war effort" the Hotel was providing first-class accommodation to officers at the (much appreciated!) rate of \$2 per day!

The early "Flower Class" corvettes, of which ARVIDA was one, had a displacement of 950 long tons. The overall length was 205 feet with a beam of 33 feet. They drew at full load 8-feet 3-inches forward and 13-feet 8-inches aft. They were single-screw with Scotch boilers and a reciprocating engine, giving a full speed of 16.5 knots. The main armament was a 4-inch low-angle gun forward, and later a Pom-Pom aft and two machine guns on the bridge. Two depth-charge throwers were fitted on either side of the main deck and with depth-charge rails aft. The ship was

* In small ships, the second in command is designated at the "Executive Officer" or the "First Lieutenant," the terms being used interchangeably. In large ships and establishments there is an Executive Officer and below him the First Lieutenant.

equipped with Model 123A ASDIC.* This was a somewhat rudimentary hand-operated set, the range of which theoretically was 2000 yards but normally was much less in the waters of the North Atlantic.

The Commanding Officer of ARVIDA was Lieutenant Alastair Ian MacKay, R.C.N.R., late of the "Lady Boats," a shipping line that operated between ports on the east coast of Canada and the West Indies. Shortly after my arrival, the Navigating Officer joined—Mate Maurice John Lothian Macdonald, R.C.N.R.—followed in a few days by Sub-Lieutenant Robert P. Jackson, R.C.N.V.R. A number of key ratings also had been drafted to the ship, including the Coxswain and C.E.R.A. de Coste. Small ships did not warrant an Engineer Officer, a C.E.R.A. (Chief Engine Room Artificer) serving as such.

The ship was nearing completion, but I had much difficulty discussing matters with the workmen, most of whom had a scant knowledge of English—little better than my French. I was far from being an expert on rivetting, but when I observed one rivet being driven into the hull when it was red hot and the next coal black, I queried a foreman who knew a little English. He shrugged his shoulders, then spreading his hands, exclaimed: "She not make zee differ-ence, zee ship, she weell be sunk in seex months anyway!" A cheerful thought.

"Shipbuilder's" trials were started on 18 April and continued intermittently into May. There was still much to be done, but "Acceptance Trials" were conducted as scheduled on 13 May. They were anything but acceptable and were termed "Provisional Acceptance Trials" pending the completion of many unsatisfactory items. The great day eventually arrived and ARVIDA was commissioned on 22 May 1941, the White Ensign being hoisted at 0930.

There was much to be done before ARVIDA could be considered to be "in all respects ready for sea" let alone "to meet the enemy." Storing and provisioning was a tedious job and even after commissioning, many items still had to be completed or rectified by the builder. Newly arrived

* ASDIC, later referred to as SONAR, acquired its name from the initials of the "Allied Submarine Detection Investigation Committee." This was a British-French Committee which produced the first rudimentary ASDIC set in 1920. It was tested in an RN ship and proved highly successful.

members of the Ship's Company had to be familiarized with the ship—many of them going to sea for the first time. On 5 June, ARVIDA sailed for Halifax.

Corvettes were named after Canadian towns, ARVIDA after the town of Arvida on the Saguenay River in Quebec. Towns after which the ships were named "adopted" such ships and ARVIDA received a large quantity of dark blue hand-knitted jerseys, scarves, socks, mitts, etc., from the town of Arvida—a very welcome supplement to "issue" clothing. Arvida was a "company town" of the Aluminum Company of Canada, named after its President, ARthur VIning DAvis, hence the name is pronounced AR-VY-DA and not AR-VEE-DA.

Our stay in Halifax included a "working-up" period at sea and training ashore for officers and ratings. During this time, the ship was honoured by a visit from the Governor General—the Earl of Athlone—and his wife, Princess Alice, the latter having christened the ship. At their request they were given a complete tour of the ship, Princess Alice in particular taking great interest in the living and messing arrangements for the Ship's Company.

On completion of work-ups in Halifax, ARVIDA proceeded to Sydney, Nova Scotia, to join the newly formed Sydney Force. Sydney at that time was designated as the summer Convoy Sub-Assembly Port for trans-Atlantic convoys, Halifax being the main Assembly Port. Sydney could not be used in winter as it would be frozen. July and August were spent escorting convoys from Sydney through the Strait of Belle Isle where they were turned over to a Group from the Newfoundland Escort Force (NEF).

It was not until the end of August that it was learnt that ARVIDA was to be transferred to the Newfoundland Escort Force after a period of training at the working-up base, H.M.S. WESTERN ISLES, in Tobermory, on the west coast of Scotland. ARVIDA was to be part of an ad hoc Group to escort Convoy SC-43 through the Strait of Belle Isle and to continue with it to the United Kingdom, the Group being augmented by ships from the NEF.

On 4 September, the day before leaving Sydney, without the knowledge of the Captain who was ashore for the day, I decided to have the ship painted with camouflage of my own design, using colours of light and dark grey and "baby blue." The Ship's Company turned to with a will and the job was completed by nightfall. ARVIDA was the first of H.M.C. ships to use camouflage. The Captain observed it as he came aboard the next morning at the same time as did the NOIC, the latter sending a signal asking in effect "what the hell?" The Captain, after asking me a similar question, entered into the spirit of the occasion and, knowing that ARVIDA would not be returning to Sydney, signalled some ambiguous reply as we slipped and proceeded. Curiously enough, we heard no more about it and by the time we entered St. John's on return from Scotland it appeared that some form of camouflage was acceptable unofficially although it was several months before being authorized.

At this point, it would be appropriate to comment on convoy organization. The Naval Control of Shipping Organization (NCSO) was responsible for the routeing of all allied merchant ships, whether in convoy or proceeding independently, and for the formation of convoys. In a convoy, normally there would be four to six ships in a column, line ahead, about three cables apart. Columns would be up to five cables apart. Thus, a convoy of 40 ships could have a front of about 4 to 4½ miles with a depth of a mile to a mile-and-a-half. One ship in each convoy would carry a "Convoy Commodore," usually a retired Admiral in the Royal Navy, given the temporary rank of "Commodore R.N.R." The master of another ship usually was designated as the "Vice-Commodore." A very good description of the responsibilities of Convoy Commodores is given in Gilbert Tucker's *The Naval Service of Canada*, Vol. II. This is reproduced in APPENDIX E.

Ships in a convoy were assigned "Pennant Numbers" for purposes of identification and for positioning in the convoy. For example, the first ship in the first column would be Pt. 11; the second ship would be Pt. 12. The first ship in the second column would be Pt. 21; the second ship in that column would be Pt. 22 and so forth.

SC-43 was a convoy of about 60 ships, sailing from Sydney on 5 September. The other Sydney escorts were the corvettes H.M.C. Ships BARRIE, DAUPHIN and PRESCOTT. On leaving the Strait of Belle Isle, the escort was augmented by a four-stacker, H.M.S. READING, the Senior Officer (S.O.) and a Royal Navy corvette.

Convoy SC-42, which had preceded SC-43, screened by the RCN Escort Group 24 (Lieutenant-Commander James Calcutt Hibbard, R.C.N., S.O., in the destroyer H.M.C.S. SKEENA) had been badly mauled by U-Boats, although the Group had been credited with one "kill." We therefore expected some excitement, but as it turned out it was an uneventful passage in fine weather. There were several reports of possible U-Boats in the area through which the convoy was scheduled to pass, but possibly evasive alterations of course may have frustrated the enemy. On 16 September, when several hundred miles from Scotland, the escort was augmented by the destroyers H.M. Ships KEPPEL, SABRE and VENGEANCE. Shortly after daybreak on 20 September the screening duties were assumed by a Royal Navy local Escort Group and ARVIDA proceeded to Greenock. Here many supplies were obtained that had not been available in Sydney, including three additional Carley Floats and six Smoke Floats.

My memory of Greenock on that occasion was the sight of bombed-out buildings, a nightly blackout with streets of darkness studded by the glow of a myriad of cigarettes, jostling crowds, laughter and giggles, drunks bellowing in the darkness and no traffic except the odd bus with dimmed lights.

On the evening of 22 September, ARVIDA departed from Greenock arriving the following morning in Tobermory. A fortnight's intensive training followed, under the guidance of Commodore Gilbert "Monkey" Stephenson, R.N.R., and his staff in H.M.S. WESTERN ISLES. The Commodore was short of stature and this, coupled with his facial resemblance to that of a bewhiskered monkey depicted on containers of a popular cleaning powder—"Monkey Brand"—resulted in this soubriquet. He had retired a few years before the war as a Vice-Admiral, Royal Navy, but had been called-out

specifically for the appointment he now held. He was ideal for the job—a person of boundless energy and imagination. On the surface he was a martinet of the first order who did not "suffer fools gladly," but underneath this harsh exterior there was a keen understanding of the frailties of human nature. He visited all ships upon their arrival and set the pace there and then. As he went aboard one ship, he threw his cap on the deck in front of several ratings, shouting: "That's a live bomb! What are you going to do?" A bright young lad leapt forward and kicked it overboard, whereupon the Commodore, pointing at his cap floating in the water, roared: "That's a man overboard! Jump in and save him!" He did!

Ships under training were at anchor and day and night had to be prepared to deal with any "emergency" conjured up by the Training Staff. The training programme included A/S exercises with a "tame" submarine, gunnery shoots and a multitude of on-board evolutions. The only let-up would be if a "make and mend"* was granted. On one such afternoon a target shoot with .303 Lee Enfield rifles was arranged between 12-man teams from ARVIDA and the corvette H.M.C.S. MOOSE JAW (Lieutenant Frederick E. Grubb, R.C.N.). ARVIDA had too many experienced "shots" in her Ship's Company and overwhelmed MOOSE JAW 292 to 107. Freddie Grubb and I were the only officers on the teams and I had to admit a personal defeat at the hands of Freddie, 44 to 43 out of 50.

The Ship's Company did a splendid job during these two weeks, and on completion were rewarded by high praise from the Commodore for their efforts. ARVIDA was the 236th. ship to pass through his hands.

ARVIDA departed from Tobermory on 8 October, arriving in Greenock the following day for topping up. At 0145 on 10 October ARVIDA slipped and proceeded to join another ad hoc Escort Group to screen a westbound convoy, arriving without incident in St. John's on 26 October.

* A "make and mend" was an afternoon "off" for all hands except the Duty Watch.

Unfortunately, my notes are sparse for the period 26 October to 20 November, but it appears that ARVIDA sailed from St. John's on 5 November returning on 20 November—for what purpose is not clear.

As Sydney Harbour froze over in the winter, it could not be used as a sub-assembly port and eastbound convoys were assembled in Halifax and escorted by a Group from the Western Local Escort Force (WLEF) to the West Ocean Meeting Point (WESTOMP) not far from St. John's. Here the escorting duties were assumed by a Group from the NEF to the Mid Ocean Meeting Point (MOMP), roughly south of Iceland. At MOMP a Royal Navy Group took over and the RCN Group proceeded to Iceland for a layover. For westbound convoys, the procedure was reversed, the RCN Group from Iceland taking over the escorting duties from a Royal Navy Group at MOMP. The positions of WESTOMP and MOMP necessarily varied with each convoy.

ARVIDA now was a member of the NEF Escort Group 24.1.1. consisting of the destroyer H.M.C.S. OTTAWA (Commander "Do" Donald, R.C.N., S.O.), the corvettes H.M.C. Ships ARVIDA, FENNEL, SHERBROOKE and TRAIL, and H.M. Ships POLYANTHUS and PRIMROSE.

EG 24.1.1 departed from St. John's on 29 November 1941, to rendezvous at WESTOMP with SC-57, a convoy of 36 ships. A gale was blowing and visibility was poor. The convoy had been delayed by the storm and when sighted on the morning of 1 December was badly scattered. It was found that ARVIDA was in company with FENNEL, POLYANTHUS, PRIMROSE, and TRAIL, with about 24 ships of the convoy in pretty loose formation. A full gale was blowing with blizzard conditions. The temperature was 10° to 15° (F) and escorts and merchantmen alike were becoming badly iced up. The following day the gale moderated and the sky was clear for the first time since leaving St. John's. It was not until 4 December, however, that our section was joined by the rest of the convoy, 12 ships escorted by OTTAWA and SHERBROOKE. The temperature was now in the low 40s and ships thankfully were again free of ice. Icing sometimes could be severe, covering everything with perhaps four or more inches of solid ice. Not only were guns and depth-charge

throwers rendered inoperable but it added many tons of topweight not included in the calculations when a ship was designed, thereby raising the centre of gravity to a dangerous degree.

The next few days were uneventful, with no reported U-Boat activity in our area, but an electrifying signal was received. I was just coming off watch on 7 December when a messenger rushed to the bridge clutching a "MOST IMMEDIATE" signal from the Admiralty: "COMMENCE HOSTILITIES WITH JAPAN REPEAT JAPAN." News of the disaster at Pearl Harbour was received later.

On 9 December, the convoy was turned over to an RN Escort Group at MOMP. SHERBROOKE, POLYANTHUS and ARVIDA were detailed to escort the Iceland Section of four ships while the rest of the Group proceeded ahead to Iceland. FENNEL was no longer with the Group having been ordered to proceed independently to Tobermory for training. It was later learnt that SC-57 after leaving MOMP had encountered a succession of gales, snowstorms and U-Boats. Before the convoy reached the United Kingdom three ships had been torpedoed and sunk: KURDISTAN, KIRKWOOD and STAR OF LUXOR.

The following day, 10 December, a signal was received that the battleship H.M.S. PRINCE OF WALES and the battle cruiser H.M.S. REPULSE had been sunk by Japanese aircraft. We found it hard to believe.

SHERBROOKE, POLYANTHUS and ARVIDA arrived in darkness in the enormous harbour of Qvalfjordur, Iceland, in the late afternoon of 11 November. ARVIDA secured alongside PRIMROSE and H.M.C.S. ROSTHERN who were secured to H.M.S. HECLA, a repair ship which was at anchor. In addition to the other members of our Group, the corvettes H.M.C. Ships BADDECK and BATTLEFORD were anchored nearby. There were many other ships in Qvalfjordur, the Royal Navy being represented by the battleship H.M.S. RODNEY (or it might have been her sister ship NELSON), two County Class cruisers and a number of destroyers. Ships of the U.S. Navy included several destroyers and the depot ship VULCAN.

At that time of the year the sun made only a brief appearance above the horizon and Iceland appeared to be a bleak, windswept country devoid of trees. During the dark hours there were some spectacular displays of the aurora borealis.

