

ACTION STATIONS



CANADA'S NAVAL MEMORIAL

HMCS SACKVILLE NEWSLETTER

October / November 2005

Memories of a Young 'Captain'

The following letter was taken from the CNMT Collection.

Dear Sir,

August 3, 2002

I was pleased to receive your letter to hear of your interest in my ship, HMCS Sackville. There are so many memories from the two years I served aboard her.

I was the youngest and had the longest time as one of her crew. As I was the youngest crewmember on each Christmas Day, and according to Navy Tradition, I became captain, once under Captain Alan Easton, once under Captain Gus Rankin. I vividly remember sailing up the River Foyle to Londonderry, Ireland on Christmas Day. I was standing on the bridge wearing Captain Rankin's coat and hat as we pulled into the jetty to tie up. It created quite a stir on the docks for as you know, Captain Rankin was 6' 4" tall and I am a mere 5' 8". Anyway, I had the pleasure of "Splice the main brace."

I designed and painted both gun shield crests. The first crest was the "sack full of subs". Then I repainted the shield with Donald Duck sweeping up the subs. I also designed and painted the shield on HMCS Stellarton. It was the cartoon figure of Jose, the rooster riding a u-boat.

There are so many tales that could and should be told of the ship and her crew.

The Sackville sailed Thousands of miles covering many ports such as St. John's NF, Halifax NS, Galveston TX, Keywest FL, Bermuda, Reykjavik Iceland, Londonderry Ireland, Greenock Scotland, Cardiff Wales and Plymouth.

Sackville was a great ship with a great crew. After the ship's boilers were damaged and we had to leave her in Halifax, it was very sad. I was transferred to a new corvette, HMCS Stellarton where I spent another year of convoy duty on the North Atlantic but it was not the same as our old Sackville.

Some people think that convoy duty was fighting u-boats, but that was only part of it. On the North Atlantic run it was the conditions we had to contend with in these small ships. It was always cold, both summer and winter. The storms were fierce and in our mess decks we were always cold and damp. A lot of our food became bad, the water (what there was of it) became rusty, but this taught us to share and pull together making a great crew.

I very well remember the battle in September 1943 that lasted a number of days with the loss of many navy and merchant ships. Numerous lives were lost on both sides.

It was a frightening experience, especially when our ship was involved with two acoustic torpedoes, one causing damage to Sackville's plates and the other nearly hitting us. The sight of ships sinking, burning and damaged, and many sailors in the water was terrible. We were on our way to help HMCS Itchen who was being attacked by U-boats. She had picked up the survivors of the destroyer HMCS St. Croix when she herself was torpedoed and blew up spraying our ship with shrapnel and large pieces of steel. There was only one survivor from both ships.

There were so many things that happened on our ship, some good, bad, terrifying, funny, happy and sad, that it would take some time to tell it all. I do have a scrapbook with some photos, articles and clippings, which help with the memories.

These are just a few of the yarns about Sackville. There were many more.

Yours Sincerely,

A.E. "Red" Geldard

Twice Captain of the Sackville

The Passing of

SPECIAL INSERT Rear-Admiral Desmond William Piers

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Chair's Update:

Ship Returns to Dockyard After Active Summer

The summer is over and HMCS SACKVILLE is back in HMC Dockyard for the winter maintenance season. The summer's wet weather and the lack of a major event like Tall Ships 2004 affected tourism in Halifax. But we held our own much to the credit of the hard working crew under Chief Bo'sun's Mate Mike Muldoon and of course our CO Wendall Brown and First Lieutenant Jim Reddy. Our re-enactors encouraged more visitors aboard and the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (CNMT) Board of Directors has agreed that the animators will continue next year. Their animated tours encouraged younger visitors to 'hit the deck - torpedo!' and the passers by could not help but come aboard. All in all we had a successful season which saw many group visits and a very active strategic planning group.

The gift shop reports a small drop in sales but not much to worry about - well done to Don Mackey for consistent stewardship in this regard. The best news was that the CNMT Endowment Fund has pushed our overall worth to over \$1 million. BZ in particular to Ted Kelly who chaired both the fund and the strategic planning group. Ted is stepping down as chair but will remain an active advisor. We can't thank him enough for his tireless leadership and huge contribution. Bryan Elson has taken over his duties and we give him a hearty welcome. He is tackling the new responsibilities with enthusiasm and brings a wealth of naval and business experience to the task.

I believe the June/July edition of Action Stations was one of the best issues ever and a fitting tribute to the Londonderry 60th anniversary Battle of the Atlantic trip, the North Atlantic Convoy Bell dedication and the many special contributors to SACKVILLE; hold onto it as a keep sake. Well done to editors Marlene and Dennis May for their fine work. As a follow up, we hope to have the Royal Naval Association in Northern Ireland visit during the Nova Scotia Tattoo in 2006 and will keep our readers posted. The bell has been returned by the captain and crew of the Norwegian cruise ship SEABORN PRIDE; they treated the bell with great reverence and have established a permanent rapport with the crew of SACKVILLE. The bell has subsequently been used at the HMCS SAGUENAY reunion on board and is in demand for special commemorative events. CNMT's commissioning of the bell was indeed a fine tribute to the 60th anniversary celebration.

