

SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL

## Barkhouse Story

(To be held for release with minesweeping stories forwarded earlier)

Halifax

April 1944

Healy

An Eastern Canadian Port -- [hold for release] -- When the Royal Canadian Navy's fleet of Bangor Minesweepers left Canadian shores to prepare for the invasion of Europe, no stone was left unturned in assuring their efficiency and confidence as fighting Canadian ships.

[Paragraph to be inserted here naming ships and describing briefly what they have just succeeded in doing, and where; also sentence saying news of their trip overseas was withheld for security.]

The man immediately responsible for organizing the ships was Commander R.M. Barkhouse, R.C.N.R. of Halifax, Command Minesweeping Officer, who was in Britain to greet them when they arrived. He stayed overseas for a month and a half working tirelessly as liaison officer between the ships and the Royal Navy before returning to Canada to resume his duties here.

Under the guidance of Cmdr. Barkhouse, himself a veteran minesweeping officer in this war and the last, the Bangors were split into two flotillas -- the 31st and 32nd -- and went through more training and manoeuvres to be fully prepared for action. When the first ships arrived Cmdr. Barkhouse had everything prepared and no time was lost.

"I never saw finer crews or a happier bunch of men when they arrived in port," he said. "The ships were in excellent condition and the men were keen to get started. Their health and esprit de corps was excellent and they had an uneventful crossing.

"We lost no time in putting them through their working up routines," he continued. "I gave them a talk before they were finished and told them we had the stuff and the ships, that the rest was up to them. I never saw more confident men."

But what he didn't tell them was how the job of getting the first Canadian-built minesweepers overseas in this war was nothing new to him. In the last war he sailed the first Canadian drifter sweeper -- they were called CDs -- overseas. He took her to Gibraltar and put her to work, and the Navy couldn't have picked a more experienced minesweeping officer to prepare this war's first Canadian sweeper flotilla for overseas service.

When Germany tried, unsuccessfully, to bottle up Halifax Harbour last year by sowing high-explosive minefields, Cmdr. Barkhouse was responsible for the safety of ships and elimination of the German mine threat to shipping. During the first three sleepless days of the sweeps he went to sea himself and personally directed the operation of his fleet which resulted in the loss of not a single ship nor man.

"Before I returned to Canada to resume my duties," he added, "I had long chats with the commanding officers. When I left I felt they knew their job and had what it took. I didn't doubt for a minute that they'd come through with flying colors."