Gales came up at short notice and on 13 December one struck with only brief warning. HECLA ran out hurricane hawsers to ships alongside. From a virtual calm at 1500, the wind was blowing at about 45 to 50 knots in less than an hour and reached a velocity of 60 to 65 knots a little later. ARVIDA suffered no damage although a wire aft parted followed by one forward. Apart from that gale, the weather was moderate while we were there, temperatures ranging from 30° to 45° (F) with a little rain and an occasional snow flurry. I was given the opportunity to go aboard the U.S.S. KEARNEY (a member of Roosevelt's "neutrality patrol") which had been torpedoed before "Pearl Harbour." She had reached port under her own power—a splendid piece of seamanship in view of the damage she had suffered. Fortunately, the weather had been kind as there is little doubt that otherwise she would have broken in two. KEARNEY lost only 11 men, 7 below and 4 up top.

Some members of ARVIDA's Ship's Company were able to go ashore to Reykjavik with Petty Officer Helgason as guide. Helgason was an Icelander, a cousin of Lieutenant Bent Gestur Sivertz, R.C.N.R., a former Vancouver Supplementary Reserve Officer. None of ARVIDA's officers went ashore—there was too much work to do. HECLA was most helpful in assisting in the repair of a number of defects which invariably arose.

On 16 December the Group—with ROSTHERN in place of FENNEL—sailed to escort the Iceland section of Convoy ON-46 out of Reykjavik to MOMP. The weather rapidly deteriorated and a gale of about 45 to 50 knots was blowing from the southward by midnight 17 December. Our Iceland section was forced to heave-to. The gale continued with unabated fury for the next three days, with our section remaining hove-to. On 21 December, a signal was received to disperse the Icelandic section, the ships to return to Reykjavik independently and the Escort Group to return to St. John's.

OTTAWA with her better speed proceeded ahead. I never heard what happened to the main body of ON-46 that we were supposed to meet at MOMP.

As usual in weather such as we had just encountered, water managed to find its way below decks—ARVIDA's short fo'c's'le being the culprit. The messdecks were always awash in heavy weather and the officers' quarters suffered little less—frequently I had a couple of inches swishing around in my cabin.

OTTAWA was not in good shape. She had been pooped and her quarters aft were unusable. In addition she had suffered some structural damage. Commander Donald supposed that the corvettes would be in worse condition and as OTTAWA left he sent a signal to all corvettes that he would arrange for them to be taken in hand immediately they arrived and would ensure that all ships received proper Christmas fare. It transpired that apart from the usual discomfort below decks, none of the corvettes had suffered more than superficial damage from the storm.

The weather moderated and the corvettes made good time, arriving in St. John's on Christmas Eve. The Main Brace was spliced on Christmas day, after which the Chief and Petty Officers were invited to the Wardroom. The cooks produced an excellent Christmas dinner for all hands. In the mid-afternoon I called on Commander Donald in OTTAWA and did not leave until nearly midnight. During the evening he and I slipped across to the four-stacker H.M.C.S. NIAGARA alongside to call on the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Thomas "Two-Gun" Ryan, O.B.E., R.C.N.R.—one of the "characters" in the Navy at that time.

Orders were received for ARVIDA to proceed to Halifax for refit and we departed from St. John's on 28 December. The Captain allowed me to take the ship out of harbour, while he remained in his cabin—brave man! The Ship's Company fell-in for leaving harbour wearing life jackets—bless them! While he was ashore the previous day, the Captain had permitted me to take ARVIDA from alongside a tanker to berth on POLYANTHUS at Bowering's Wharf. The Captain had allowed me to handle the ship many times before but, until now, always under his watchful eyes.

LONG "N"

We arrived in Halifax on 30 December 1941, securing to Jetty 5. I was delighted to learn that I had been selected for the Long Navigation course (Long "N") at H.M.C.S. KINGS starting on 16 January 1942, for which the Captain had recommended me. It was at this time too that my good friend Lieutenant Carle Sandey, R.C.N.V.R., was selected to take a Long Signals Course at H.M.C.S. ST. HYACINTHE.

Halifax weather that January was at its worst, with gales, rain, fog, snow, hard frosts, thaws and even some sub-zero temperatures with a 10° (F) below zero on 14 January. At the end of the month, to cap it off, there was a blizzard, leaving six-foot drifts.

Robin Johnston, my old compatriot from Vancouver rugby and cricket days, arrived with his wife, Mary, on 10 January. He was a Sub-Lieutenant R.C.N.V.R. and had been appointed to KINGS for courses. He was permitted to "live out" and had secured accommodation in the Commodore Apartments.

On 16 January, I was billeted in KINGS sharing Cabin 44, Middle Bay, with Lieutenant William "Bill" Evans R.C.N.V.R., later to command the corvette H.M.C.S. KITCHENER made famous in the film *K-225*. The Long "N" had a number of old friends on it, all Lieutenants R.C.N.V.R. with seetime.

KINGS was the former Kings College of Dalhousie University which had been taken over by the Navy as an Officers' Training Establishment. The Commanding Officer was Commander Adrian B. Hope, R.C.N., an officer whom I had never held in high esteem, and no doubt by the end of the course, vice versa. The First Lieutenant of KINGS was Lieutenant Louis de la Chesnaye Audette, R.C.N.V.R., a Gunnery Officer. Acting Lieutenant-Commander Bent Gestur Sivertz, R.C.N.R., was the chief instructor for the Long "N"—and a very good one, as was Lieutenant James Nolan, R.C.N.R.

The course ended on 11 April 1942, but unexpectedly, and to my disgust, a seven-day signals course was tacked on by Commander Hope who was a signals specialist. I did not distinguish myself on that course. I did more than reasonably well, however, on the Long "N", having an average of 87 percent on the weekly tests and 97 percent on the final examinations. I believe, however, that I had incurred the displeasure of Commander Hope, for on 17 April a signal was received from NSHQ appointing me in command of a Fairmile Motor Launch, H.M.C.M.L. Q-054, on 19 April. I had hoped for something better. Lieutenant James Swinburne "Foghorn" Davis, R.C.N.V.R., shared my disappointment, he too being appointed in command of a Fairmile, Q-060.

To digress briefly at this point, the Admiralty and NSHQ recognized only the "Marcq St. Hilaire" method of navigation and this therefore was taught at the Long "N". It is a most precise method, giving positions of great accuracy provided that all conditions are right. There were, however, a number of "short methods" then in use for air and surface navigation—but not by the Navy. Positions obtained by the short methods theoretically are not as accurate as those obtained using Marcq St. Hilaire—accuracy in this case being a few hundred feet. It takes far less time to calculate a position using a short method than when using Marcq St. Hilaire. Moreover, in most short methods—Gingrich for one—one small compact book contains all the necessary tables, whereas when Marcq St. Hilaire is used, several volumes have to be consulted.

For ideal accuracy, sights taken of celestial bodies require that the observer should be on a steady platform and at an accurate known height above the sea level. A large ship such as a battleship or an aircraft carrier—or even a cruiser—on many occasions can provide these requirements. In smaller ships such as destroyers and below, this rarely is the case and heights may vary constantly as the ship rises and falls with the seas. Moreover, it is most difficult to obtain a truly accurate sight when standing on a deck that, to say the least, often is unsteady.

When I returned to sea after completing the Long "N" I opted for a short method. I managed to obtain an old copy of a book *Aerial and Marine Navigation Tables* compiled by John E.

Gingrich in 1931—which is still in my possession. When Gingrich produced these tables he was a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. In 1951, he was a Rear Admiral serving in Hawaii, the Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Admiral A. W. Radford, U.S.N. On my way to Korean waters in that year, when in command of H.M.C.S. ATHABASKAN, I made my official call on the C.-in-C., but was received by the Chief of Staff instead. When returning my call, he kindly autographed my "Gingrich Tables." Just before ATHABASKAN returned from the Korean Campaign in 1952, Gingrich was appointed as "CTF 95" (Commander, Task Force 95—in overall command of all United Nations naval forces employed in that Campaign).

I used the Gingrich method throughout my career. Even when I had a Navigating Officer, I used to keep my hand in, more or less as a hobby. In my corvette days when I had no Navigating Officer, under some conditions I was happy if I obtained a "cocked hat"* a mile across. Under ideal conditions, a cocked hat of a few hundred yards was common.

H.M.C.M.L. Q-054

On 19 April 1941 I assumed command of Q-054, then alongside in Dartmouth, across Halifax Harbour. Fairmiles were 112 feet in length with a beam of 17-feet, 10-inches. They were fitted with twin 650-h.p. gasoline engines which could give the craft a top speed of twenty knots. Their armament consisted of an antiquated 3-pounder gun and two .50 calibre machine guns. They had a rudimentary and not particularly effective ASDIC set that "beeped" dead ahead, so that when a contact was gained, the ship had to be trained instead of the set. Depth-charge rails were fitted aft.

My First Lieutenant, Sub-Lieutenant John M. Lewis, R.C.N.V.R., late of H.M.C.S. OTTAWA, joined the day I assumed command, but my other two officers, Sub-Lieutenants R.C.N.V.R. Robert M. Kincade and Sherwood B. Marshall, did not join until the end of the month. Q-054 had been in refit and still had a number of defects to be taken in hand, on completion of which

* A "cocked hat" is the area on the chart or a facsimile thereof produced by the intersection of sight lines from three or more celestial bodies. The ship's position is somewhere inside the cocked hat.

we had a work-up period followed by local patrols. On 26 May Q-054 was assigned to the Base in Sydney, Nova Scotia—H.M.C.S. PROTECTOR.

Prior to Q-054 leaving Halifax, an incident occurred that would have been amusing had it not been evidence of the sorry state of the armament fitted in Fairmiles. As the senior Commanding Officer of Fairmiles in Halifax, I had the honour of taking the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Percy Walker Nelles, R.C.N., and staff in Q-054 to St. Margaret's Bay for him to judge personally the effectiveness of Fairmiles. I had found that the so-called high-explosive shells for the three-pounder (circa 1891?) were anything but. On arrival in St. Margaret's Bay, I requested permission to show how our main armament performed. There was a sizable rock showing above the water in the bay that I wished to use as a target. I closed within about fifty yards, which the Admiral questioned might be a little close. "Oh! No, sir!" I assured him, "not for this demonstration." The three-pounder was fired. Splat! No explosion. To confirm that this did not happen to be a single "dud," three more rounds were fired. Splat! Splat! Splat! To say that the Admiral was shocked is to put it mildly—his staff were busy writing notes for the next few minutes. I never heard what action was taken for I did not remain in Fairmiles long enough to find out.

At Sydney, we were deployed with other Fairmiles outside the harbour on monotonous low-speed ASDIC patrols—four days out, two days in. This was hard on the engines and it was necessary to give them bursts of full speed to keep them in good condition. Apart from this requirement, to break the boredom I found it "expedient" on occasions to pursue an ASDIC contact several miles to sea, then streak back to my patrol position at full speed. On more than one occasion, I was asked by the Staff Officer Operations in the base (Lieutenant Commander John H. McConnell, R.C.N.V.R.) to explain why I had used an excessive amount of fuel—far greater than other Fairmiles. He would listen to my tongue-in-cheek explanation, nod sympathetically, and as I left would say: "Watch it!"

The weather was generally excellent and I looked upon my Fairmile days as a few weeks of yachting at Government expense. I had applied for leave, as Daphne and I had set 9 July 1942 as our wedding day. On 9 June I received a signal appointing Lieutenant William C. "Bill" Rigney, R.C.N.V.R., to relieve me in command on 1 July and appointing me to STADACONA for "leave and disposal." I had no idea what "disposal" might be, but cherished the hope that it might be a seagoing appointment other than a Fairmile and perhaps in command of a corvette.

On 27 June the Coxswain, on behalf of the Ship's Company, presented me with a decanter set for "Scotch" and "Rye" with a small plate on top bearing the R.C.N.V.R. Badge and "H.M.C.M.L. Q-054" as a gift for my forthcoming wedding. They had been a splendid team and it was one of those moments when it was most difficult to maintain a steady voice. That evening, the Chief ERA gave me an ash tray that he had made, with three (de-powdered!) .50" shells as the base.

I turned over command of Q-054 to Bill Rigney on 29 June, up-dated from 1 July, and took the train for Halifax. Robin and Mary Johnston had a spare room in their apartment at the Commodore in Halifax and I stayed with them temporarily.

On 9 July 1942, Daphne Margaret Woodford Edwards and I were married at All Saints Cathedral (Church of England) in Halifax. The Reverend Charles de Wolfe White—a Naval Chaplain—officiated. The only persons present were Carle and Claire Sandey—he my best man—and Robin and Mary Johnston, Robin giving Daphne away. We spent our honeymoon at Baddeck, in the Bras d'or Lakes.

RETURN TO ARVIDA

Shortly after our return to Halifax on 22 July I received a signal appointing me to ARVIDA as the First Lieutenant, to date 5 August. Apparently it was not realized that I had served in the same capacity in the same ship previously. I was disappointed as I had hoped for a command, but as it will be seen it worked out very well. Until it was time for me to travel to Newfoundland to join ARVIDA I was employed for watchkeeping duties in STADACONA.

ARVIDA was still operating out of St. John's, now a member of the Mid-Ocean Group C-4 which consisted of the four-stacker H.M.C.S. ST. CROIX (Lieutenant-Commander A. H. Dobson, R.C.N.R., S.O.); the destroyer OTTAWA (now in command of Lieutenant-Commander C.A. Rutherford, R.C.N.); the corvettes H.M.C.S. AMHERST (Lieutenant H.G. Denyer, R.C.N.R., who had been the C.O. of H.M.C.S. STANPOINT in Prince Rupert in 1939-40); SHERBROOKE: ARVIDA and H.M.S. CELANDINE.

Lieutenant MacKay was still in Command of ARVIDA. Other officers were Sub-Lieutenants R.C.N.V.R. John A.G. Clarke, Richard C. Pearce and Douglas S. Trenholm. In addition, ARVIDA was blessed to have Boatswain (A/S) L.T. Bell, R.N. (a Warrant Officer), appointed to the ship. He was a fine officer and invaluable in A/S work. Mate Macdonald had left the ship a short while before and the Captain was now doing his own navigating. He was emphatic that he did not wish me to undertake the job, but wanted me to put all my energy into being the First Lieutenant.

I was delighted to find that in the Ship's Company there were still a number of the old hands who had been in the ship before I left, including Chief Engine Room Artificer (CERA) de Coste, who had been with the ship when building. I was disappointed however to find that ARVIDA was still equipped with Type 123A ASDIC and the nearly useless SW1C radar.