Also in this issue is a report on the proposed plans by the Waterfront Development Corporation and the Armour Group Ltd. to have SACKVILLE as the centrepiece within a major maritime heritage complex at Queen's Landing, adjacent to Sackville Landing. This is just what CNMT has been working towards in the last several years. We have a long way to go yet but I am confident that the support, enthusiasm and funding will all make it so. Please lend your support any way you can. Even with the reality of such a complex we will retain ownership and oversight as we continue as CNMT. We have been discussing these plans with the Navy and the head of their Centennial Project, Captain (N) John Pickford.

The 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar was celebrated in grand style in Halifax with up spirits aboard SACKVILLE, a reception in HMCS PRESERVER and the Royal Navy using the fine new mess to host a very special event. All navies learned from Lord Nelson's innovative tactical sense and strong and aggressive leadership at sea. He is revered as an immortal memory and long may we celebrate his unique contribution. It is interesting to note that Samuel Spencer, the master's mate aboard HMS VICTORY during the Battle was born here in Halifax.

Let me close by wishing all of you the very best for Christmas and the holiday season. We have a lot to look forward to with exciting plans for SACKVILLE and CNMT. It would be a great time to sign up your children, grand and great grand children as members of the ship's company as a fine holiday gift.

Vice Admiral Duncan (Dusty) Miller CMM MSC CD (Ret'd)

Chair Canadian Naval Memorial Trust

WELCOME ABOARD

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Help Wanted Fred McKee, Ship's Curator

Starting in January of 2006 I would like to bring some order to the archival information presently held in SACKVILLE. The information presently held is, as far as I can determine, covers two periods:

(A) a limited amount of information with respect to the wartime navy is held in SACKVILLE and a requirement exists to ensure the information available is accessioned and stored correctly and,

(B) to accession and put in order the correspondence, which is of some historical significance, the Trust originated and received that brought SACKVILLE to her present configuration.

I am looking for several volunteers that are available two forenoons a week and willing to make a somewhat long-term commitment. If you are not comfortable with paper work, a great deal of filing and research has to be done WRT our artifacts, including re-arranging the present displays in the ship in preparation for 2006. Some typing skills would be an asset.

A forenoon of training will be available. These are not onerous tasks but it is time to put our "ship" in order. If you are really interested please contact Fred McKee at 435 0323.

Mannequins Needed

The ship is in need of at least a dozen mannequins to replace those presently held. For information I have investigated the War Museum in Ottawa and the cost per mannequin comes with a price tag of \$2-5,000.00, a bit beyond our pay field. If anyone is aware of a resource to donate mannequins would you contact the curator at (902) 435 0323.

Return of the Convoy Bell By Wendall Brown

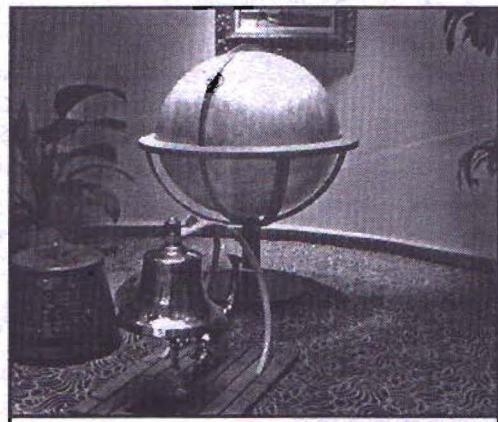
Readers of Action Stations will recall that the Convoy Bell, an old naval bronze ship's bell, was acquired by the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust in February 2005. The bell was engraved with "North Atlantic Convoys 1939-1945" in both official languages, mounted on a stand with a teak deck, representative of a wooden ship deck and held aloft by a double horizontal U-shaped steel structure, representative of a ship's frame. It was dedicated in the Cathedral Church of Saint Columb in Londonderry, Ireland in May as a significant contribution to the 60th Anniversary Battle of the Atlantic

memorial ceremony. A bell is a significant part of a ship and the Convoy Bell was instantly and warmly received in Londonderry. The Lord Mayor of Derry requested that the Convoy Bell be made available for display in the Guild Hall for the summer. The Trust agreed to the request as long as the bell was returned to Halifax in time for Battle of the Atlantic Sunday in May 2006.

The Trust wanted to ensure the Convoy Bell would be safely returned in time and without excessive cost to the Trust. It was with great relief that Ray Soucie, CNMT Executive Director received an e-mail from Ireland advising the Trust to meet the Norwegian cruise liner Seabourn Pride in Halifax on Sept 12, 2005 to reclaim our bell.

The e-mail didn't prepare us for our reception on board the Seabourn Pride or the humbling experience of witnessing the honour and reverence paid to the bell as a symbol of the sacrifice made by merchant and naval seafarers maintaining the Atlantic life line during WWII.

