

For Quebec papers

Healy

**An Eastern Canadian Port** – He’s stretched out on a hospital bed right now – minus part of his interior anatomy. But Petty Officer Claude Marcoux, R.C.N., of Quebec, recently advanced to that rate, can recall the Battle of Oran, sinking of the German battleship Bismark, action of Murmansk and the White Sea, and Sardinia bombardments.

A young French-Canadian, Marcoux joined the Royal Navy a few days before the outbreak of war while visiting overseas, saw history being made during the following two years and then returned to Canada after being transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy.

He was attached to an R.N. destroyer which touched every major port of call from South West Africa to the northern tip of Russia. The Battle of Oran in the summer of 1940 stands out as his most exciting episode. His action station was on the anti-aircraft “pom-pom” gun amidships.

“Sure I helped shoot down aircraft,” Marcoux recalled, “but I would never guess how many. We were with the Mediterranean Fleet during the battle and were pounded heavily by enemy aircraft. But as soon as the planes would swoop over, there would be criss-cross fire from all the fleet. Planes dropped but nobody knew who brought them down.

“Our position was on the port side of the fleet,” he continued, “and we suffered more from the other ships’ anti-aircraft shrapnel than from bombs. After it was all over we went around picking up handfuls of shrapnel off the deck.”

During a bombardment of an Italian submarine base at Sardinia his ship was under constant aircraft attack for two full days. They came over in droves of as many as 24 at a time and dropped 500-pound bombs on the fleet.

Marcoux’s ship was part of the large flotilla which hunted down the Bismarck. She was not far from the Hood when it was sunk. They took part in the chase and when the Bismarck was finally destroyed she escorted the fleet through the sub-infested waters and then proceeded into port to refuel.

“We were told ours was the first British ship to enter Russian waters in this war,” Marcoux boasted, “and at one time we were operating only 800 miles from the north pole. Cold? What do you think?”

“There were plenty of enemy aircraft to contend with on our first trip to Murmansk, but not many subs. The subs didn’t know which way we were going and couldn’t track us down.”

Then there was the action he ran into at Petsamo, north of Finland, when they bombarded the German air and naval base there. They went in with a flock of minelayers and screened them by bombarding the coast while the minelayers did their job. They sank at least six German trawlers.

The battles they had with subs during all that time didn’t seem to Marcoux to be worth mentioning.

“We had several brushes with subs to our credit and once the fleet brought home a German sub crew. But it wasn’t known which of us sunk her. The only time we actually feel we had perhaps sunk any was when we could bring oil to the surface. That happened several times.”