



# ACTION STATIONS



THE LOG OF THE LAST CORVETTE — HMCS SACKVILLE

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## GOVERNMENT TURNS OVER "THE LAST CORVETTE" TO CNCT IN HALIFAX

CNCT Campaign Chairman E.C. Bovey (left) formally accepts HMCS Sackville at handover ceremony on 28 October. In fore ground are ship's nameplate and framed ship's papers. (Below) CPO George Heard, and Vice-Admiral J.C. Wood present Maritime Command's "big" contribution to Commodore A.C. McMillin. Behind Commodore McMillin the "grand old lady" rests in drydock.



## GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS TITLE OF SACKVILLE TO CORVETTE TRUST

Halifax, 28 October 1983 ---"Today Senator Henry Hicks, on behalf of the Government of Canada, has just transferred title of CFAV Sackville to the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust and she is ours. You may rest assured that she has found a good home with friends who love her and who will take good care of her."

With those words CNCT Campaign Chairman E.C. Bovey accepted title to the last corvette during a colourful ceremony at the Halifax Industries Ltd. drydock.

The short, crisp ceremony, conducted in brilliant sunshine, to the accompaniment of the Stadacona Band at HIL's Scotiadock, gave no hint of the last minute chaos of the night before when an emergency session of Parliament over the Grenada situation prevented the Hon. Geraïd Regan, acting Secretary of State for External Affairs from attending. Mr. Regan had been scheduled to turn over title of the ship to the Trust.

A spate of late night and early morning telephone calls between Ottawa, Toronto and Halifax and the generous acceptance by Senator Hicks to fill in for the Minister permitted the handing over ceremonies to go flawlessly. Senator Hicks managed to fit the last-minute assignment into his already crowded Dalhousie University Commencement schedule.

Vice Admiral J.C. Wood, Commander, Maritime Command, reviewed Sackville's career which began and ended working to make the seas safe for merchant shipping. First as a wartime convoy escort ship, and later in civilian life as an acoustic research vessel engaged in the study of underwater sound detection.

Pointing to Sackville, high and dry in the drydock behind him, Admiral Wood said: "We are here to pay our respects to a grand old lady, a real survivor", adding that having her on public display "with her bottom

uncovered" was perhaps an odd way of showing this respect.

Then, accompanied by CPO George Heard, Admiral Wood presented Mr. Bovey with a three foot long cheque for \$24,751.81, the proceeds of a campaign among the officers and men of Maritime Command. Maritime Command had set a campaign objective of \$15,000. Not only was this almost doubled as of the turning over of the ship, but contributions are still being received from the Pacific Command and will be turned over as they are received.

Presenting the cheque to Mr. Bovey, Admiral Wood said he was particularly impressed and gratified by the depth of the response to the campaign. "It was not just the old guard which contributed but the men and women of every rank in military establishments from Argentina to Esquimalt."

Senator Hicks presented Mr. Bovey with Sackville's name plate and her framed ship's papers. He praised the efforts to restore the ship to her wartime appearance and said that "many of Sackville's staunchest allies are here with us today" and others are working in towns and cities across the country.

The task ahead is a mammoth one, in fact the largest ship restoration ever undertaken in Canada, but he said he was sure that it would be crowned with success and that HMCS Sackville would occupy "that safe and historic resting place" she had so well earned.

Mr. Bovey accepted title to the ship on behalf of all who sailed in her and her sister ships of the Navy in World War II and on behalf of present and future generations of Canadians.

"I hope that HMCS Sackville will also be a constant reminder to Canadians that for all their country's thousands of miles of prairies, lakes and mountains, Canada is a maritime nation, ever-dependent on the freedom of the seas. Canadians must be prepared, today and in the future, as they have always in the past, to maintain and defend that freedom."

## **SPEAKERS NEEDED TO "TALK UP" CNCT/HMCS SACKVILLE PROJECT**

Speakers willing to address service clubs, Legion Branches, business and church groups are urgently needed.

Program Chairmen of local clubs and associations are always on the qui vive for an interesting speaker with a different story to fill their schedules for regular meetings.