The story of the return of the bell unfolded as follows: Aideen Corr, a member of the organizing committee for the Londonderry BoA Anniversary Memorial, works for the Derry Port Authority and liaises with visiting cruise ships. She knew that the Seabourn Pride was calling at Londonderry followed by visits to St John's and Halifax. She approached the Line and once they understood the significance of the bell, agreed to transport it to Halifax.



Convoy Bell on display aboard Seabourn Pride.

Shortly before the Seabourn Pride arrived in Londonderry Aideen Corr was offered passage to Halifax to accompany the bell and be responsible for its safe delivery. The bell was uncrated and placed in a position of honor in the centre of the circle at the foot of the spiral staircase. This staircase is the central passageway from the main dining room to all the passenger decks. The bell was rung daily and Aideen Corr had to explain its story and significance to all passengers.

When we arrived at the ship, we were directed to the passengers' breakfast dining room to await customs clearance for the

bell. The captain of the Seabourn Pride joined us and personally thanked us for the honour of transporting the bell to Halifax. He asked our concurrence to have the Seabourn Pride sail up the harbour past HMCS SACKVILLE on their departure for New York at 1700 that day. We agreed with his proposal. At 1700 Seabourn Pride departed her berth and transited east of George's Island, up the harbour and turned off the stern of SACKVILLE. She sounded her whistle and passengers lined the rail of the upper deck while we rang the Convoy Bell, which was mounted in a highly visible location beside SACKVILLE's ensign staff. Seabourn Pride then proceeded down the harbour to sea, sailing for New York.



Seabourn Pride passes in salute

Our experience with the officers, crew and passengers of the Norwegian cruise ship is reminiscent of the experience of Canadians visiting war graves in European countries, particularly the Netherlands. The gratitude, expressed by the people of countries occupied by the Nazis, for the sacrifice made on land, sea and air during the 1939-1945 conflict is humbling and food for thought for those of us on this side of the Atlantic. It may be a case that our general population was on the perimeter of the battle and less directly exposed to its horror than the population of Scandinavia and the rest of Europe. Canadian veterans who returned were, at least until recently, loath to talk about their experiences. We are less aware of the horrific impact of war in our community and haven't developed the same gratitude for deliverance. Lest We Forget.



(l-r) A/Slts Stephen Boivin, Ray Soucie, Wendall Brown, Aideen Corr and Kevin Timms with Convoy Bell on board Sackville.

Remembrance Day

(originally entitled Armistice Day 1973)
by Patricia Martinson

1. Last Post

Chill, plaintive,
Crystal-clear trumpet notes;
Tears rising,
Heartstrings tightening,
Goose flesh
And stones in throat. Memories stirring.

We who came back,
Remembering
Those who stayed.

2. Two Minutes Silence

The telling bell's echoes
Die away
In the sudden quiet,
Scarce broken by
A cough, a sob,
A chink of arms or equipment,
A hoof against the cobbles;
Distantly, an aircraft noise
Impinging on the winter morning air.

As we, with them are joined.

3. Reveille

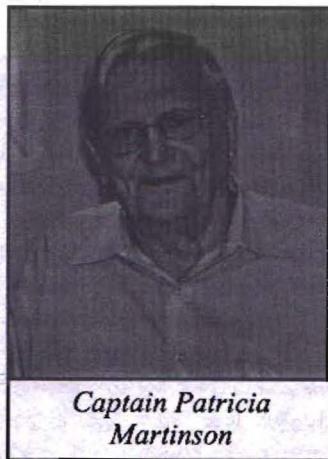
Now the brisk alarm
Sounds off,
Recalling us from the days that were
yesterday;
Ending our reveries
And our communion.

To you sleep, good friends:
While we, to our living return.

4. March Off

Brass bands blowing,
Pipes skirling;
Parades move off
To disperse
In clouds of shouted commands.

As in pubs and clubs,
Glasses are raised
“To them,” “To us,”
As we remember them.



Captain Patricia
Martinson

On Nov. 11, 1972, while travelling by sea from St. John, NB to St. John's Nfld. Patricia wrote this poem. Captain Pat, as she is known to her friends, spent nineteen years in the Merchant Navy after a five year stint in the RCAF. Having swallowed the anchor in 1982, she settled in Halifax, where, among others jobs, she worked for seven years as an interpreter at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. After her retirement she was able to devote more time to volunteer work and has spent thirteen years in the prop department of the Nova Scotia Tattoo. Pat states, "Born in Ireland in 1923, I was in and out of Canada since 1952. The last twenty-three years living in Halifax have been the greatest!"