Mid-Ocean Escort Groups now were taking eastbound convoys from WESTOMP to the waters of the United Kingdom where they were turned over to a local RN Escort Group. Westbound convoys similarly were being escorted by Mid Ocean Groups from U.K. waters to WESTOMP.

C-4 departed from St. John's on 16 August to escort the eastbound Convoy SC-96. It was an uneventful passage in reasonably good weather and the Group arrived in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, on 26 August. Layovers in port were always busy, preparing the ship for sea again and making use of the shore training facilities, emphasis always being placed on A/S training. Londonderry also was an excellent place to have defects taken in hand.

On 5 September, C-4 departed from Londonderry to escort the westbound convoy ON-127, taking over these duties at about noon. Fine weather prevailed and the convoy made good time and for the first five days there was no sign of the enemy. On 10 September, however, on a fine clear afternoon at about 30° West three ships were torpedoed almost simultaneously—Pennants 12, 22 and 32. ARVIDA, ahead of the convoy, obtained a good ASDIC contact and attacked with a pattern of 10 depth charges. Contact was not regained before the position was over-run by the convoy. ARVIDA was ordered to resume her station while OTTAWA and SHERBROOKE dropped astern in an attempt to keep down the suspected U-Boat. At 1812 a tanker, Pt. 43, was torpedoed. ST. CROIX and CELANDINE were now astern and OTTAWA and SHERBROOKE had not yet returned to their stations, leaving only ARVIDA and AMHERST screening ahead until joined about an hour later by CELANDINE. At about 2100, two more torpedoings occurred. The whole convoy responded by firing "Snowflakes"—bright, burning lights, suspended by parachutes. Combined with starshell from the escorts, the scene was light as day, the hope being that surfaced U-Boats would be detected or forced to dive. At about midnight, ST. CROIX reported gaining a radar contact of a U-Boat which she forced to dive and attacked with unknown results. ARVIDA's SW1C radar was broken down but at about the same time that ST. CROIX was attacking her U-Boat, ARVIDA sighted one a few hundred yards ahead. As ARVIDA closed, it submerged and a 10-charge pattern of depth charges was fired. I can still see the outline of the U-Boat in the phosphorescent water on the port side, below the surface, as it passed under the bow of ARVIDA from right to left. The charges fired from the port throwers perhaps were a second late, but ARVIDA later was credited with "possible damage to a U-Boat." No ASDIC contact was gained and ARVIDA returned to her station. The rest of the night passed peacefully.

All was quiet for the first few daylight hours of the following day, 11 September. During the afternoon, however, in fine weather, another ship was torpedoed—the HINDANGER. By early evening, OTTAWA, CELANDINE and ARVIDA were the sole escorts screening the convoy, the rest

of the Group being otherwise engaged. SHERBROOKE was far astern sinking the disabled HINDANGER (a questionable operation) and the other two escorts were following up contacts. ST. CROIX joined the screen in due course, but just before she did so the EMPIRE MOONBEAM and HECTORIA were torpedoed. ARVIDA was ordered to pick up survivors and rescued 15 from the EMPIRE MOONBEAM and 19 from HECTORIA.

There was no further action that night, 11/12 September, nor until the night of 13/14 September. On 13 September, the convoy received air cover from Newfoundland which most likely was the reason for there being no attacks during the daylight hours.

The Ship's Company responded cheerfully to the inconvenience of having 34 survivors on board and the galley did not miss a beat in providing additional meals.

LOSS OF H.M.C.S. OTTAWA

Just before nightfall on 13 September, the four-stacker H.M.C.S. ANNAPOLIS and the destroyer H.M.S. WITCH joined the screen. Late that night, 13/14 September, two or more ships were torpedoed and ARVIDA was ordered to pick up survivors. A few minutes later OTTAWA was torpedoed. ARVIDA turned to see if OTTAWA required assistance, but as she was afloat and apparently in no immediate danger of sinking, proceeded to pick up 107 more survivors from the torpedoed merchant ships. A little later, OTTAWA was struck by another torpedo and sank swiftly. ARVIDA picked up one officer and twenty-one ratings. Four more officers and fifty ratings were rescued by other ships. The Captain, Lieutenant-Commander Clark Rutherford, R.C.N., four other officers and one hundred seven ratings were lost. OTTAWA was sunk in approximate position 47° 55' North, 42° 27' West.

My notes of the action ended that night for as First Lieutenant, with the ship bulging with survivors, I had little time to take notes. There was one last torpedoing that night but no further attacks occurred during the ensuing days. It was not until much later that it was learnt that one or more of the damaged ships had managed to remain with the convoy and reached port safely. My

notes do not reflect the number of attacks carried out by ARVIDA, but upon reaching port there were few depth charges left.

ARVIDA now had 163 survivors on board and again the Ship's Company coped magnificently with a most difficult situation. The galley staff, augmented by several survivors and working around the clock, managed to provide meals for everyone, but by the time St. John's was reached the cupboard was pretty bare.

The convoy was turned over to an Escort Group from the WLEF at WESTOMP on 16 September and C-4 arrived in St. John's the same day.

When land was first sighted, word spread swiftly through the ship and the survivors rushed to the port side to see it. ARVIDA, light in fuel, listed unexpectedly, to the consternation of the Captain. It took several minutes before equilibrium could be restored. A photograph of the survivors being disembarked from ARVIDA is shown in APPENDIX H.

The survivors, to a man, had been most co-operative and had done their best not to interfere with the working of the ship. Many volunteered their services in any capacity that might be required. I shall always remember Captain W.G.S. Hewison, the Master of the EMPIRE MOON-BEAM. He was a most pleasant individual with a strong personality who seemed to boost the spirits of the survivors as he mingled with them.

We also had picked up the Fourth Engineer of the EMPIRE MOONBEAM, A. Swan, a large Australian of immense strength who had been of great assistance hauling survivors aboard after later sinkings. We had picked up a doctor from one of the ships and he proved to be worth his weight in gold, for we had a number of injured survivors. I was making informal "rounds" to check how matters were with the Ship's Company and the survivors when I came upon the doctor carving away on the leg of a rather messed-up survivor on an improvised operating table in one of the messdecks—the Sick Bay being chock-a-block. The ship was low in anaesthetics and obviously the victim was far from being fully anaesthetized. One of the survivors was holding him down by the shoulders—he

was strapped to the table around the midsection as was one leg. Swan had a large hand clamped to the leg being operated on, while he munched a fried egg sandwich held in his other hand. A strong stomach.

* * *

PART V - SECTION 3

September 1942 - May 1943

ARVIDA IN COMMAND - ESCORT GROUP C-4
CONVOY SC-101
CONVOY ON-137 AND SS BURY
CONVOY SC-107
LUNENBURG REFIT
CONVOY HX-233

ARVIDA IN COMMAND

Lieutenant Alastair MacKay had been in command of ARVIDA for 16 months. The continual pressure of convoy work was taking its toll so on 17 September, the day after our arrival in port, he went for a medical check-up and was immediately hospitalized for observation. C-4 was assigned to escort Convoy SC-101 in five days' time, 22 September. On the afternoon of 21 September, Captain (D)* (Captain Edmund Rollo Mainguy, R.C.N.) sent for me. With no preparatory discussion, he asked me if I was prepared to take command of ARVIDA. My reply was a swift "Yes, sir!" "That's good," he replied, "for MacKay is suffering from acute exhaustion and is being given a shore billet. Good luck, King." End of interview. Fortunately, Captain (D) managed to find an additional officer for me—Lieutenant J. Angus Wyatt, R.C.N.V.R., who reported on board that evening.

C-4 sailed from St. John's at first light on 22 September 1942, the destroyer H.M.C.S. RETIGOUCHE (Lieutenant-Commander Desmond W. "Debby" Piers, R.C.N.) replacing OTTAWA. The only other change was in AMHERST, Lieutenant Louis Audette, R.C.N.V.R.—late of KINGS—having been placed in command also on 21 September and as a pier-head jump. The former C.O. had been removed forcibly—his long-standing love affair with the bottle finally having led to his undoing.

* "Captain (D)" is the designation for the Senior Officer (a Captain in rank) of a group (squadron, flotilla) of destroyers. In most cases during the Battle of the Atlantic, with escort/support groups composed of a mixed bag of vessels, a Captain (D) was established ashore, he being the administrative authority to whom Senior Officers of groups and Commanding Officers reported.

CONVOY SC-101

Thick fog was encountered as the Group left St. John's but no difficulty was experienced in making contact with SC-101, a convoy of 27 ships. The fog prevailed until 26 September, but as it lifted a fierce northwesterly gale arose, forcing the convoy to heave to for nearly a full day. The weather then moderated and the rest of the passage was uneventful, with no reports of U-Boat activity on the convoy's route. One night-straggler, however, the SS LIFLAND, failed to rejoin the convoy and was never seen again—presumably sunk by a U-Boat.

After turning over the convoy to an R.N. Escort Group, C-4 arrived in Londonderry at 0230 4 October, but not without mishap. It was customary to take a local pilot at the mouth of the Foyle, particularly at night, as the river is narrow and twisting with ever shifting sand bars. RESTIGOUCHE, however, had decided to dispense with a pilot and had grounded on one of these hazards. The ship refloated without assistance about three hours after grounding. When I called on Commodore (D) Western Approaches (Commodore G. W. G. "Shrimp" Simpson, R.N.) that morning, Debby was just leaving the office. "There's a gentleman for you!" he exclaimed, greatly relieved. As RESTIGOUCHE had sustained no damage, the Commodore told him to forget the whole incident and not to report it.

It was a cheerful group and RESTIGOUCHE was a fine replacement for OTTAWA. On one occasion as the Group was proceeding up the Foyle, a Royal Naval converted yacht with the Pennant Numbers Y-00 was met. RESTIGOUCHE's Pennant Numbers were H-00, so Debby sent a signal: "To: Y-00 from H-00. YOO-HOO."

CONVOY ON-137 AND SS BURY

C-4 was assigned to escort the westbound Convoy ON-137 on 10 October. In a gale on 9 October the Group left Londonderry for Moville for topping-up, ARVIDA securing alongside the tanker EMPIRE SERGEANT. Just as refuelling was completed, ARVIDA had to make a hasty departure as another tanker—with RESTIGOUCHE alongside—was dragging and was bearing down

on the EMPIRE SERGEANT. Luckily, the anchors of the other tanker finally held and a collision was averted. On completion of fuelling the Group anchored at the mouth of the Foyle for overnight.

C-4 weighed and proceeded at 0630 10 October with the gale still blowing. By mid morning C-4 had assumed the escort of ON-137, a convoy of about 47 ships including the British Rescue Ship SS BURY. The weather moderated slightly as the day wore on but another gale from the west of 35 to 40 knots developed the following day. On 15 October with the gale still blowing and high seas running, SHERBROOKE and ARVIDA were detached on orders from the Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches (C.-in-C.W.A.) to search for survivors of the SS STORNEST, believed to be a straggler from another convoy and to have been torpedoed. Apparently in view of the heavy weather, C.-in-C.W.A. a little later ordered the search to be abandoned and SHERBROOKE and ARVIDA rejoined the convoy. In the late afternoon that day, Pt. 13 in the convoy reported having engine trouble and ARVIDA was ordered to stand by her. Some hours later she was able to get under way and ARVIDA escorted her back to the convoy rejoining at 0930 the following day, 16 October.

Mid morning on that day a signal was received that U-Boats were believed to be shadowing the convoy. The gale had moderated but fog then developed. CELANDINE, equipped with Type 271 radar, was ordered to circle the convoy at a distance of three to four miles. At about noon CELANDINE, about three miles ahead of the convoy, reported that she had sighted a periscope close by and had attacked with depth charges. CELANDINE followed the contact through the convoy and when astern carried out further attacks which she regarded as being promising. AMHERST then gained an ASDIC contact in the same area and attacked it. Both ships lost contact and were ordered to rejoin.

Heavy fog persisted and at about midnight, ARVIDA, with her radar broken down, was in contact with one ship only—Pt. 15. (ARVIDA's radar was to remain out of commission until her return to port.) As dawn broke on 17 October, and with the fog lifting, it was found that ARVIDA and CELANDINE were with a number of scattered ships. These were rounded up and joined the rest

of the convoy some hours later. The gale reasserted itself and by 2000 was blowing at about 45 to 50 knots with the barometer reading 29.12. Visibility was poor, the convoy appeared to be scattering again and ARVIDA could only see two ships. At 2330, ARVIDA contacted Pt. 11, the only ship now visible, and screened her. The gale had moderated a little but high seas were running, making ASDIC conditions very poor. At 0235 18 October, Pt. 11 was torpedoed but, although stopped, remained afloat. This was reported to ST. CROIX who ordered the Rescue Ship BURY to pick up survivors while ARVIDA screened. BURY had difficulty in finding Pt. 11 and ARVIDA (reluctantly) was forced to fire Snowflakes to direct her. At about 0330 Pt. 11 began to sink and the crew took to lifeboats. BURY arrived a little later and picked up all survivors and course was set to rejoin the convoy. At 0815 ARVIDA sighted an overturned lifeboat with six men miraculously clinging to it in spite of the heavy seas. They were survivors from a ship from another convoy. BURY was able to pick them up, a rather difficult operation in the conditions prevailing. Course was resumed to intercept the convoy at a speed of eight to ten knots.

The weather continued to moderate during the day and the morning of 19 October broke fair with a southwesterly wind of about 20 knots. At 1400 a good observed position was obtained of 49° 28' North, 32° 35' West. This was passed to BURY and course was altered slightly to 224° to intercept the convoy the following day. I was at this time becoming concerned about the amount of my fuel remaining and advised BURY that I would be unable to stay with him beyond 0900 the next day at which time we should be close to the convoy.

To complicate the situation BURY, who was equipped with HF/DF, reported two U-Boat transmissions during the evening. The first at 1830 on a bearing of 084°, estimated distance 20 miles, did not appear to pose a threat. The other at 2230, however, was on a bearing of 265° estimated distance 25 miles. As this might be troublesome, course was altered to the southward for two hours, after which course was again set to intercept the convoy.

During the night of 19/20 October, visibility deteriorated and ARVIDA lost visual contact with BURY. At 0900 20 October, ARVIDA had 58 tons of fuel remaining. I therefore contacted BURY and RESTIGOUCHE on R/T explaining the situation. (ST. CROIX had left the convoy to refuel in the Azores and RESTIGOUCHE was now the Senior Officer.) I estimated that the convoy was about 30 miles distant and passed this information to BURY along with the p.c.s. of the convoy. BURY also was in R/T contact with RESTIGOUCHE. After sending BURY a parting signal I shaped course for St. John's at the most economical speed.