The Sackville story is a different one and you are probably just the interesting speaker to make it come alive. A short slide presentation is available, complete with commentary as well as notes for a 15 minute speech on the restoration and preservation of HMCS Sackville.

If you belong to an organization which regularly uses guest speakers for its members, or if you are willing to speak to other groups, please send your name, address and telephone number to the Secretary at Corporation House Ltd., 85 Albert Street, Suite 500, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6A4.

If you can, enclose a list of those organizations you think might be interested in the Sackville story and the names of those to whom you would be willing to speak.

## **ATLANTIC VETERANS EXCHANGE SALUTES IN HALIFAX HARBOUR**

HALIFAX, N.S., 12 OCTOBER --- The Royal Navy hasn't lost its touch for the beau geste.

During its short passage from Jetty 9 to the Halifax Industries Ltd. drydock for bottom cleaning and repairs, Sackville was towed past elements of the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic, in Halifax for a two-week visit.

Passing the sleek, modern British, U.S., German and Netherlands warships tied up in the dockyard, the partially dismantled Sackville looked small, somewhat bedraggled and just a little sad --- but not for long.

As Sackville drew slowly abeam, bosuns pipes

shrilled on HMS Glasgow's deck as the British veteran of the recent Falkland Islands War saluted a doughty veteran of another earlier, but obviously unforgotten, victorious Atlantic campaign.

Smartly uniformed on Sackville's bridge in hard hat, windbreaker and blue jeans, Vern Howland, a retired RCN captain and Project Manager of the Sackville restoration, returned the courtesies with a hand salute and a large lump in his throat.

Well done Glasgow, 30,000 former corvette sailors across Canada proudly return your salute.

## **39-YEAR-OLD 'WARM' MEMORIES OF A 'YANK PONGO' BRING CORVETTE CONTRIBUTION**

TOGUS, MAINE, 7 NOVEMBER --- The Chief of Ophthalmology at the Veterans Administration Center here has "warm" memories of a Canadian corvette.

Col. Merrill J. King Jr. recalled a cold, foggy late afternoon in Argentinia Bay just before Christmas, 1944, when he and a group of libertymen from a U.S. minesweeper anchored in the bay were "quite literally" saved by a Canadian Flower Class corvette.

Col. King, then an enlisted seaman, was on his way for a run ashore after escorting a slow convoy from Sydney, N.S., when the whaleboat ferrying them was run down in the fog by a passing tanker.

"They neither saw us before, nor heard us after their wake overturned our boat and threw us into the freezing water", Col. King said. "Fortunately a nearby Canadian corvette heard our cries for help and fished us out, freezing cold and wet, but otherwise none the worse for wear."

In a telephone conversation with Action Stations, Col. King said the Canadians "rushed us below, dried us off, wrapped us in warm blankets and best of all, gave us each a stiff tot of rum --- for medicinal purposes of course".

This summer during a trip to Halifax, Col.

King heard about the Sackville project from Commodore Andrew McMillin, who took him down to see Sackville then tied up at Pier 9.

Col. King later sent a contribution to the CNCT with a note saying that he hoped his contribution would be accepted "even if it came from a Yank pongo".

He said he could not recall the name of the corvette but believes the Executive Officer was Anthony Paddon, who was later a physician with the Grenfell Mission and is now the Hon. Anthony Paddon, a honorary patron of the CNCT, of St. John's, Newfoundland.

### "CORVETTE CITIES" ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SACKVILLE PROJECT

The mayors and councils of the Canadian towns and cities for which RCN corvettes were named are responding enthusiastically to a CNCT appeal for municipal support of the project to restore and preserve HMCS Sackville.

Late in September a letter outlining the objectives of the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust was sent to the mayor of each of the 100 municipalities for which WWII corvettes were named. To date replies have been received from more than 30.

Without exception the response has been highly enthusiastic. In all cases the letter was tabled for council consideration; in most cases a member of council or a prominent citizen was named to act as council's liaison with the CNCT and in many cases the councils requested a suggestion from the Trust for a municipal contribution.