Searching for WW11 Mascot

By Stanley Noble

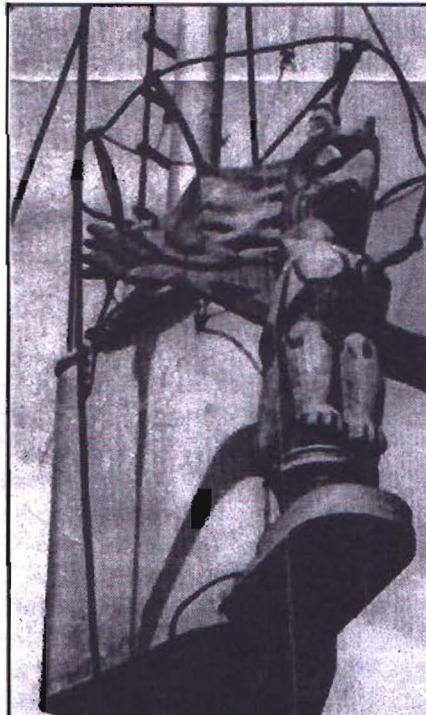
During WW11 I served aboard HMCS QUESNEL-K133 for three years as a seaman gunner and quartermaster. I was originally drafted to the QUENSEL in Esquimalt, BC during the summer of 1942 and later that year we were transferred to the Atlantic coast along with four other Flower Class Corvettes.

Before arriving in Halifax we wanted to emphasize that we were a west coast ship. The ship's crew decided to display a definite emblem of our west coast origins. In the previous year, one of the crew had acquired an authentic Thunderbird from the Alert Bay area. This was carefully refurbished and repainted in the original colour patterns. We then pulled it up the mainmast and placed it on the mast headlight and securely bolted it to the crowsnest. It was extremely impressive to say the least. The Thunderbird became not only our ship's crest but also our friend and mascot.

Shortly after VE Day in 1945 the ship was decommissioned and sadly ended up in the graveyard in Sorel P.Q. Over the years there has been considerable interest by former crew members to try and locate the Thunderbird and return it to its original home on Vancouver Island or to the local museum in Quesnel BC.

As a group, we would like to know if our friend and totem has survived and if it found a good home. It was far too distinctive to have been destroyed out of hand.

Inquiries that we have made to date have met with no success. Is there anyone in the Atlantic area with knowledge of what may have happened to our Thunderbird? Any information would be most welcome and can be forwarded to Stanley Noble, Service Rd. 63, 15420 Niagara River Pkwy, Niagara on the Lake, ON L0S 1J0



Captain's Cabin: Visitors Support Maintaining Ship

HMCS SACKVILLE completed the 2005 summer season at Sackville Landing and returned to her winter berth in HMC Dockyard on 17 Oct. We had a successful summer and although tourist traffic on the waterfront was down, SACKVILLE received a good number of visitors. I spoke with a number of visitors from across the country, the US, UK, Ireland and Norway. The universal sentiment expressed is gratitude to the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust for saving and maintaining SACKVILLE. One family was quite emotional as they discovered the wife's father in the 1942 crew picture mounted in the after mess deck. Animated tours of the ship, conducted by professional actors dressed in WWII shipboard dress, were enthusiastically received by visitors and in particular by the children.

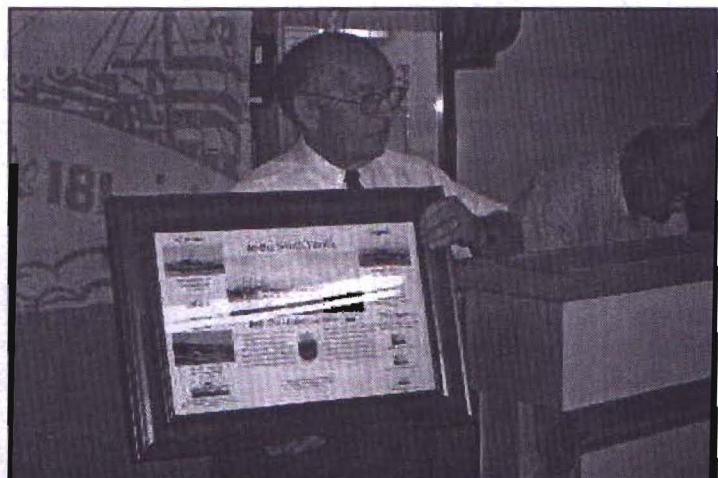
Captain Kenneth Pugh, the Chilean Naval Attaché to Canada, visited the ship and presented a framed montage of five former Canadian corvettes that were commissioned in the Chilean post war navy and served until the late 1960s.

With regard to ship safety and security, we have opted for overkill in berthing hawsers. We gained access to some new condition destroyer towing hawsers (9" circumference) with which we replaced our wire hurricane hawsers. In addition, we obtained some 8" circumference hawsers for use as general berthing lines. They are much heavier than normal corvette berthing lines, but appropriate in view of our lack of crew and silent hours unmanned situation.

The Convoy Bell (refer to article on page 3 in this issue of Action Stations) is rapidly coming into demand as a visual symbol of the maritime sacrifice in World War II. The Trust has received a request for its presence at the World War II Annual Remembrance Church Service to be held 4 Nov 2005 at St Agnes church in Halifax. We also anticipate a request from the Nova Scotia government for its display in Province House for as yet to be announced ceremonies and possibly longer-term display in an appropriate and significant setting.