All attempts to conserve fuel were made including cutting out one burner, accepting the risk that maximum speed would not be available should contact be made with a U-Boat. By 1500 22 October, in observed position 47° 18' North, 50° 02' West, ARVIDA was down to nine tons of fuel. I estimated that it would not be possible to make St. John's by about 20 to 30 miles. I therefore sent for assistance, giving my p.c.s.

It was a clear, bright night and we were met right on the button by the tug TENACITY screened by the Bangor Minesweeper, H.M.C.S. WASAGA. I slipped the tug outside St. John's and proceeded into the harbour under our own power, coming alongside at about 0130 23 October. The Chief of Staff, Captain Roger E. S. Bidwell, R.C.N., was waiting on the jetty. As he came aboard he greeted me with: "Let's have a drink—I need one! Don't do this too often, King, it's too hard on your Chief of Staff's nerves!" This was typical of Captain Bidwell; most officers in his position would have sent a Staff Officer to meet the ship. Captain Bidwell also advised me that Daphne had arrived in St. John's and found accommodation.

It was not until later that I heard about the other vicissitudes that had beset ON-137. ST. CROIX had been forced to leave the convoy on 19 October to refuel in the Azores. Shortly after her departure from the Azores she had engine trouble which was not repaired for 10 hours. At this time, as it would not be possible to catch up with the convoy, she proceeded direct to St. John's. From 16 October onwards, SHERBROOKE, CELANDINE and AMHERST had suffered breakdowns in their

ASDIC and radar. CELANDINE and AMHERST had to be detached for St. John's because of fuel shortage, leaving only RESTIGOUCHE and SHERBROOKE as the sole escorts of the convoy. Fortunately there were no further attacks by U-Boats. As the A/S Staff Officer (U.S.N.) on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, reported to the latter: "The convoy seems to have been blessed with good luck.....losing only one ship." He also praised RESTIGOUCHE for his screening of the convoy during the rest of the passage, with only two escorts at his disposal.

As a sequel to this event and adding insult to injury, the Master of BURY had the audacity to report to the Admiralty to the effect that ARVIDA had deserted him in the middle of the Atlantic for no good reason! In due course, the report filtered down to me for my comments. These I gave in detail, enclosing a copy of my Report of Proceedings on Convoy ON-137 and also copies of all relevant signals. In passing my report upwards on 4 February 1943, Captain (D) (by then Captain H. T. W. Grant, R.C.N.) commented:

It is considered that the Commanding Officer of H.M.C.S. ARVIDA took all steps possible to protect the SS BURY and further kept the Senior Officer of the Escort fully informed of the situation. Under these circumstances, the criticism of the Master of SS BURY, if indeed it was meant as such, appears entirely unjustified.

In forwarding my report to NSHQ, The Flag Officer Newfoundland (Commodore H. E. Reid, R.C.N.) wrote:

Submitted for the consideration of Naval Headquarters, concurring with Captain (D) Newfoundland.

I heard no more about this incident, but sincerely hoped that the Master of the SS BURY had his knuckles rapped.

CONVOY SC-107

C-4's next assignment was to escort Convoy SC-107. Numerous accounts have been published on the disastrous battle for this convoy, some of which contain factual errors. All of these accounts I believe were compiled long after the event, from official and unofficial reports. My

narrative of this convoy has been produced primarily from notes that I made during the course of the battle.

C-4 sailed from St. John's on 30 October 1942 to rendezvous at WESTOMP with SC-107 which was being escorted from Halifax by Escort Group T.U. 24.18.7 of the WLEF.

With the departure for refit of ST. CROIX, Lieutenant-Commander Piers in RESTIGOUCHE assumed the duties of Senior Officer. Still under 30 years of age, Debby Piers was a most able officer and an experienced Escort Commander who proved his mettle in the forthcoming battle, using the forces available to him with skill and determination against almost overwhelming odds.

In addition to the departure of ST. CROIX, SHERBROOKE was unable to sail with the Group owing to defects. As replacements, two corvettes which were destined for service in the Mediterranean (Operation "TORCH") H.M.C. Ships ALGOMA and REGINA were assigned to C-4 on a temporary basis. REGINA, however, broke down immediately after leaving St. John's. Another corvette, H.M.C.S. MOOSE JAW, was assigned as a replacement but was unable to overtake the convoy until late on 2 November, in the heat of the battle.

Thus when assuming the duty as the Escort for SC-107 on 30 October in position 47° 00' North, 52° 10' West, C-4 consisted of only five ships: the four regular members—RESTIGOUCHE, AMHERST, ARVIDA and CELANDINE—plus the newcomer ALGOMA. ARVIDA was assigned a station on the starboard bow of the convoy.

Through the years, much criticism has been levelled at C-4 and the Royal Canadian Navy in general for the disastrous results of the ensuing battle. Various factors have been discussed at length, including the probability of inadequate training in a rapidly expanding service. But no matter how well-trained a military unit may be, it can be only as effective as its equipment. C-4 was ill-equipped to meet the enemy. The reason for this state of affairs will be discussed later.

Radar was the "eyes of the fleet"; lacking it, escorts were blind at night or in low visibility, permitting U-Boats to approach a convoy on the surface undetected. Canadian corvettes were equipped with the initial Canadian-designed-and-produced 1.5 metre anti-submarine radar Type SW1C or its successor SW2C, both sets with an appalling record of breaking down. H.M.S. CELANDINE was equipped with the excellent British 10 centimetre radar, Type 271. RESTIGOUCHE had the older British Type 286 Radar which, while superior to the SW1C or SW2C, was no match for the Type 271. A High Frequency Direction Finding set (HF/DF) was another vital piece of equipment at this stage of the Battle of the Atlantic. With it, a U-Boat transmission could be monitored, giving the bearing of the U-Boat. A well-trained operator, by the strength of the signal, could give a reasonably accurate distance of the U-Boat, perhaps plus or minus five miles. Used in conjunction with another set with a reasonably broad base, such as an escort on each bow of a convoy, and/or one on the bow and one astern, an accurate position of the U-Boat could be obtained by triangulation. The corvettes did not have HF/DF. RESTIGOUCHE and the British Rescue Ship SS STOCKPORT in the convoy were fitted with it, and during the forthcoming battle it was of value in at least determining the bearings of transmitting U-Boats and their possible distance. The HF/DF set in RESTIGOUCHE had been obtained by Lieutenant-Commander Piers by "informal" means when the ship had been in the United Kingdom earlier.

ASDIC in the Canadian corvettes was the rudimentary, hand-operated Type 123A. As previously mentioned, its effective range under ideal conditions was 2000 yards, but in the sea conditions normally experienced in the Atlantic, the range was far less.

Corvettes were fitted with magnetic compasses. I have no knowledge of the type in other corvettes, but ARVIDA suffered from having a three-figure compass (0° to 360°) in the wheelhouse and a quadrantal compass on the bridge and in the ASDIC hut—not a happy combination.

SC-107 consisted of 43 ships including STOCKPORT and the U.S. Tugs PESSACUS and UNCAS which were to be used as rescue vessels. The convoy was formed in 10 columns abreast making it about 4 miles wide and perhaps a mile or more in depth.

That an attack was probable was evident shortly after C-4 took over the escort duties of SC-107, when it was reported by shore authorities that the convoy was being shadowed by U-Boats. The night of 30/31 October passed quietly as did the following day of 31 October, with the convoy steaming 7 to 7½ knots in a generally northeasterly direction but making a number of course alterations in an effort to frustrate the shadowers. RESTIGOUCHE, however, warned that increasing U-Boat signal traffic indicated an attack was most likely imminent. The weather began to deteriorate at this time.

On 1 November, RESTIGOUCHE and STOCKPORT continued to intercept U-Boat transmissions on HF/DF, and RESTIGOUCHE made a number of forays on some of the bearings in an effort to keep the U-Boats down. Shortly after dusk on 1 November on one such foray, RESTIGOUCHE detected a U-Boat on radar which dived immediately when illuminated by starshell from RESTIGOUCHE. CELANDINE previously had been ordered to investigate a transmission from a U-Boat believed to be closing the convoy and she and RESTIGOUCHE now were well astern. This left ARVIDA as the sole escort to cover the starboard bow and side of the convoy. With her SW1C radar broken down, ARVIDA illuminated the area periodically with starshell hoping to keep down any U-Boat approaching the starboard side. At about 2000, RESTIGOUCHE, still astern of the convoy, bore down on a strong HF/DF bearing, being rewarded shortly by a radar contact. Illuminated by RESTIGOUCHE's starshell, the U-Boat dived. but a few minutes later ASDIC contact was gained and a depth-charge attack was carried out with unknown results. The weather continued to deteriorate and ASDIC conditions worsened.

At about the same time, CELANDINE reported that his normally most reliable Type 271 radar had broken down. (CELANDINE was without the use of his radar for the several days of the

battle. ARVIDA's SW1C fared little better, being out of commission most of the time. Other corvettes in the Group reported from time to time that their radar was broken down.)

At 2112 1 November in estimated position 51° 40' North, 46° 36' West, the first victim in the convoy, the EMPIRE SUNRISE, was torpedoed. The convoy made an immediate emergency alteration of course from 015° to 050°. The battle was joined.

Just after midnight a ship on the starboard side of the convoy was torpedoed and ARVIDA carried out a starshell sweep on the starboard quarter but with negative results. At 0150 another ship on the starboard side was torpedoed. A few minutes later, ARVIDA, briefly astern of the last two columns of the convoy, passed survivors on rafts. This was reported to the S.O. Five minutes later, ARVIDA's ASDIC operator reported a torpedo approaching wide on the port bow. Full ahead and hard to port was ordered to stem the course of the torpedo. Moments later the operator reported the torpedo passing by on the starboard side. The course of the torpedo was estimated at about 140°. ARVIDA searched the area from which the torpedo had been fired and obtained a doubtful ASDIC contact which was depth-charged. Contact, however, could not be regained. It was apparent that ARVIDA had been the target since the course of the torpedo would not have taken it near the convoy.

Shortly after this incident, another ship in the convoy was torpedoed and RESTIGOUCHE ordered an illumination sweep known as "RASPBERRY" during which ARVIDA obtained an ASDIC contact with hydrophone effect. The contact was depth-charged, but again, contact could not be regained. The weather continued to deteriorate and ASDIC conditions could not have been much worse. Another ASDIC contact was depth-charged a little later, but contact was not regained.

At 0407 2 November, two more ships were torpedoed—MARITIMA and MOUNT PELION—and another "RASPBERRY" was carried out. During the operation, ARVIDA passed survivors in boats and on rafts. When picked up later, these survivors—from the MARITIMA—stated that shortly after ARVIDA passed, a U-BOAT circled them, then proceeded towards the convoy.

At 0550, ARVIDA was detailed to proceed astern to assist STOCKPORT in picking up survivors. On the way, ARVIDA picked up the survivors that she had passed earlier, then picked up survivors from MOUNT PELION. On completion, ARVIDA proceeded to rejoin the convoy, screening STOCKPORT, which now had approximately 200 survivors on board. ARVIDA had 60, 27 from MARITIMA and 33 from MOUNT PELION. The rest of the morning passed quietly but in mid-afternoon, another ship was torpedoed and survivors from this ship were picked up by STOCKPORT while ARVIDA screened her. On completion, ARVIDA and STOCKPORT once again proceeded to rejoin the convoy, but almost immediately, ARVIDA obtained a fairly strong ASDIC contact which was promptly depth-charged. Contact was regained at 900 yards but was lost before another attack could be carried out. ARVIDA therefore hastened to overtake STOCKPORT who had continued unescorted during this brief encounter. After the war, it was determined that ARVIDA's contact had been U-522 who had been severely shaken up but not sufficiently to prevent him from making a report a few hours later.

The Third Engineer from MOUNT PELION, who had been picked up by ARVIDA and who had later died, was buried on the way back to the convoy, being given proper honours. On the latter point, the Master of the MOUNT PELION was a little dubious about the proposed burial ceremony. Lieutenant Wyatt, however, who spoke a little Greek, persuaded the Master that the victim's soul would not be placed in jeopardy by the service that I intended to conduct.

Late in the evening, ARVIDA and STOCKPORT rejoined the convoy, which now was steering 090°. The destroyer H.M.S. VANESSA, from another convoy which was not threatened, now joined the screen. The rest of the night of 2/3 November passed without incident. The convoy altered course to 010° at 0130 3 November.

At 0745 3 November, with heavy weather still prevailing, the convoy, now in estimated position 54° 35 North, 41° 42' West, again came under attack, a ship in the starboard column being torpedoed. A few minutes later ARVIDA obtained a doubtful ASDIC contact which was depth-

charged. Contact was regained, but rapidly lost. Shortly thereafter, ARVIDA obtained another ASDIC contact which too was attacked, but once again, contact could not be regained.

At 0830, the convoy altered course to 052°. At 1034, CELANDINE, now well astern, reported engaging a surfaced U-Boat with gunfire and a few minutes later reported that the U-Boat had retaliated with torpedoes. At 1050 AMHERST reported that he was attacking a surfaced U-Boat. At 1118, just as a ship was torpedoed in the starboard column, other ships in that column were seen to be firing at an unseen target. ARVIDA closed at full speed and searched the area that had been fired upon, but without obtaining any contact.

The weather did not improve and ASDIC conditions remained very poor. At 1600, the convoy altered course to 030°. Just as darkness fell, a ship on the starboard bow of the convoy was torpedoed and a "RASPBERRY" was ordered during which ARVIDA obtained and depth-charged a doubtful ASDIC contact. A few minutes later, MOOSE JAW, who finally was joining the convoy from astern, reported attacking a surfaced U-Boat.

At 2037 in estimated position 55° 36' North, 39° 52' West, ARVIDA obtained another doubtful ASDIC contact which was depth-charged. A firm contact was regained, but before another attack could be carried out, an explosion of extreme violence occurred. ARVIDA shuddered as though struck. The stern appeared to lift and then settle heavily. Men manning the depth-charge rails on the quarterdeck were thrown to the deck. ARVIDA suffered no damage, but contact with the target was lost and not regained. The explosion appeared to be far too severe to suspect that ARVIDA's earlier attack had been successful. After the war, it was concluded that the explosion, which was felt throughout the convoy, was caused by U-122 administering the coup de grâce to the ammunition ship HOBBERMA which although torpedoed earlier was still afloat. Presumably, U-122 had closed within a short distance of his target to ensure that he did not waste a torpedo and paid dearly for his diligence, for he was never heard of again.

