

Kent story

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Healy

SPECIAL RELEASE

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An Eastern Canadian Port – He's one of the heroes of the Royal Canadian Navy but he'll never go back to sea again, for Telegraphist Chuck Kent, R.C.N., of Calgary, is lying in a hospital bed today with the lower part of both legs amputated. He miraculously survived a direct hit by a German bomb during a fight between a Canadian destroyer and enemy aircraft.

A grin on his face, though he's still suffering, the 21-year-old sailor relaxed on his pillow here today and told how a 2,000-pound bomb ripped through the port bulkhead of the signal room and sliced his legs from under him before careening out the starboard side and exploding at the water line.

"I guess you might say I just reached the end of my luck," he said casually. "You see, once before I was torpedoed and spent 12 hours clinging to wreckage before being picked up. I never thought I'd finally get it from a bomb."

Kent's ship was doing patrol duties with four other ships about three miles off the coast of Spain when attacked by 20 German bombers "of almost every type". One of the ships, a British sloop, was hit by a bomb dead amidships and sank within 40 seconds.

"I was standing in the corner of the room when the bomb struck," Kent said. "I guess I didn't really know what had happened. It came fast. The only reason I wasn't killed was because the bomb didn't explode until it passed through."

"The bomb cut right through my legs. I came down on the stumps and fell over. Blood was gushing from the open wounds but not like you'd think. The

shock slowed up the flow. All the time I knew what I was doing. I knew I had to stop that flow of blood or die right there.

“I dragged myself across the room and spotted one of the crew,” he continued in a nonchalant tone. “Then I hauled out my knife and cut the straps from my life belt. I handed them to the guy and asked him to tie up my legs to stop the blood. I guess that saved me.”

Kent was carried to the captain’s cabin where he was operated on by the ship’s surgeon. There he remained for nearly four days before the ship reached port, “just smoking and doing a lot of thinking.” He never lost consciousness until put to sleep with chloroform for the operation.

“It’s a funny thing,” he added, “but I wasn’t really scared until I realized the doc was going to operate. They didn’t tell me, but I knew.

“They brought in a mess table. Then they covered it with white sheets from the old man’s linen locker and placed me on top. The chloroform was wonderful.”

A former student at Western Canada High School, Calgary, Kent joined the navy at the outbreak of war. He trained on the west coast, and has served on two corvettes and two destroyers, with a total of more than two years sea time to his credit. He arrived in Canada recently aboard the hospital ship Lady Nelson, former queen of the Canadian National West Indies fleet.