We have a number of safety and habitation items that remain outstanding and will be progressed depending on the availability of the required skilled trades and volunteer assistance. They include: a new electric power entrance and distribution capability that, in addition to current load, would support electric heating throughout the ship; improvements to our current steam system to provide thermostatic control; "sump" type pump(s) that would expel water from a corrosion hull leak and trigger an alarm in some 24 hour manned location, and a public address system to address both safety and internal communications requirements. In addition to the major items, painting and cleaning are ever present requirements.

Cdr Wendall Brown (ret'd)
Commanding Officer



Wendal Brown, Capt. Of HMCS Sackville holding picture which was presented to Sackville by Chilean Naval Attache to Canada, Capt. Kenneth Pugh

Ray's Daily Orders

Returned Mail (Anyone knowing the whereabouts of the following please advise Ray)

Mr. Frank Fenn - BC
A. Harry Hughes - NS
John E. Milburn - BC

Upcoming Events

Nov 19 - 1400 - 1700 - Christmas Concert for Veterans - see Note 1
Dec 8 - 1830 - 2030 - Onboard Christmas Reception - see Note 2
Dec 23 - Last Mess Noon Hour for 2005 - Mess will reopen Fri January 6, 2006
Jan 1, 2006 - HMCS Sackville New Year's Levee - 1130 - 1330

NOTE 1: CNMT Christmas At Home for Camp Hill Veterans

For the past 3 years CNMT has hosted an afternoon of music and song for the Camp Hill Veterans and any other Veteran who wished to attend. The Metro Fiddlers provide the major portion of the "down home" toe tapping and dance music with some seasonal Christmas sing-a-long tunes. CNMT's own Benny Goodman jammed a couple of jazz tunes with other occasional "guests" providing musical diversions.

The Sackville Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion has agreed to host this special event to be held 19 November 2005 commencing at 14:00. Food for the Veterans will be served at 15:30.

CNMT Trustees, guests and Veterans all are welcome and encouraged to attend.

NOTE 2:

The 2005 Christmas Reception will be held in HMCS Sackville, Thursday December 8th, from 1830 until 2030. Cost shared function. List is posted in the Mess or names to Sackville Chief Bosun Mate: tel- 427-2837

NOTE 3: The ship is now berthed in HMC Dockyard at or near our usual South Dockyard berth. The Mess is open Fridays from 1200 to 1400 approx. Sandwiches requirements to CBM at 427-2837, (leave voice mail msg if calling after hours) NLT secure Thursdays, or if you plan on visiting every Friday, feel free to place a standing order. It is intended to remain at our winter berth until end May 2006.



HMCS Sackville heads for her winter berth

CNMT Veterans Participate in Interview Filming Session

By Bill Gard

On Thursday, August 25, 2005, Halifax Independent Filmmaker, Mr. John Hillis, filmed four of our Trustees. Mike, who operated the sound boom mike, accompanied him. The location chosen for filming was Camp Hill Hospital as Mr. Ken Winsby lives at the veterans' residence.

The individuals interviewed were from left to right: Lieutenant Ken Winsby (Commanding Officer, HMCS Amherst), Filmmaker Mr. John Hillis, Lieutenant-Commander Bill Murray (First Lieutenant, HMCS Sackville); Lieutenant Maxwell Corkum (Navigating Officer, HMCS Moosejaw); and Lieutenant-Commander Murray Knowles (Commanding Officer, HMCS Louisburg II). Mr. Hillis has been working on his project over the last 3 or more years whereby he is capturing veterans' stories of their personal wartime experiences on digital film. The duration of the filming took the morning, during which two hours of actual filming were completed. The first hour was about each veteran's chronological history. The second hour focused on their personal stories, anecdotes, recollections of events and interesting characters that they encountered during their time in the Royal Canadian Navy.

The event was organized by Bill Gard in conjunction with Mr. Hillis who volunteered his time and equipment to make this filming possible.



Crossed the Bar



*Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark.*

*I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.
Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1809-1892*

Rear-Admiral Desmond Piers
LCdr Arthur Harry Hughes
Mr. Wesley Hawkins

60th Wedding Anniversary



Trustee Henri Savard and his wife on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary in St. Laurent QC. During the BoA, Henri served as an E.R.A. in HMC Ships Joliette and Fredericton.

Navy Issues Call for Artists

As part of the Canadian Naval Centennial Project 1910 - 2010, the Canadian Navy intends to commission six official paintings to mark 100 years of naval service. In this regard, the Navy is soliciting the interest of established Canadian artists for selection as one of the artists to produce these works.

The aim of the Naval Centennial Project is to build and strengthen among Canadians an appreciation for the Navy and its contributions to Canada during a century of service. The centennial will promote the navy of today and the requirement of the navy of the future through the achievements of the past and the present. In addition, it will highlight the role the navy plays, as part of the Canadian Forces, in a maritime nation like Canada.