At 2110, the Senior Officer—Debby Piers—ordered CELANDINE and ARVIDA to proceed astern to screen the rescue tugs PESSACUS and UNCAS, while rejoining the convoy. This was accomplished without incident by 0730 4 November. The weather had now improved and the convoy's observed position at 1130 was 56° 29' North, 32° 02' West. STOCKPORT now had over 300 survivors on board and the tugs were reported to be "overflowing" with survivors. No attacks had occurred since the explosion the previous day and apparently U-Boat transmissions now were virtually nonexistent. With the addition of VANESSA, the escort now consisted of seven ships. CELANDINE and ARVIDA, however, were low in fuel and depth charges and the latter had 60 survivors on board. Under these circumstances and with the prospect of the screen being augmented by three U. S. N. ships the following day, the Senior Officer at 1100 4 November wisely detached CELANDINE and ARVIDA to escort STOCKPORT, PESSACUS, UNCAS and the tanker GAUGER to Iceland.

Thus ended ARVIDA's participation in the battle for SC-107. It was learnt later that one more ship in the convoy had been torpedoed during the night 4/5 November. This proved to be the last victim, but the loss of so many ships (later determined to be 15) without the destruction—as far as was known—of a single U-Boat was nothing but calamitous. The lack of modern fighting equipment had taken its toll. If there was any redeeming factor at all, it was that 562 survivors had been rescued.

The following ships had been sunk:

DALCROY	HATIMORA
DALEBY	HOBDEMA
EMPIRE ANTELOPE	JEYPORE
EMPIRE LEOPARD	MARITIMA
EMPIRE LYNX	MOUNT PELION
EMPIRE SUNRISE	PARTHENON
HAHIRA	RINOS
HARTINGTON	

I mentioned at the beginning of this report on the battle for SC-107 that some accounts contained factual errors. One blatant untruth is contained in the book *The Battle of the Atlantic* by a pair of British authors, Terry Hughes and John Costello. This book is described as:

The first complete and thoroughly documented account of the pivotal campaign of World War II—the German attempt to sever the supply lines in the Atlantic....Now the release of hitherto secret documents from official British, German and American archives makes it possible for the first time to tell the full story of how this momentous battle was fought and won.

On page 228 of this book, it is reported that SC-107 was a convoy of 43 ships escorted by 5 Canadian Escorts and the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter GEMINI. It is stated that:

The U-Boats intercepted SC-107 in the small hours of 2 November and the Wolf Pack soon found that the inexperienced Canadian escort left plenty of gaps for them to get in amongst the convoy columns.

It goes on to report that:

U.S. Coastguard Lieutenant John M. Waters witnessed the results from the GEMINI: first came the dull shock as a torpedo hit the EMPIRE SUNRISE three miles away, then the shrill clanging of GEMINI's general alarm bell....On the main deck they [the crew] were greeted by an unforgettable sight. Every ship in the convoy was firing Snowflakes lighting the scene like daylight, and as they burned the noise of depth charges was heard.

GEMINI was not a member of the escort at any time—before, during, or after the battle. The last ship in the convoy was sunk on the night 4/5 November. The following day, the screen was augmented by three U. S. N. ships, LEARY, SCHENCK and INGHAM—but even then, no GEMINI. This is an example of pure unadulterated fiction by Messrs. Hughes and Costello. It makes their entire book suspect.

On 8 November, CELANDINE and ARVIDA, having delivered their little convoy to the proper authorities in Iceland, entered Reykjavik Harbour a few minutes before midnight. The shore authorities had made arrangements to receive our survivors and they were disembarked from all ships

upon arrival. The following day, I explored ashore with three of my officers, Pierce, Trenholm and Wyatt, with Petty Officer Helgason as our guide.

At 0945 10 November, ARVIDA and CELANDINE proceeded to sea from Reykjavik to escort STOCKPORT to Greenock, arriving just after first light on Friday 15 November. While there, it was possible to have a few defects taken in hand and the First Lieutenant took full advantage of the fine weather to have some much needed painting done.

On 17 November ARVIDA and CELANDINE sailed from Greenock, arriving in Moville for topping up in the late afternoon. The following day, ARVIDA and CELANDINE rejoined C-4 to escort Convoy ON-147. H.M.C.S. DAUPHIN was assigned to the Group for this convoy. Unlike recent convoys containing the number seven—ON-127, ON-137, SC-107—it was a quiet passage with not even a U-Boat report. The weather was good for the first part, but became pretty foul within a few days. During the passage an attempt was made to refuel from a tanker in the convoy, but weather conditions were such that this was unsuccessful. CELANDINE and ARVIDA, being low in fuel, therefore had to leave the convoy a day early, arriving in St. John's on 28 November.

LUNENBURG REFIT

ARVIDA was scheduled for refit, so after refuelling on 28 November, sailed from St. John's for Halifax, screening a merchant ship, the SS FORT AMHERST. A fierce gale was encountered on 2 December. The barometer fell from 29.87 at 0800 to 29.15 at 1530. The wind by noon was blowing from the south at 45 to 50 knots and FORT AMHERST insisted on heaving-to. Torrential rain was experienced and evidently the eye passed over us, for briefly the sun appeared, the wind dropped to a light breeze, then whipped around to the north with renewed vigour. By 1800 the wind had moderated and FORT AMHERST agreed to proceed. It had been an uncomfortable few hours, FORT AMHERST being a sitting duck and ARVIDA circling to screen her, although ASDIC was just about useless in such heavy weather.

ARVIDA arrived in Halifax on 3 December 1942 and on 8 December proceeded to Lunenburg for refit. It was an indirect passage, however, as ARVIDA was detailed to screen the Bangor minesweeper H.M.C.S. THUNDER who was towing a "skid" to Shelburne. The weather deteriorated unexpectedly and the tow overturned. ARVIDA stood by until the following morning by which time the storm had abated sufficiently for THUNDER to retrieve the remains of the skid and take it in tow. After seeing THUNDER safely to Shelburne, course was set for Lunenburg and ARVIDA anchored outside the entrance to the port just before midnight 9 December, entering the following morning.

Daphne had arrived in Lunenburg the previous day and had secured accommodation in the house of a Mrs. Silver. The latter and her 43-year-old daughter "Fanny"—a teller in the Bank of Montreal—were excellent hosts and the typically Lunenburg fare that was provided was excellent.

Lieutenant R.W.S. (Robin) Johnston, R.C.N.V.R.—my old cricket and rugger friend who was at KINGS taking courses when I was at the Long "N" in early 1942 and who had since had nearly a year at sea—was appointed as my First Lieutenant on 11 January 1943. He and Mary also managed to find accommodation in Lunenburg.

ARVIDA was taken in hand for refit by the Lunenburg Foundry Co. Ltd. on arrival on 10 December. I believe that this was the first refit of a vessel the size of ARVIDA to be undertaken by the Foundry and it proved to be difficult and far from satisfactory in spite of my constant prodding and that of the Resident Naval Engineer. In any event, it was "completed" on 8 February and ARVIDA proceeded to Halifax on that date.

Those two months in Lunenburg, apart from the frustrations with the refit, were interesting in spite of it being an exceptionally cold and snowy year—the worst in 40 years we were told. Lunenburg essentially is a fishing port and this was reflected in the lives of the people. It seemed a little backward, for teams of oxen with ornamental harness were still being used to draw waggons, snowploughs, and so forth.

ST. ROCHE, the R.C.M.P. vessel that recently had navigated the Northwest Passage from west to east, also was refitting in Lunenburg. The Captain, Sergeant Henry Larsen, R.C.M.P., rarely was present but his Mate, Corporal F. S. "Ted" Farrar R.C.M.P., was left in charge. He was a most knowledgeable person who spun many an interesting yarn on their recent exploits.

Also refitting in Lunenburg were four Royal Naval Motor Minesweepers, numbers 99, 100, 104 and 108. Their officers were a fine lot and we saw much of them. Some that I recall were Lieutenant J. "Taffy" Evans, R.N.R., Lieutenants R.N.V.R. Norman Lowe, Clifford Gates, Clifford Greene, D. M. Mein, D.S.C., J. Worrall and Skipper J. W. Greenall, R.N.R.—from Blackpool, no less.

Other people well-remembered in Lunenburg included the Kinley Clan, one of whom was an M.P., and the doctors Hewat and Creighton and their respective wives, Flo and Catherine. The dentist, Aubrey Tupper and his wife Joyce were fine people too. He had captained the Dalhousie University Rugby Team that had played in Victoria in 1926. As a farewell gift he gave me a set of little cut-glass cocktail glasses which had been given to him for some of his rugger exploits. These glasses have accompanied me ashore and afloat throughout my career and are still intact.

There were, for all intents and purposes, two distinct social "cliques" in Lunenburg, members of one not mingling in any way with the other unless necessity so dictated. Persons of both cliques had been kind to the officers and ratings of ARVIDA, so on 7 February—the day before our departure—members of both were invited to ARVIDA's farewell cocktail party. Any social discomfiture, however, swiftly evaporated under the effects of an innocuous-looking punch labelled "London Fog," a concoction of Robin Johnston. It was a simple formula: melted ice cream and gin. We poured the last of our guests ashore shortly before midnight and sailed at first light the next morning, arriving in Halifax in the late afternoon. Some years later when visiting Lunenburg, I met one of our guests at that party. With a wry smile he remarked: "THAT party will never be forgotten!"

ARVIDA was scheduled to drydock in St. John, New Brunswick, immediately after the completion of her refit but unfortunately, because of some emergency, the drydock was not available until 21 February. The time spent in Halifax, however, was put to good use. Items not properly done in Lunenburg were made good and advantage was taken of the training facilities ashore as there had been many changes in the Ship's Company.

The drydocking in St. John's included a number of underwater items and it was not completed until 14 March on which day ARVIDA proceeded to Halifax arriving on 16 March. More training and post-refit trials were undertaken in Halifax. On 25 March, ARVIDA sailed to St. Margaret's Bay for calibrations and "work-ups" before returning to operational duties. On 8 April, in company with the corvette H.M.C.S. WETASKIWIN (Lieutenant J.R. "Jack" Kidston, R.C.N.V.R.), ARVIDA proceeded to St. John's, Newfoundland, escorting (again!) the S.S. FORT AMHERST, arriving on 10 April.

CONVOY HX-233

ARVIDA was assigned temporarily to the Ocean Escort Group TU 21.1.3 to escort HX-233, a convoy of 58 ships. The Group consisted of nine ships: the U.S. Coast Guard Cutters SPENCER (Captain P. R. Heineman, U.S.C.G., Senior Officer) and DUANE (Captain H. G. Bradbury, U.S.C.G.), the destroyer H.M.C.S. SKEENA (Lieutenant-Commander Eric E. G. Boak, R.C.N.), the corvettes H.M.C. Ships WETASKIWIN, ARVIDA and ROSTHERN (Lieutenant R. J. G. Johnson, R.C.N.V.R.), H.M. Ships BERGAMOT (Lieutenant R. T. Horan, R.N.R.), BYRONY (Lieutenant T. Hand, R.N.R.) and DIANTHUS (Lieutenant Neil F. Israel, R.N.R.). It was surprising to see the high rank of the officers commanding the U.S. Coast Guard Cutters.

At 0430 11 April, the main part of the Group sailed from St. John's to meet HX-233 at WESTOMP in position 44° 28' North, 45° 01' West. ROSTHERN and DIANTHUS were delayed owing to defects and did not overtake the convoy until 15 April. ARVIDA too was delayed being unable to obtain engine oil (!) but finally sailed at 1400. A little more than an hour later, an ice field

of growlers and "bergie bits" was encountered which had to be negotiated with care. After an hour or so, clear water was found and speed was increased but the convoy, making 9½ knots, was not overtaken until 1000 on 14 April. ARVIDA was assigned a station on the port side of the convoy.

En route to the convoy on 13 April, the SS HANIBAL HAMLIN had been met, a straggler from HX-233 who had decided not to try to overtake the convoy and was heading for Halifax, where she arrived safely we heard later.

The convoy had been routed well to the south in order to avoid a suspected concentration of U-Boats northeast of St. John's. It was nevertheless found to be shadowed by four to six U-Boats and on 16 April the screen was augmented by the Third Support Group of the Royal Navy, consisting of four destroyers. In spite of this strong escort of 13 ships, one ship in the convoy—the SS FORT RAMPART—was torpedoed in calm seas in broad daylight on the morning of 17 April. ARVIDA picked up 49 of the 55 members of the crew, 3 badly injured survivors being transferred to DUANE who had a doctor on board.

In the early afternoon, shortly after this transfer had been completed, SPENCER who was ahead of the convoy obtained an ASDIC contact and carried out two depth-charge attacks. Then, with DUANE, she followed the contact through the convoy, being rewarded by the U-Boat surfacing just astern. Accurate gunfire from the U-Boat (U-175) before it was sunk killed three in DUANE and one in SPENCER who also suffered eight wounded. Forty-four prisoners were taken by SPENCER. Later that day when the convoy was about 600 miles from the United Kingdom, air cover was provided and the rest of the passage was uneventful.

On this southern route, the weather had been excellent and refuelling alongside a designated tanker in the convoy was accomplished with no difficulty. In this connection a rather amusing incident occurred. The normal procedure with RCN or RN Senior Officers was for the S.O. and the escort requiring to top-up to exchange signals, the S.O. then designating when fuelling should take place. On this occasion no signals had been exchanged when unexpectedly a preemptory signal was

received from DUANE (not the Senior Officer): "REFUEL IMMEDIATELY." I decided it would be best to ignore this apparent U.S.N. discourtesy and proceeded to the tanker to refuel. While ARVIDA was alongside the tanker, BYRONY also detached from the screen and hovered nearby. The following day when transferring FORT RAMPART's injured survivors to DUANE, I received a hand message from the Captain of the latter: "Sorry to have appeared so insistent on fuelling yesterday. Our signalmen mistook you for BYRONY when they sent the last signal to fuel immediately."

On 20 April, ARVIDA was detached to escort the SS FENNIMORE COOPER to the Clyde and to disembark survivors at Gourrock where ARVIDA remained overnight. The following day, course was shaped for Belfast, arrival being made at 2000. Here a number of ever-present defects were taken in hand.

