

Halifax and Montreal papers

HEALY

An Eastern Canadian Port – Chief Petty Officer Writer Alick Macqueen, R.C.N., of Montreal and Dartmouth, N.S., recently promoted to chief, today holds two records he claims no other writer in the navy can come near – and he's mighty proud of them.

He has more sea time to his credit than any other writer – seven years – and he has spent more continuous time on one ship than any other writer – four years. And the latter record is one that few navy men can beat.

(Macqueen's wife lives at 31 Russell St., Dartmouth, and his mother, Mrs. A.A. Macqueen, at 927 Clifton Ave., Montreal)

The start of Macqueen's four-year stretch on the one ship – a Royal Canadian Navy destroyer – began a little more than a year before the war, and it was on that ship that he found much adventure. He spent two continuous years on North Atlantic convoy duty and boasts that "we never lost a ship".

It was during the evacuation of Dunkirk in June, 1940, that Macqueen received his first taste of actual sea-war, and he saw it all from the wheelhouse of his ship.

"We were headed in the direction of Bordeaux on the French coast to land a party of army engineers," he recalled, "when we were ordered to steam to La Pallice (France) to evacuate French and British troops.

"A party of seamen were sent ashore in a whale boat to contact the troops, but they refused to be evacuated," he said.

The ship was then ordered to proceed down the French coast to the port of St. Jean-de-Luz, near the Spanish border, to evacuate about 100 Polish troops and civilians of all nationalities who had been cut off by the German invasion of France.

"After picking them up, we were ordered to proceed again to Bordeaux to land our army engineers," he continued. "But on the way back up the coast one of our sister ships was sunk. That changes all our plans.

“We picked up 130 of her survivors and headed back to Plymouth. It was a pretty awful trip through, with the ship loaded down with evacuees and survivors. You can imagine what it would be like with more than 200 extra persons aboard.

“There was shortage of food and absolutely no fresh water. A lot of sickness broke out among our human cargo to add to the discomfort. A tiny infant aboard was one of the best passengers. It was fed undiluted canned milk from a spoon.”

When the ship finished evacuation work and arrived safely at the home port, the much-deserved rest that Macqueen had hoped for was short-lived. They hit smack into the midst of the German serial blitz over Britain and he spent most of his time dodging bombs and helping injured civilians.

With all this behind him, Macqueen now finds his present job a bit dull and would love to go back to sea.

“But I’m afraid there’s not much hope for awhile,” he says. “I guess they figure I’ve had enough.”