The original letter did not contain a request for financial support. It requested official recognition of the project, local publicity and assistance that could be provided to locate residents of the community who were former corvette sailors and who might be able to provide photographs, corvette equipment and other wartime memorabilia of the corvette war in the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean theatres.

In order to reply to the requests of many municipalities for guidance in deciding upon municipal contributions to the Trust, it was decided to suggest that a contribution of \$1,000 from the larger cities and of up to \$500 for the smaller towns and villages might be appropriate.

In their acknowledgements of the original letter a number of councils pointed out that at this time of year municipal budgets were completely committed. It was suggested by some that a formal pledge of a gift be considered by council this year with the actual payment to be deferred until after the 1984 budgets are struck. In the majority of cases the council passed resolutions affirming support in principle of the project and passed the letter on to the finance planning and budget committees for further consideration.

Typical of the tone of the positive responses of the councils are the following excerpts from some of their letters:

"I am personally very interested in your project as it is very worthwhile...and will certainly foster greater public awareness and pride in Canada's great naval heritage."

Wendy L. Calder, Mayor, Woodstock, Ontario

"We in Collingwood were proud to have a corvette named after our town and naturally we are very supportive of your project."

R.J. Emo, Mayor Collingwood, Ontario

"You may rest assured that Edmundston will join you in helping to preserve HMCS Sackville as a tangible symbol of the contribution made by the corvettes."

Donald D'Amours, City of Edmundston, N.B.

"I have been appointed as Vancouver City Council's liaison with your Association. Please let me know how I can assist you."

Alderman Don Bellamy, Vancouver, B.C.

To press time the following municipalities had responded and appointed a liaison officer or passed a resolution supporting the appeal in principle: Barrie, Belleville, Buctouche, Chilliwack, Collingwood, Dundas, Edmundston, Halifax, Kamloops, Lindsay, Lunenburg, Midland, Moncton, Morden, Moose Jaw, Napanee, Orillia, Peterborough,

Prescott, Stellarton, Thunder Bay, Tillsonburg, Timmins, Trenton, Vancouver, Weyburn and Woodstock.

Requesting further information were: Calgary, Kamsack, Kitchener, Regina, Smiths Falls, Sorel and Whitby.

**HAVE GUNS (HOPE THEY) WILL TRAVEL  
IS CNCT OFFICIALS' PRAYER  
AS LAST CORVETTE IS RESTORED**

Are the plans for a 42-year-old warship lying forgotten in an old seabag in your attic?

First finding and then obtaining genuine 1940s-corvette equipment is no easy task but its part of the job for members of the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust.

As big and expensive a job as rebuilding her as a corvette is, it is essentially a shipbuilding operation. Outfitting her with original equipment is something else again.

Where do you find a four-inch, Mark 9 breech loading naval gun these days? Main armament for corvettes was a problem even in the 1940s when the corvettes were first built and it hasn't gone away today.

The first Canadian-built corvettes, HMCS Windflower and HMCS Mayflower, made their maiden Atlantic crossing in 1941 sporting dummy wooden decoy deck guns. The four-inch guns earmarked for them were not available in Canada and had to be drawn from the British Navy's stockpile of World War I guns.

The Canadian and British navies searched their records in 1982 and failed to come up with the needed gun for HMCS Sackville but, before resorting to wooden ones for a second time, someone remembered seeing a naval gun mounted outside the Canadian Legion building at Amherstberg, a small southwestern Ontario town near Windsor.

Sure enough, it was a four-inch Mark 9, and probably the last one in existence anywhere. Former Ontario Provincial Treasurer W. Darcy McKeough, a member of the Trust, is currently negotiating with the Amherstberg Legion to trade the antique gun for another, less endangered species of naval cannon.

A two-pound pom-pom anti-aircraft gun the corvettes were fitted with was found on the front lawn of a private home near Lunenburg, at LaHave, N.S. Originally mounted on the corvette HMCS Halifax, it was missed when the armaments were stripped prior to selling the surplus ship to a Nova Scotia salvage company after the war. Negotiations are also underway to obtain it for HMCS Sackville.