On 24 April, Robin Johnston and I slipped away to London for a few days, flying in an RAF transport plane to Hendon. We stayed with Robin's Uncle Peter and put our time to good use. This included lunch at The Mitre with Peter and Sir Henry Markham, the Secretary to the Admiralty, who was a friend of Peter. I paid visits to my paternal Uncle Walter and Aunt Gertrude (McLean)—brother and sister—in Worthing; to my maternal aunts Irma (Chappat) and Cecile (Ball) in London and also journeyed to Cambridge to visit a relative of Daphne, Alice Roughton. Her husband was a brilliant physicist on loan to the U.S. Government and was in Washington, D.C. Alice had turned their large house into a species of refuge for "displaced persons," including several members of the Ballet Rousse. One queued for meals and everything was organized down to the time when baths could be taken. Alice was a most interesting person. I remained overnight and returned to London the next day.

Robin's Uncle Peter was an Air Raid Warden whose orders were absolute and I well remember our chagrin when instructed by him to go to a shelter when sirens wailed. I have vivid memories of London at that time: parts of it in shambles, parts still lovely and untouched—Peter's

"Oxford House" in Bethnal Green—Cockney humour in adversity—and introducing Robin to Gieves.

The weather was beautiful and we returned to Belfast rejuvenated.

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PART V - SECTION 4

May 1943 - March 1944

*ESCORT GROUP C-5
CONVOYS ON-182 AND HX-240
AN UNEXPECTED VISIT TO ICELAND
ROUTINE CONVOYS — THE "GNAT"
MORE ROUTINE CONVOYS
REFIT IN CURTIS BAY
CORVETTE MEMORIES*

ESCORT GROUP C-5

On 3 May 1943, ARVIDA left Belfast and proceeded to Londonderry. I believe that TE 24.1.3 was dissolved after escorting HX-233. In any event, the Fifth Canadian Escort Group (hereafter referred to as "C-5") was formed on 6 May with Commander Hugh F. Pullen, R.C.N., the Senior Officer, in the destroyer H.M.C.S. OTTAWA (ex-H.M.S. GRIFFIN). This was the second ship of that name, replacing OTTAWA that was lost when escorting Convoy ON-127. The formation of this Group less than 24 hours before sailing to escort a westbound convoy, appeared to be a spur of the moment decision by NSHQ. Commander Pullen had no previous intimation of the formation of the Group and had no time to draw up Group Orders or to formulate Group Policy. The best he could do was to call a meeting of the Commanding Officers of those ships of the Group that were at anchor in Moville at 2300 on 6 May—the night before sailing. While from time to time, particularly in the early days of the war, operational authorities of necessity had to form "ad hoc" groups, it was undesirable to do so for such groups lacked "team work" and could not be expected to be more than moderately effective. Permanent Groups such as C-5 normally were formed with reasonable advance notice.

C-5 initially was composed of OTTAWA, the corvettes ROSTHERN, WETASKIWIN, ARVIDA and H.M. Ships DIANTHUS, BANNF and FISHGUARD. H.M. Trawler ST. ELSTAN and H.M. Tug STORM KING sailed with the Group to be stationed in the convoy. Commander Pullen

"appropriated" from a former RCN Escort Group the distinctive "barber pole" funnel markings to be used by ships of C-5.

CONVOYS ON-182 AND HX-240

C-5 sailed at first light on 7 May to escort ON-182, a convoy of about 60 ships. It was an uneventful passage in so far as the enemy was concerned, which perhaps was fortunate, observing that the Group had not worked together before. On 12 May, U-Boat activity was suspected and the screen was augmented by the 4th. Support Group of the Royal Navy, consisting of the destroyers H.M. Ships FAULKNER, IMPULSIVE and ONSLAUGHT. They departed on 14 May when the U-Boat threat had subsided.

The weather was reasonably good which was surprising as the convoy had been routed far to the northward, the snow-capped peaks of Greenland being visible on 12 May. On the night of 15/16 May, however, as the convoy entered the waters of the Labrador Current, a dense fog was encountered along with many icebergs, growlers and "berg bits." These presented a serious hazard to the convoy. OTTAWA, with her excellent Type 271 Mk. 4 radar and a fine ASDIC set, was able to pass the position of at least the larger icebergs to the Commodore of the convoy. Miraculously, only one ship, the SS GOTHLAND, was damaged but she managed to remain with the convoy. When the fog lifted on 16 May, the convoy was found to be badly scattered and it was some hours before it was reorganized.

Refuelling at sea was now routine and ARVIDA refuelled twice during the passage.

On 16 May, ARVIDA was detached to escort the SS TUDOR PRINCE from the convoy to St. John's arriving at 1700 on 17 May.

During the next few days in St. John's, the officers of the Group became acquainted by parties given by BANFF, DIANTHUS, FISHGUARD, ARVIDA, and OTTAWA, the latter for Commanding Officers only. Commander Pullen also had a Group meeting for Commanding Officers. There were other corvettes in port commanded by old friends and I was happy to accept invitations

from Lieutenant E.T. "Ted" Simmons, R.C.N.V.R., in H.M.C.S. PORT ARTHUR and Lieutenant F.R.K. "Fred" Naftel, R.C.N.V.R., in H.M.C.S. KENORA, both of whom had been with me on the Long "N" course in 1942. I was also glad to see Lieutenant Orme G. Stuart, R.C.N.V.R., who had been the Commanding Officer of the Prince Rupert Reserve Division when I arrived there in October 1939. He now was the Commanding Officer of the corvette H.M.S. PENNYWORT.

I believe that it was during this time in port that ARVIDA was fitted with the Canadian-built Type RXU 10 cm radar, replacing the existing SW2C. It proved little better than the latter.

My First Lieutenant, Robin Johnston, had the misfortune to develop mumps and was sent to Halifax for hospitalization. I appointed Lieutenant J. Angus Wyatt, R.C.N.V.R., as my First Lieutenant temporarily—a job he handled well.

C-5, with no changes in the Group, sailed from St. John's on Victoria Day (24 May) to meet 56-ship Convoy HX-240 the following day at WESTOMP. ARVIDA now carried the newly appointed Group A/S Officer, Lieutenant Cooper, R.N.V.R., (on loan from the Royal Navy) and also the Group Radar Officer, Lieutenant (SB) Geoffrey L. Goodwin, R.C.N.V.R. Lieutenant Cooper not only was a welcome addition for A/S purposes but also for watchkeeping duties in the absence of Robin Johnston.

The Second Support Group, consisting of H.H. Ships STARLING, WOODPECKER, WILDGOOSE, KITE and CYGNET, joined on the morning of 27 May and remained until the evening of 30 May. Air cover also was provided for the period 26-31 May. To have air cover as well as a Support Group was a far cry from earlier days.

The destroyer H.M.C.S. KOOTENAY (ex-H.M.S. DECOY) (Lieutenant-Commander Kenneth L. Dyer, R.C.N.) joined on 30 May—a very pleasant addition to the Group.

On 3 June, after turning over the convoy to the local escort, the Group proceeded to Londonderry, arriving shortly before midnight. The weather had been good and it certainly had been an uneventful passage. ARVIDA refuelled once.

During this layover in Londonderry, two of my officers, Sub-Lieutenant Robert E. Eakins, R.C.N.V.R., and Sub-Lieutenant Roger Mann, R.C.N.R., developed mumps and had to be left ashore in hospital. Sub-Lieutenant J. C. Rankin, R.C.N.V.R., from ROSTHERN was lent to me for watchkeeping duties. I also had for passage to Newfoundland a Lieutenant-Commander Smith, R.N.V.R., who also assisted in watchkeeping.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT TO ICELAND

On 11 June, C-5 sailed from Londonderry to escort ON-188, a convoy of 56 ships including the British Rescue Ship SS GOODWIN, H.M. Trawler COLDSTREAMER and H.M. Tug HESPERUS.

There were some changes in C-5 which now consisted of: OTTAWA, KOOTENAY, ROSTHERN, WETASKIWIN, ARVIDA and H.M. Ships DIANTHUS and TWEED.

The weather deteriorated after a couple of days and in the afternoon of 13 June in fairly heavy seas, ARVIDA, ahead of the convoy, obtained an ASDIC contact and carried out two depth-charge attacks. On dropping the second pattern, one depth charge exploded prematurely and shook the ship badly. Contact was not regained but ARVIDA continued to search the area until well astern of the convoy to keep down the possible U-Boat. On rejoining the screen, the "Chief" (CERA de Coste) reported that No. 1 pump had been put out of commission by the premature depth-charge explosion. He said that a considerable amount of leaking had been noted in the hull aft. At 0730 the following morning, the Chief reported that the remaining pump could not keep up with the flooding which appeared to be coming primarily from lost and loose rivets. The circulating pump could be used but that would require shutting down the main engine. Continued efforts to stem the flow were unsuccessful, and at 1400 ARVIDA was taken in tow by the tug HESPERUS with COLDSTREAMER screening, course being set for Iceland.

The following morning, 15 June, the Chief reported that by the use of the circulating pump, the water had been sufficiently lowered for the engine room staff to seal many of the rivet

holes and leaking rivets. He had found that the flooding could now be controlled by the remaining pump and that the ship could get under way again. The situation therefore was reversed, the tow being slipped with ARVIDA and COLDSTREAMER screening the tug. My subsequent signal advising that ARVIDA was now under way and giving my p.c.s. evidently caused some raised eyebrows ashore, for I was asked to confirm the signal.

The three vessels arrived in Iceland without incident and ARVIDA anchored in Qvalfjordur at 1300 16 June. The following day, ARVIDA was placed in the floating dry dock. Her hull at the stern resembled the rose of a watering can as water streamed forth, mute evidence of the poor rivetting that had been observed when the ship was being built. I had some unkind thoughts for the people responsible.

Captain Blackman, Royal Navy, the Captain of the Repair Ship H.M.S. BLENHEIM, Engineer Commander Smith, Royal Navy, and his Warrant Shipwright, Mr. Bean, could not have been more co-operative and went out of their way in preparing ARVIDA for sea again. As well as replacing a multitude of loose and lost rivets, they replaced the damaged pump and took in hand a number of other lesser defects. The repairs were completed on 25 June.

It proved to be a pleasant stay in Iceland. The weather was excellent and the sun daily slipped below the horizon at midnight to reappear again a little later. The Ship's Company worked with a will, and by the time we left, ARVIDA was resplendent with a new and much needed paint job. The hands enjoyed their time ashore as well as the amenities placed at their disposal by BLENHEIM and a U.S. depot ship in Qvalfjordur. I was able to catch up on the inevitable "paper-work" and also enjoyed hiking over the hills with my passenger, Lieutenant-Commander Smith.

We were scheduled to sail on 28 June to rendezvous with C-5 which would be escorting the eastbound Convoy HX-245. On 26 June, ARVIDA proceeded to Reykjavik. I called on Rear-Admiral C. E. Horgan, D.S.C., Royal Navy, the Flag Officer Iceland, and had lunch with his Chief of Staff, Captain N. V. Grace, Royal Navy.

The following day, the Admiral and his very charming wife invited me to dinner which also was attended by a Commander R.N.Z.N.V.R., the Senior Officer of a flotilla of Bangor minesweepers stationed in Reykjavik. The Admiral's "house" was a Nissen Hut which his wife had decorated most tastefully.

Before leaving St. John's on 24 May, I had made arrangements for Daphne, who was then staying at the Willow Tree Inn in Halifax, to arrive in St. John's about the time I anticipated ARVIDA would return. I assumed that she had arrived and had been able to ascertain my whereabouts from shore authorities. In any event, I thought that it would be well to send her a cable. Bearing in mind security requirements, I cabled: "Sorry plans went awry. Could have let you stay at Willow Tree for another month."

Before leaving Iceland I made arrangements for flights to Canada for Lieutenant-Commander Smith and Sub-Lieutenant Rankin—the latter as ROSTHERN was bound for refit. We had to do a little doubling-up on watchkeeping.

ARVIDA sailed from Reykjavik at 0900 28 June in fine weather. Thanks to accurate observations, HX-245 was met at the appointed time of 0700 "Dominion Day" (1 July). As ARVIDA approached, OTTAWA flashed a signal: "Glad that your haemorrhoids are cured." The signalman was having difficulty with the key word and kept flashing back "IMI" (requesting a repeat). I had read the word and finally growled, "Haemorrhoids!" to which the signalman queried: "What does that mean, sir?" Momentarily forgetting my avowed dislike for an officer to use any suggestion of coarse language to a rating, I snapped: "Holes in the arse!"—although that perhaps was medically incorrect.

A little later I learnt that Commander Kenneth F. Adams, R.C.N., was in command of OTTAWA temporarily, as Commander Pullen was ill. I did not think that OTTAWA's greeting had a Pullen-ish touch.

ROUTINE CONVOYS

HX-245 was a "mega-convoy" of 80 ships including an Escort Carrier, H.M.S. CHASER and a "MAC Ship," the SS EMPIRE MACANDREW, both of which flew off anti-submarine patrols. MAC Ships were "Merchant Aircraft Carriers" conceived by the Admiralty. They carried four to eight Royal Naval Swordfish Torpedo Bombers. Suitable British merchant ships and tankers of 8,000 to 11,000 tons were strengthened and fitted with flight decks on which the slow-flying Swordfish could take off and land. The MAC Ship was a vast improvement over the earlier "CAM Ship," which stood for "Catapult-Aircraft Merchantman." These were operated to defend convoys against long-range German bomber attacks. Suitable British merchant ships had a ramp and a catapult affixed forward from which an RAF Hurricane fighter could be launched. The aircraft, of course, could not land on the ship, so having disposed of the attacking bomber(s), the pilot had to ditch when his fuel ran out, preferably close to an escort and hope to be picked up. ARVIDA had one occasion to pick up such a pilot. It was gathered from this pilot that the assignment to a CAM Ship was not on a voluntary basis but more often than not because the pilot was in "the doghouse" for some reason or another. He did not reveal why he had been assigned to a CAM Ship! I never learnt the fatality rate of CAM Ship pilots.

ROSTHERN's place in the Group had been taken by H.M.C.S. KITCHENER (K-225), in command of another old friend from the 1942 Long "N" Course, Acting Lieutenant-Commander William "Bill" Evans, R.C.N.V.R.

On 4 July at the behest of KOOTENAY, ships of the Group "dressed ship" with a U. S. flag. As ARVIDA did not carry such a flag, Leading Signalman Wilson (who had passed his Board for Sub-Lieutenant) sat up most of the previous night painting an excellent U. S. Flag on a red flag! (He was permitted to keep it as a memento!)

OTTAWA, DIANTHUS and ARVIDA detached on 4 July with the fast section of the convoy—ships capable of 12 knots or better. The rest of the Group with KOOTENAY as Senior Officer, remained with the main body.