The centennial will be officially marked from summer 2009 until winter 2010. The Navy is in preliminary discussions with various government agencies, museums, service support organizations and other groups with regard to events and activities. Much activity will be centered on the highly visible 24 Naval Reserve Divisions across the country. Events being planned include Freedom of the City parades, open houses, interactive displays and performances of the Naval Reserve Band. Other activities being considered are fleet reviews, port visits, historical conference, musical review, gun run, bands and an accompanying art show.

With regard to the paintings, the aim is to produce six paintings that represent significant highlights of the last 100 years, and specifically, WWI, WWII, Korean War, Cold War, Operation Friction (Persian Gulf War) and Operation Apollo (war against terrorism).

Ideally, the Navy would like to have one artist represent one era, however, this may not be achievable and will not be a determining factor in the selection process. Each chosen painting would be reproduced for approximately 50 artist's proofs, 500 signed prints and other smaller, unsigned prints and cards, and would potentially be used in any other promotional material that the Navy deemed appropriate.

Interested artists would submit an artist's study (10_X_12_) on each era they wish to represent for selection by a jury to be established by the project office. Paintings will be judged on artistic merit and historical significance.

Paintings and print reproductions need to be completed by spring 2009, and the deadline for the submission of the artist's studies is 31 August 2006. As well, artists need to include, when they submit their artist's study, what their fee would be for both the painting and associated copyrights in the event that their submission is selected. In due course, a permanent home for the paintings will be determined; initially, they will be on permanent display to the public at locations across the country.

An indication of interest noting the particular era or eras an artist wishes to paint is requested by the end of December 2005. Letters of interest or requests for additional information may be directed to the following:

Project Manager, Canadian Naval Centennial 1910-2010,
National Defence Headquarters
C/O Chief of the Maritime Staff
101 Col By Dr,
Ottawa, ON, K1A

Rear-Admiral Desmond William Piers

1913 - 2005



Canada lost one of its preeminent naval veterans when Rear-Admiral Desmond William Piers, DSC, CD, RCN (ret'd) passed away on 1 November 2005 at the age of 92. Affectionately known as "Debby", Rear-Admiral Piers had a distinguished career in both war and peace, and was one of the most personable figures in our navy's history.

Born in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 12 June 1913, Piers entered the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) on 2 September 1932 as a Cadet through the Royal Military College of Canada. His early career followed the normal pattern of training in various establishments of the Royal Navy; Piers did well and when the Second World War broke out he was serving in the Canadian destroyer HMCS *Restigouche*. While in that appointment the destroyer escorted convoys into the Atlantic from Halifax and in June 1940 went overseas as part of Canada's effort to support the United Kingdom during its most trying time. While *Restigouche* was operating in the English Channel, Piers first experienced combat when a small boat under his charge came under fire from German batteries while trying to evacuate British troops at St Valery-en-Caux, France. In November 1940, Piers was appointed First Lieutenant, or executive officer, of the destroyer HMCS *Assiniboine*.

The RCN was short of experienced officers and on 30 June 1941, at the relatively tender age of 28, Piers became commanding officer of HMCS *Restigouche*. The Battle of the Atlantic was entering its most desperate stage, and over the next two years Piers, who also served as senior officer of the RCN escort group C-4, was exposed to challenges and circumstances that tested all and defeated many. Reeling from fantastic growth and expanded responsibilities, the RCN struggled to defend vulnerable convoys from skilled and tenacious U-boats. Some convoys, such as SC-107, which sailed under Piers's command in October-November 1942, sustained heavy losses but in the face of tremendous adversity, Piers earned a reputation as one of the RCN's most talented young leaders. Besides being a fine seaman and tactician, Piers also took keen interest in the welfare of his sailors, and in a celebrated report to naval headquarters he recommended reforms that led to improved conditions for Canadian sailors fighting the Battle of the Atlantic. The citation to the Distinguished Service Cross that Piers received when he left *Restigouche* in June 1943, gives an indication of the value of his service in the Battle of the Atlantic:

"This officer has served continuously in His Majesty's Canadian destroyers since the commencement of hostilities. As Senior Officer of Convoy Escort Groups in the North Atlantic, he has, by his vigorous leadership and aggressive attack, been an inspiration to those under his command."

After a spell ashore in the important position of Training Officer in Halifax, in February 1944 Piers returned to the war at sea in command of the fleet destroyer HMCS *Algonquin*. Serving in European waters with the Royal Navy's Home Fleet, Piers's command was again at the forefront, performing effectively on convoys to Russia, in carrier raids and anti-shipping operations off Norway, and in the invasion of Normandy where *Algonquin* contributed fire support to Canadian and Allied soldiers fighting ashore. In November 1944, *Algonquin* took part in an attack on a German convoy off Norway, and helped to destroy seven enemy vessels. Other activities were more joyful, and during a February 1945 layover in North Russia, *Algonquin*'s sailors engaged a local team in what was probably the first Canada/Russia hockey match, losing 3 to 2 in what Piers described as "a very sporting game."