Other esoteric equipment is slowly being unearthed as word of the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust's project to save HMCS Sackville spreads.

A recent letter received by the Trust stated: "For obvious reasons I must remain anonymous but I have in my possession the original bridge engine revolutions counter from HMCS Sackville." The mystery writer, who had somehow removed the heavy instrument from the ship when she was first decommissioned, promised to have it delivered to the Trust "as soon as I am sure that the project to restore the Sackville is really happening".

In Halifax a group of radio hams, all former merchant navy radio operators, promised to locate and install the 1940s radio equipment used in corvettes. They even offered to operate the equipment from the ship after she becomes a floating museum.

In British Columbia the Navy's apprentice school, as a training exercise, has undertaken to build from scratch the 25-foot wooden whaler the corvettes used as ships boats and lifeboats.

One by one, other equipment, like depth charge throwers and Carley floats, are being uncovered and finding their way to the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust in Halifax.

Still missing, however, are the detailed drawings showing the layout and construction of the corvette's bridge, wheelhouse, Asdic (sonar) hut, wireless and radio direction finding offices. The obvious Canadian sources and the British National Maritime Museum in Greenwich have searched for but not found the missing drawings.

Retired Navy Captain Vern Howland, the

Sackville Project Manager, hopes an old corvette sailor somewhere may have them or other original equipment in his attic. If so, Howland said, please send them in on a 'no names, no pack drill' basis.

### **RESTORATION PROGRESSING WELL PROJECT MANAGER REPORTS**

HALIFAX, N.S. 7 November 1983 --- Restoration work on HMCS Sackville is well underway according to a progress report issued today by Halifax Working Group Project Manager Capt. V.W. Howland.

Although formal transfer of the ship from the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation to the CNCT did not take place until 28 October (see story elsewhere in this issue) actual work began in June. Volunteers removed radio and navigation equipment, brass fittings and other items of value and by summer's end Sackville was virtually stripped.

The prime contractor, Eastern Marine Services Ltd. of Musquodoboit Harbour, began work on 29 August and to date have removed forward bulwarks and rigged guard rails; removed the port davits and built and installed the Carley Float rack; relocated the main switchboard and converted all DC circuits to AC power; removed the after deckhouse which was used as a laboratory and installed a new sanitary pump motor and converted system to use fresh water. These jobs were virtually completed by the end of October.

After her drydocking at Halifax Industries Limited's Scotiadock the heavy weed and barnacle growth was hydroblasted from Sackville's hull, her bronze propeller was removed and stored on the quarterdeck and 70 new zinc anodes were fitted to inhibit electrolytic corrosion of the hull and, after sandblasting, the hull was coated with coal tar epoxy and corrosion paint.

Some additional steel plates were fitted to the hull below the engine room for additional strength and all underwater orifices were sealed. The total cost of this work on completion will be \$128,627.

Capt. Howland emphasized that all past and future work has been broken down into

discrete work packages and individually costed and that future tasks would only be undertaken as funds were available to pay for them.

He said that Halifax Industries Limited as its contribution to the project, has waived the customary docking and lay-day charges and has completed the work in dry dock at cost. International Paints (Canada) Ltd. donated the coal tar epoxy hull coating free of charge.

### **STOP PRESS BULLETINS!!**

#### Kitchener Remembers

The following resolution was passed by Kitchener City Council on 14 November, 1983:

"That the City of Kitchener donate \$500.00 to the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust for the restoration and preservation of HMCS Sackville.

And further, that an additional donation of \$500.00 be considered in conjunction with the 1984 Budget deliberations."

A letter announcing Kitchener Council's decision was received just as Action Stations went to press. Details in next month's Action Stations.

### **SACKVILLE CAMPAIGN NEARS 22 PERCENT OF OBJECTIVE**

TORONTO, 25 November --- CNCT National Campaign Treasurer reported today that contributions to the campaign have reached the \$175,000 mark, almost 22 percent of the \$800,000 objective.