Arrival in Londonderry was made in the early hours of 6 July and an unusually long layover of eight days was enjoyed. As usual, full use was made of the excellent Royal Naval training facilities ashore. A number of shipboard parties took place and together with the other Commanding Officers of the Group I was privileged to dine with Commodore Simpson, Commodore (D), at the Savoy Hotel.

The weather was excellent throughout our stay and so was the cycling. I was happy to welcome back Sub-Lieutenants Eakins and Mann, fully recovered from their mumps.

On 15 July, C-5 departed Londonderry for A/S exercises with a "tame" submarine off the entrance to Lough Foyle. On completion on 16 July, the Group proceeded to Moville for topping up and overnight. At 0530 the following morning C-5 sailed to escort another mega-convoy of 81 ships, ON-193. The composition of C-5 now appeared to be stabilized: OTTAWA, KOOTENAY, KITCHENER, WETASKIWIN, DIANTHUS and ARVIDA.

With a convoy of this size, six escorts could in no manner provide an adequate screen. The front of the convoy of 14 columns must have been 7 or 8 miles with a depth of possibly 3 miles. The Royal Navy's Fifth Support Group consisting of the frigates H.M. Ships NENE and TWEED and the corvettes H.M.C. Ships CALGARY, PORT ARTHUR and SNOWBERRY, therefore joined on 19 July and remained until 23 July. Air cover was provided from 21 to 24 July.

The weather was excellent and the passage once again uneventful, with not even a sniff of the enemy. C-5 arrived in St. John's on 25 July. I was glad to welcome back Robin Johnston, he, too, fully recovered from mumps. Commander Pullen, recovered from his illness, again took command of OTTAWA.

C-5 sailed from St. John's on 4 August to escort HX-250, yet another "mega-convoy" of 79 ships. On this occasion no additional support was provided, nor was there an escort carrier or a MAC Ship in the convoy. Good air cover, however, was provided for much of the time.

After turning over the convoy to a local Group, C-5 arrived in Londonderry on 14 August. It had proved to be another uneventful passage and the Group was becoming a little restive. It is difficult to keep ships at peak fighting efficiency when there appears to be no threat from the enemy.

I believe that it was during this layover in Londonderry that the Commanding Officers of the Group took advantage of the open invitation of C.-in-C. W.A. to attend anti-submarine seminars in Derby House, Liverpool, under the guidance of Captain Roberts, Royal Navy. These were conducted in the operations room of C.-in-C. W.A.'s Headquarters. It was a most worthwhile visit, Captain Roberts and his highly efficient staff passing on all the latest intelligence on the current tactics of U-Boats and what might be expected in the future. A number of simulated A/S exercises also were carried out.

While in Liverpool we stayed at the grand old Adelphi Hotel. About six tons of herring had been released to Liverpool and we were served herring at least twice a day, prepared in a variety of ways—all excellent!

I believe it was during this layover in Londonderry that ARVIDA was fitted with Type 271M radar, replacing the ever-failing RXU.

On 28 August C-5 sailed from Londonderry to Moville for topping-up and overnight, proceeding the following morning at 0400 to escort ON-199, a convoy of 61 ships, including H.M. Trawler SAPPER and H.M. Tug ALLEGIANCE.

DIANTHUS had now left the Group for refit, her place being taken by the corvette H.M.C.S. LA MALBAIE (Lieutenant Janes S. "Foghorn" Davis, R.C.N.V.R.). We were sorry to lose DIANTHUS, a splendid member of the team, but LA MALBAIE was a fine replacement. Her Captain was another old friend from the Long "N" Course in early 1942—and Fairmiles.

H.M. Trawler SAPPER, who was in the convoy as the escort for the tug ALLEGIANCE should her services be required, proved useless, being unable to keep up with the convoy which was making 9½ knots. She was ordered back to Liverpool.

It turned out to be a most undisciplined convoy, with very poor station-keeping and constant straggling. This kept the escorts busy, having to leave their place in the screen to prod ships back to their proper station.

A strong northwesterly gale came up during the night of 31 August and the SS FORT CABOT RIVER straggled and failed to rejoin. We did not learn her fate.

All in all it was yet another uneventful passage. ARVIDA refuelled twice. C-5 arrived in St. John's just after midnight on 4 September. As Commander Pullen reported: "It was a very dull passage without even a non-sub contact to attack."

C-5 departed from St. John's on 14 September 1943 to escort HX-256, a convoy of 62 ships including the British Rescue Ship SS GOTHLAND. There had been more changes in the composition of C-5. OTTAWA had to undergo a short refit and KOOTENAY now was the Senior Officer. It transpired that LA MALBAIE was not to be a permanent member of the Group and had been assigned elsewhere. The corvettes H.M.C. Ships EYEBRIGHT and SUDBURY (Lieutenant Douglas S. Martin, R.C.N.R.) were assigned to C-5 temporarily. H.M. Tugs ALLEGIANCE and SAMPSONIA also sailed with the Group, to be stationed in the convoy.

There was a little excitement in an otherwise dull passage when the SS WILLIAM PEPPERELL reported that she had been torpedoed. An operation known as "ARTICHOKE" was ordered by the Senior Officer, but no ASDIC contacts were gained. A little later, the WILLIAM PEPPERELL reported that she had been torpedoed for the second time. It was finally determined that there had been no torpedo attacks, but that some special defensive gear with which she was equipped had blown up and had caused a considerable amount of damage. She was, however, able to maintain her station in the convoy.

Good weather prevailed during the passage although some fog was encountered. ARVIDA fuelled twice. In due course, the convoy was turned over to the local escort and C-5 proceeded to Moville for topping-up on 22 September, thence to Londonderry.

THE "GNAT"

On arrival we heard the shocking news of the sinking of ST. CROIX and H.M. Ships POLYANTHUS and ITCHEN by the new "German Naval Acoustic Torpedo" (GNAT). There had been a tremendous loss of life. H.M.S. LAGAN also had been torpedoed but eventually was towed to port. This was the first use of the GNAT, a torpedo that homed on the noise of a ship's propellers. A brief account of this engagement, summarised from *The Atlantic Campaign* by Dan van der Vat, is given below. A diagram depicting this battle is given in APPENDIX I.

The convoys involved were ON-202, 38 ships, escorted by the RCN Group C-2 (7 escorts) and ONS-18, a very slow convoy of 27 ships escorted by the RN Group B-3 (9 escorts). ONS-18 sailed from the United Kingdom on 12 September, ON-202 on 15 September. By 19 September, ON-202 had nearly overtaken ONS-18. It was now known that a massive line of U-Boats was lying in wait across the line of advance of the convoys. It did not appear to be feasible to divert the convoys with any hope of success so it was decided that the two convoys should amalgamate. The RCN Support Group 9 was despatched to augment the screen. This provided 21 escorts to screen the combined convoy of 65 ships. Nevertheless, the initial use of the GNAT proved devastating. LAGAN had her stern blown off on the night of 19/20 September. The following night ST. CROIX (Lieutenant-Commander Dobson) and POLYANTHUS were sunk. ITCHEN picked up many survivors from both ships. On the night 22/23 September, ITCHEN was sunk, with the survivors from ST. CROIX and POLYANTHUS on board. Only three were rescued from the ship's companies of the three ships—one from each. During the course of the battle, three U-Boats were destroyed, two were damaged and seven merchant ships sunk.

For some months, the Admiralty had anticipated that in due course U-Boats would be provided with a homing torpedo and had prepared for such an eventuality by producing "FOXER GEAR." This was a simple noise-maker, towed astern when it was suspected a U-Boat might be in the vicinity, the GNAT homing on the FOXER instead of a ship's propeller(s). It appeared that neither the Admiralty nor NSHQ had suspected the use of the GNAT so soon. The FOXER and later the Canadian CAT GEAR had one serious drawback: their noise severely hampered the effectiveness of ASDIC. The ships of C-5 were equipped with FOXER GEAR before departing from Londonderry to escort the next convoy.

Fair weather continued during this stay in Londonderry and a cricket match was arranged between a team from KOOTENAY and one from ARVIDA, KITCHENER and WETASKIWIN. KOOTENAY fielded 13 to our 11! We declared at 69 for 5 wickets, but KOOTENAY knocked off the necessary runs for 8 wickets.

On the morning of Sunday 26 September, Jack Kidston and I accompanied Commander Pullen to the Cathedral to attend a special Naval service to commemorate the Battle of Britain. In the afternoon, Jack and I cycled to Buncrana, in Southern Ireland and enjoyed tea at our favourite little restaurant, The Erin. Many of us often crossed into (neutral) Southern Ireland (in plain clothes of course!). Border Guards knew who we were but never gave any trouble. It was rather strange to go to such places as Packie's Bar in Moville where an abundant supply of liquors of all kinds was on display at low prices, all being virtually unobtainable in Ulster or in the U.K. and even if available, at stratospheric cost. (To clarify any question about the status of Moville, the village of Moville was in Southern Ireland. Where we refuelled was across the Foyle in Ulster.)

MORE ROUTINE CONVOYS

C-5's next assignment was to escort ON-205 on 6 October 1943. ARVIDA sailed at 0630 to escort the Loch Ewe Section to the convoy. The rest of the Group sailed about noon. The Loch Ewe Section proved to be a single ship which was delivered to the convoy shortly after noon the

following day. There was one change in the composition of C-5: the corvette H.M.C.S. SOREL had taken the place of EYEBRIGHT. H.M. Trawler BOMBARDIER and H.M. Tug BUSTLER sailed with the Group from Londonderry, to be stationed in the convoy.

On 9 October, the 7th. Support Group, consisting of H.M. Ships PHEASANT, CHANTICLEER and CRANE joined the screen but detached on 13 October to support HX-260.

Again, the enemy was not encountered, but the fine weather that had been enjoyed in recent passages began to deteriorate on 9 October. From 11 to 15 October, a very heavy westerly gale with winds in excess of 50 knots was encountered and a number of ships in the convoy suffered damage. The convoy was badly scattered by 13 October and great credit was due to the ships as they rejoined as the weather moderated. It must have been extremely difficult to handle large merchant ships in ballast in the strong winds and heavy seas that were still running.

At the height of the storm the SS JAN LIEVANS reported that her keel, bilge plates and tank tops in the engine room were fractured and that she was unable to proceed. BOMBARDIER and BUSTLER were able to find the JAN LIEVANS and in the worst possible conditions of wind, seas and visibility, these two small vessels managed to take her in tow to the safety of Iceland—an act of seamanship that would be hard to follow.

The SS JOHN GORRIE also was severely damaged, her sheer strake and deck plating abreast No. 3 and 5 hatches being fractured. She proceeded independently to Iceland and arrived safely.

All ships of C-5 refuelled from a tanker in the convoy on 8 October but heavy weather prohibited any further refuellings. In consequence, WETASKIWIN and ARVIDA, both low in fuel, were detached on 14 October, arriving in St. John's p.m. 18 October.

Unhappily, it seemed that it was no longer possible to keep the Group intact as a team. For the next assignment, while OTTAWA and ROSTHERN returned from their refits, KOOTENAY now had to leave for a short refit and KITCHENER and SUDBURY were assigned elsewhere. The

corvette H.M.C.S. DAUPHIN (Lieutenant Matthew H. Wallace, R.C.N.R.) and H.M.S. BURNHAM joined the Group.

At 1600 23 October, C-5, less ARVIDA, sailed from St. John's taking over the escort of HX-262, a convoy of 61 ships, the following morning. ARVIDA was delayed because of a defective main generator. She sailed the next day and caught up with the convoy at noon on 26 October in position 43° 58' North, 38° 30' West.

On 28 October, in position 47° 05' North, 28° 15' West, the screen was augmented by the 2nd. Support Group, consisting of the sloops H.M. Ships STARLING, MAGPIE, WOODCOCK, WILDGOOSE and TRACKER. They parted company the following evening.

The convoy was turned over to the local escort at 0100 on 2 November in position 55° 33' North, 06° 52' West and the Group detached for Londonderry, arriving at 0300.

The convoy had been routed well to the southward and the weather had been excellent. The usual refuelling had taken place, but it was yet another dull, monotonous convoy, with no sign of the enemy.

The usual use was made of the training facilities ashore and a number of defects were taken in hand. The weather was not bad for the time of the year and Jack Kidston and I went on our usual bicycle trips to Buncrana and way points. I think that it was during layover that Jack and I had been invited to have dinner with Commander Pullen in OTTAWA, berthed some distance from our ships. After dinner we discussed convoys, U-Boat tactics, seamanship and a multitude of other subjects. We had a sherry before dinner and a brandy afterwards. We drank nothing else in the course of the evening. Sober as judges, we left about 2230. It was a dark, moonless night and we had no flashlights. At one point we were not sure if we might have missed the way back to our ships. I remarked to Jack: "You go first. If you fall in, I'll know to stop." I had hardly uttered the remark, when SPLASH! Jack had indeed fallen in. It was a drop of about ten feet to the water, but luckily there was no "guard log." Jack replied to my shout of enquiry that he was all right but was there a

blinkety-blank ladder nearby. There was, and I had to light matches to guide him to it. As he came up the ladder, his Burberry was still on his shoulder and he was wearing his cap. We found that we were almost at our ships and we had made a sufficient commotion to bring several of ARVIDA's hands on deck. ARVIDA was secured alongside with WETASKIWIN berthed outboard. As Jack crossed ARVIDA's quarterdeck to WETASKIWIN, dripping wet, I'm sure that the hands thought that we had imbibed unwisely!

On our arrival in Londonderry, BURNHAM was detached from the Group but we were delighted to welcome back DIANTHUS with Neil Israel still in command. The Frigate H.M.C.S. WASKESIU (Lieutenant-Commander John S. MacDonald, R.C.N.R.) joined C-5.

C-5 sailed from Londonderry at 0830 14 November to rendezvous with ON-211, a convoy of 50 ships including the MAC Ship EMPIRE MACANDREW and the British Rescue Ship SS ABOYNE. H.M. Trawler NORTHERN SPRAY sailed earlier and H.M. Tug ASSIDUOUS was with the Clyde Section, both being stationed in the convoy. The weather deteriorated on leaving the Foyle and a full northeasterly gale was blowing when the Clyde and Loch Ewe Sections of 18 ships were met at the designated position of 55° 57' North, 06° 50' West. Apparently the main body was badly scattered to the southward. By first light on 15 November, with the gale still blowing, only 18 ships were still in sight. WASKESIU was despatched to try to find the Commodore's ship and to round up any ships sighted. It was nearly dark before a reasonably well-formed convoy of 50 ships was proceeding on the proper course.