Piers's wartime experience contributed to a successful career in the uneasy peace of the Cold War. After serving on the training staff at Cornwallis, he served as executive officer in the aircraft carrier HMCS *Magnificent*. Subsequently appointed to naval headquarters, Piers was promoted to Captain and served in the influential positions of Deputy Director and then Director of Naval Plans and Operations. This was an intense period of the Cold War, and Piers was at the centre of decision-making involved in the navy's ongoing commitment to the Korean war and in shaping Canada's maritime commitment to NATO. In 1952 he headed the RCN's initial detachment to NATO's SACLANT headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia. After serving on the directing staff at the National Defence College in Kingston, Piers returned to sea as commanding officer of the cruiser HMCS Quebec, and then served as Commander of the First Canadian Escort Squadron. In 1956, in the rank of Commodore, he served as Senior Canadian Officer Afloat (Atlantic). The next year Piers returned to the Royal Military College as Commandant, and in September 1957 he was appointed Honorary Aide-de-Camp to the Governor General. From 1960-62 Piers served as Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Plans) at naval headquarters, and after being promoted rear-admiral in August 1962, he was appointed to the important position of Chairman, Canadian Joint Staff (Washington). After 35 years of service, Rear-Admiral Piers was honourably released from the Royal Canadian Navy on 25 June 1967.

When thinking of "Debby" Piers it is impossible not to also think of Janet, his wife and cherished companion of more than 60 years, who remained by his side until the end. As a couple they were inseparable, epitomizing a sense of style and elegance all too evident to their many friends. The love between them was palpable and lasted throughout their marriage. Together they enjoyed a long and happy retirement in Chester, Nova Scotia.

A stylish officer with legendary charm, "Debby" Piers was one of the navy's true gentlemen. A natural leader and an outstanding seaman, he exuded a cheerful confidence that won over most who served with him. He was active in sports, and especially enjoyed playing golf and tennis. He loved life and comradeship, and as recently as the 2003 Battle of the Atlantic Dinner in HMCS Sackville, he was dancing on his feet, gleefully playing harmonica to a series of naval shanties to the delight of a mess deck packed with shipmates, friends and colleagues.

When he left SACLANT headquarters in 1953, Piers's superior gave him the compliment of being a credit to his service and his nation; that remains a fitting description of his entire naval career.

Michael Whitby
Senior Naval Historian
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Most Important Mission in 64-year Career

By Len Canfield



HMCS Sackville at her summer berth

HMCS Sackville, the last of more than 100 corvettes built in Canada during World War II, is gearing up for the most important mission in her storied 64 year career: a permanent home on the Halifax waterfront. Preliminary plans recently unveiled in Halifax would feature Sackville as the centrepiece of a naval heritage centre as part of a \$200 million marine and naval heritage complex proposed for the city's waterfront. The Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) contracted with the Armour Group Ltd. to develop preliminary concept plans and an economic feasibility study for Queen's Landing, an area adjacent to Sackville Landing.

The proposed plans are very much in keeping with the mission of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (CNMT), which maintains and operates Sackville. The Trust wants the ship preserved in perpetuity to ensure she is available to future generations.

Vice Admiral Duncan (Dusty) Miller (ret'd), chair of CNMT says it is important that all Canadians learn more about HMCS Sackville and what the ship represents. Sackville was designated Canada's Naval Memorial by the federal government in 1985 after serving more than 40 years as a warship and oceanographic research vessel.

"The long-term preservation of Sackville will help Canadians appreciate the incredible contribution of the Canadian Navy to the allied victory at sea during the war. Sackville is the symbol of the courage of all sailors and our living memorial to their bravery," Miller explains.

Sackville and her sister ships engaged enemy submarines while escorting merchant convoys during the critical Battle of the Atlantic.

Miller and fellow trustees of CNMT feel a permanent home for Sackville 'ashore' can be achieved within the proposed Queen's Landing complex. The complex would include four segments: marine heritage (including a boat building facility), naval heritage, marine life, and theatre/commercial/entertainment (including 250 room hotel).

In the naval heritage centre, the 205-foot Sackville would be enclosed in a Battle of the Atlantic hall. The hall would host events of 800 or more people and as the developers explain "...provide a unique experience as attendees dine alongside Sackville and experience through sight and sound a submarine night attack." The ship would be available to the public year-round. At present, Sackville is open to the public during the June-September period at Sackville Landing and then returns to her winter berth in HMC Dockyard.

Sackville, named after the Town of Sackville, NB and commissioned in Saint John, N.B. in 1941, retired from active service in 1982 and shortly after was acquired by the volunteer trust. Since then, trustees and other volunteers have carried out considerable work to restore the 'flower class' corvette to her 1944 configuration in order that visitors can gain an appreciation of life at sea in wartime. VAdm Lynn Mason (ret'd), chairman of CNMT's 2005 Annual Fund Committee says increasing public awareness and support for what Sackville represents is a priority of CNMT. The trust includes more than 1000 trustees and supporters from Newfoundland to British Columbia. "Sackville, although well known in the naval and maritime community, needs to be recognized in a similar vein as the National Cenotaph in Ottawa, the Vimy Memorial and the new Juno Beach memorial in France," he explains.

If WDC proceeds with its plans and with Sackville appropriately preserved and restored, CNMT trustees feel their vision of the ship as an inspiring memorial capable of increasing interest in Canada's impressive naval heritage will have been fulfilled.

HMCS Sackville is very much part of Canada's rich naval and maritime heritage.

The Battle of the Atlantic is recognized as a crucial battle of WW II and the Canadian and allied navies were engaged in a deadly struggle to keep the North Atlantic 'lifeline' open throughout the war. The Canadian Navy provided escort for 47 per cent of all merchant convoys; the convoys carried millions of tons of materiel that supplied the allied war effort in Europe. Canada paid a steep cost for keeping the 'lifeline' open: the Navy lost 24 ships and suffered 2000 fatalities, and the Merchant Navy suffered heavy losses of ships and crews. Sackville, with a crew of 80 sharing crowded quarters, was in the thick of the action during the critical 1942-44 period. In August 1942 she engaged several U-boats in a 24-hour period, damaging two of the subs. In 1944, Sackville was part of the escort group that escorted the largest convoy of the war across the Atlantic, the 167 ship HX 297.

Following the end of hostilities Sackville was placed in the reserve fleet. In 1951-52 she underwent an extensive refit and commenced a new 20-year career as an oceanographic research vessel, including service with the Bedford Institute of Oceanography.

"Canadians from all walks of life can help support the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust in its on-going work to ensure the long-term preservation of Sackville as an important national memorial," Mason says.

Support can take a number of forms, including becoming a Trustee (\$75 year donation), with various privileges, or becoming a member of the Ship's Company (\$25 year) which provides free access to the ship. Additional information is available on CNMT Web site: www.canadiannavalmemorial.com, or by calling the ship (902) 429-2132/427-2837. Mailing address is Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, HMCS Sackville, PO Box 99000 Station Forces, Halifax, NS B3K 5X5.



Sackville's Cox'n, Guy Ouellet, reviews proposed plans for the ship's future home.

From My Ditty Bag

The fifty cent coin issued to commemorate the 60th anniversary of victory in Europe features a RCN frigate. Her hull number is K676. What is her name?



Capt. and crew of Seaborn Pride visit HMCS Sackville

Sackville Centerpiece for Sailpast at Pier 21

Jim Reddy

On Sunday afternoon, September 11th, Navy tugs moved Sackville to Pier 21 so that she could serve as the reviewing dais for a sailpast in honour of Canada's Merchant Navy Veterans. That weekend, the AGM and reunion of the CMNVA took place in Halifax and more than 100 veterans from across the country attended. The final event of the busy weekend was a Parks Canada commemorative plaque unveiling at Pier 21. To pay a unique tribute to the Merchant Navy sailors, the Convoy Cup Foundation organized a sailpast of local yachts to follow the Parks Canada ceremony. When the Navy agreed to shift Sackville to Pier 21 for this event, it took on an even more special flavour.

With the VIP reviewing party including the Honourable Geoff Regan, the Lieutenant Governor and the CMNVA national president on the open bridge, 40 yachts passed in column down the side and delivered salutes, led by the Navy fireboat water display. Also as a reenactment of a convoy harbour departure, the yachts carried banners with names of ships, both merchant and naval, that sailed in the convoys, many of which were lost.

The weather cooperated beautifully and veterans were clearly thrilled with this unique tribute that ended their weekend with a most meaningful, nautical touch.

Answer to My Ditty Bag

She is HMCS Penetang, commissioned in October 1944 and saw service as a mid-ocean escort. Paid off and sold she was reacquired in 1954. In 1955 she was lent, then transferred outright to the Norwegian navy and renamed Draug. She served until 1966 and was then broken up.

The Last Word

During a Sept. holiday in Canada, my wife and I had the good fortune to walk along the Boardwalk at the waterfront and came across the corvette HMCS Sackville, now Canada's Naval Memorial.

Having served with the RCN during the Battle of the Atlantic in HMCS Assiniboine, I found past memories coming alive for me when I boarded Sackville. Ray Soucie greeted us and offered to take my wife and I to the 'Officers Ward Room' to show us the thirty foot mural painted by a distinguished naval artist. This painting depicts the climax of the running battle Assiniboine, commanded by Lieut. Stubbs, had with the German U Boat 210, under the command of Lemcke, when Assiniboine rammed and sunk the enemy submarine. To me, the painting was vividly awesome, a sight I will never forget.

Ray kindly showed us around the base and the dockyard and we will be forever grateful to him for the time and patience he showed us that day, - a day we never expected, - a day that made our holiday complete. One day we will be back to Halifax to see Sackville in her new home, in dry-dock.

Yours sincerely,
Ex-AB/Radar. Derek G. Mander P/JX 319700
Weymouth, Dorset, England

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