The weather moderated on 17 November and the EMPIRE MACANDREW was able to fly off patrols. Poor weather during the rest of the passage, however, prohibited any further flying.

Once again the enemy was not met and the convoy was turned over intact to the WLEF Group at 1000 on 24 November. OTTAWA proceeded to Halifax for a long refit and the rest of the Group entered St. John's in the late afternoon.

On 26 November, Robin Johnston, who had done an excellent job as Number One, was appointed ashore for medical reasons and was replaced by Lieutenant John Charles Paul Desrochers, R.C.N.V.R.

Regrettably, I have few notes on the next two convoys, the first of which was an eastbound convoy of 55 ships, HX-268, which included H.M. Trawler LANCER and H.M. Tug ASPIRANT. WETASKIWIN left the Group for a long refit, but KOOTENAY returned with Lieutenant-Commander Dyer still in command and assumed the duties of Senior Officer. C-5 now consisted of KOOTENAY, WASKESIU, ROSTHERN, ARVIDA, the corvette H.M.C.S. DUNVER and H.M. Ships DIANTHUS and GOULD.

C-5 sailed from St. John's on 30 November in deteriorating weather and HX-268 was met the following day. The weather continued to deteriorate and at one point, the convoy was hove-to in a gale with winds of 50 to 55 knots. As was now customary, there was no sign of the enemy during the passage. C-5 proceeded to Londonderry on 11 December after turning over the convoy to the local escort. After a long layover in Londonderry, C-5 sailed on Christmas Day 1943 to escort the westbound Convoy ON-217 and arrived in St. John's on 5 January 1944. As usual, it had been yet another dull convoy, the enemy being conspicuous by his absence.

ARVIDA was scheduled for a badly needed refit and modernization and departed from St. John's for Halifax on 6 January 1944, arriving on 9 January.

When detached for refit on 5 January 1944, ARVIDA had the distinction of being the only ship that had been a member of C-5 since its inception on 6 May 1943 to have been in the Group for every convoy escorted by it. This included westbound ON-188, when ARVIDA was damaged and had to proceed to Iceland for repairs but had met the next convoy escorted by C-5, the eastbound HX-245.

It had, however, been a most frustrating eight months. Although the object—"the safe and timely arrival of the convoy"—had been achieved in every instance, it was extremely disappointing not

to have met the enemy. Commander Pullen, whom I had known since 1939 and who had been a splendid Senior Officer, shared these views most emphatically. U-Boats had been destroyed by other Groups, but C-5 did not have the opportunity to do so. Unlike the dismal days through 1942, when RCN escorts were overworked and poorly equipped, Escort Groups now had better schedules and the majority of ships—not including ARVIDA—had greatly improved equipment enabling them to meet the enemy on more even terms.

REFIT IN CURTIS BAY

On 12 January 1944, ARVIDA departed from Halifax for Curtis Bay, Maryland, not far from Baltimore, where she was to refit at the Dockyard of the U. S. Coast Guard. I had been instructed to de-ammunition en route at the U. S. Naval Base in Norfolk, Virginia. ARVIDA's arrival in Norfolk at 0800 15 January, coincided with a heavy snowstorm, there being about six inches on the ground. I had signalled my ETA and a berth had been designated. There was, however, no sign of life at the base and I secured alongside at the assigned berth without the benefit of anyone being present to take the lines. During the next hour, all attempts to raise anyone at the base failed. The visibility in the snow was poor and as I wished to reach Curtis Bay—far up Chesapeake Bay—before dark, I dumped my ammunition on the dock and departed, sending a signal to the base that I had done so.

The first part of passage up Chesapeake Bay was not altogether pleasant. The visibility in snow was extremely poor, but fortunately my 271 radar and the echo sounder were in good order and it was a matter of navigating from buoy to buoy—such as there were. Luckily the weather cleared in the afternoon and arrival in Curtis Bay was made without incident.

En route to Curtis Bay, I received a rather rude signal from the Norfolk Naval Base about dumping my ammunition and upon arrival I was given a hand message that the U. S. Coast Guard Commandant wished to see me in the morning. He greeted me warmly, then waved a copy of the signal from Norfolk, saying: "Tell me about it!" He laughed when I recounted my experiences,

remarking something to the effect that the U. S. Navy could operate pretty well at sea, but had difficulty doing so ashore, particularly when it snowed. Apparently he was senior to the Admiral in the Norfolk Naval Base, for he drafted a signal giving ARVIDA a very mild slap on the wrist but admonishing Norfolk for failing to fulfill its obligations. It was not until later that I learnt that the Coast Guard was older than the U. S. Navy and liked to rub it in! Years afterwards, when I was serving on the Staff of SACLANT in Norfolk, I found that even a couple inches of snow tied up everything!

The Coast Guard people could not do too much for us and all the facilities of the base were open to my officers and ratings. Thanks to the British Naval Liaison Officer, a Commander Royal Navy, I obtained accommodation and Daphne joined me shortly after ARVIDA's arrival.

The refit progressed very well and I expected to rejoin C-5 again in April. I had been promoted to Lieutenant-Commander on 1 January 1944 and on 14 March I received a signal that as of 16 March, I was appointed in command of a frigate, H.M.C.S. STETTLER (K-681), then building in Montreal at the yard of Canadian Vickers Limited.

All told, I had served in ARVIDA for over 27 months, all of which had been challenging, but which I had thoroughly enjoyed in spite of occasional frustrations. I had become deeply attached to ARVIDA and her Ship's Company which, with the exception of the odd "bad egg," always had been a keen, willing and hard-working team, which had put up cheerfully with some extremely difficult living conditions. Later in 1944, I was astonished to learn that I had been "Mentioned in Despatches" for service in ARVIDA and wondered if perchance there had been some mix-up. In any event, I only wished that all members of the "team" could have shared the honour, for they indeed had "most loyally and capably carried out their duties under the most trying conditions." The citation read:

Lieutenant-Commander Dudley Gawen King.....since assuming command of one of His Majesty's Canadian Corvettes in September 1942 has most loyally and capably carried out his

duties under the most trying conditions. In encounters with the enemy he has proved himself to be both cool and courageous...

The device for the M.I.D. was a bronze oak leaf which was worn on the jacket where a medal ribbon would be worn and later would be affixed to the ribbon of the "1939-45 War Medal" when issued.

My corvette days were about to close and looking back, apart from what I have recounted already, there are a few memories that perhaps are worth recording.

CORVETTE MEMORIES

Seaworthiness — Corvettes, designed along the lines of a highly successful British whale-catcher, the SOUTHERN PRIDE, sometimes were said to "bob around like a cork." They certainly were lively, even in moderate seas, but they proved to be marvellously seaworthy. I recall very clearly the first time that ARVIDA was pounding into an ever increasing gale, with waves finally reaching a height of 30 to 40 feet. I remember watching as one monster wave bore down from ahead. I expected that the ship would take it green, with tons of water cascading over the fo'c's'le. Instead the bow rose almost majestically and the ship slid down the other side of the wave to meet succeeding waves with the same aplomb, only a comparatively small amount of water breaking over the fo'c's'le.

There was one night, however, when a "rogue wave" struck ARVIDA broadside, about 70° from the direction of the seas. I had been on the bridge for many hours and was thoroughly soaked. As the storm had moderated slightly, I had slipped down to my "day cabin" to change into something dry. (My "sea cabin" consisted of a bunk at the back of the ASDIC hut, behind the ASDIC operator.) Just as I had completed changing, there was a resounding crash and ARVIDA heeled far over to starboard. I managed to clamber out of my cabin and fought my way to the bridge, as the ship slowly righted herself. She had heeled so far over that water had poured down the funnel. Somehow, the lookout in the gun platform aft had managed to hang on, but his binoculars went overside. There were a good many bumps and bruises, but no one was seriously hurt. When dawn broke, we assessed the damage. One boat was stove in. Three Carley floats had been wrenched from

their lashings and washed overboard. Two steel "ready-use lockers" (used for stowing various deck supplies) which had been welded to the deck, had been torn off and gone overside. Below decks there was a considerable amount of damage to crockery and other breakable items, which would have been perfectly secure in any normal storm.

The rather amusing sequel was when next in port I submitted my report of loss and damage. Everything was approved without question, except the binoculars! I had much difficulty in persuading shore authorities that they had indeed gone overside. Had the lookout gone with them, there would have been no problem. I recall telling one doubting Thomas that it was bloody obvious that he had never been at sea. He hadn't!

It was found also that corvettes were virtually free from any danger of pooping. As mentioned earlier, when the destroyer OTTAWA was pooped in 1941, ARVIDA and the other corvettes in the Group had not suffered from this problem. I remember on one occasion, when nearly hove-to with a gale blowing from astern, watching the stern rising to the seas perfectly with no sign of pooping.

Corvettes were indeed lively and often for days at a time it was not possible to sit down to a meal, even if it had been possible for the galley to prepare one. Instead, sandwiches or soup with perhaps a bit of hardtack were taken while hanging on to a stanchion.

Conditions Below Decks — Originally, corvettes were built with a "short fo'c's'le." That is, the raised deck of the fo'c's'le ended some ten feet in front of the bridge section. The bulkhead at the after end of the fo'c's'le had doors in it leading to the messdecks. In spite of doorway baffles, water spilling over the fo'c's'le, or coming over the ship's sides found its way into the messdecks below which were awash most of the time in stormy weather. Water also entered the officers' quarters and I recall numerous times when I was the First Lieutenant having a couple of inches of water swishing around in my cabin. Later, corvettes were built with extended fo'c's'les and

many of the short fo'c's'le corvettes were converted, which eliminated the problem. ARVIDA was not converted while I was in command.

A Near Miss — It happened during the dark hours in reasonably good weather with moderately fair visibility. ARVIDA was stationed about a mile off the starboard bow of the convoy at an angle of about 45°. Escorts always zig-zagged in station. The Officer of the Watch was halfway into a "zig" to port when he saw a large shape fine on the starboard bow. ARVIDA's radar was broken down and the lookouts had not seen it. A moment later the O.O.W. realized that it was a large ship steaming at good speed directly at ARVIDA. He ordered full ahead and continued his turn to port. I happened to be on my way to the bridge and arrived just as the ship passed not more than two hundred feet from ARVIDA's stern. It was so close that it prompted a strange reaction in the lookout in the gun platform aft, who threw his lighted flashlight at the ship whose huge bow wave seemed to toss ARVIDA many feet in the air. It was either the QUEEN MARY or ELIZABETH—I forget which—full of troops and doing about 30 knots. It was an uncomfortably close call. Luckily, the QUEEN evidently detected the convoy just in time and altered course to avoid. We learnt afterwards that someone had erred and had routed the QUEEN incorrectly. It always has puzzled me, however, why the QUEEN had not detected the convoy earlier. I never heard if heads fell over the incident, but they certainly would have if the QUEEN had plowed into the convoy—or had demolished ARVIDA.

Disintegration of a Merchant Ship — I cannot recall in what convoy this incident occurred, but I can see it as clearly today as I did then. It was during the dark hours and the convoy, under attack, was lit up with Snowflakes. ARVIDA was about a mile from the starboard side of the convoy. I was scanning the water towards the convoy for a surfaced U-Boat, when I caught sight of a ship in the convoy whose entire hull in an instant became the colour of a red-hot poker. A split second later the ship disappeared in a column of water. My eyes did not deceive me, nor was it a

figment of my imagination. I had seen tankers loaded with gasoline blow up, but this was unreal. Had anyone told me that they had seen what I saw, I would have been highly sceptical.

Heroism — Heroism is an overused word and in this day and age the meaning of "hero" has become eroded to the extent that even an athlete who performs well is termed a hero. It is an elusive word, measureless, sometimes determined only by the eye or mind of the beholder. It comes in many forms. The men on watch in the boiler room of a corvette in wartime might qualify, for should a torpedo strike, their chance of survival virtually would be nil. The merchant seaman who somehow had managed to cling to the bottom of an upturned lifeboat in an Atlantic gale, the while clutching a shipmate (the last of 10) who was too weak to hang on, to me was a hero. In ARVIDA there were two different acts, one of which definitely was heroism—the other an ongoing display of courage.

Petty Officer Stefan Helgason, as mentioned earlier, was the cousin of Lieutenant-Commander Bent Gestur Sivertz, R.C.N.R. On this occasion the convoy was under attack from U-Boats when a faulty blazing Snowflake, fired by a merchant ship, landed on ARVIDA's depth charges in the rails aft. Petty Officer Helgason had no knowledge if it could cause the depth charges to explode, but without a moment's hesitation, he leapt to the rails, seized the Snowflake in his bare hands and cast it overside. For this he was awarded the B.E.M. (British Empire Medal).

Ordinary Seaman Evans was a member of the Ship's Company drafted to ARVIDA when she was commissioned on 22 May 1941. He was a "new entry," an "Ordinary Seaman" who had never been to sea—slight of stature, probably about 18 years of age. He proved to be a victim of chronic seasickness, but never missed a watch and even carried a bucket with him when taking a turn at the wheel. He was never in trouble, ashore or afloat, and was a diligent worker. He was still in ARVIDA when I rejoined the ship in August 1942. I had hoped that he might have overcome his seasickness, but it was as bad as ever. He seemed to have lost some of the little weight he ever carried, but not his spirit. As I had done when I was in ARVIDA previously, I discussed with him

the possibility of having him drafted ashore for medical reasons. Again he begged me not to do so. Fortunately I found that he had developed a marked aptitude for Gunnery, so a few weeks later I was able to have him drafted ashore honourably to take a specialized Gunnery Course. I lost track of Evans until I ran into him near the end of the war. He now was a Chief Gunner's Mate—a Chief Petty Officer in one of the most respected branches of the Service. I sincerely congratulated him, but refrained from asking about his seasickness. Perhaps Evan's battle against seasickness was not heroism, but it certainly was the pluckiest performance I had ever seen.

"The Press" — There was an occasion during a layover in Londonderry that I acquired a distrust for "the press." A member of the press, whom I had known in Vancouver in my rugger days, called on me in ARVIDA. It was a beautiful autumn afternoon and during a casual conversation, as we observed a couple of lads nearby tossing a rugger ball to each other, I remarked: "Gad! I'd like to be playing rugger at Brockton Point!" (in Vancouver). Weeks later, I received a cutting of an article in a Vancouver newspaper from a friend. The headline read: "SKIPPER OF CANADIAN CORVETTE WISHES HE WAS HOME." The utter bastard!

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