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A woman John Rigby helped rescue being carried to the ambulances waiting for survivors at Sydney. flanks and at the stern. And they've all got a set pattern to sweep. But with a single-ship convoy, I don't know, really, whether there was that much planning to that or not, to tell you the truth. Due to the lack of escorts we had, that would be why we were a single-ship escort. (And due to his choice of a speed that permitted you to just keep up, you couldn't do normal sweeping.) There was a real shortage, in those days, of escorts.... This area was a real hotspot for submarines. (The next morning, the light comes up, you're through chasing your submarine. Does your captain take you back to look for survivors?) Actually, what happened, we had a Canso aircraft come out. And that would help keep the sub down, for one thing. Plus, he was pinpointing the survivors and directing us to them. Well, John here, he was actually right over the side, helping people in. Rigby: Some of them; they couldn't get aboard themselves. They were just hanging on, just all that you can do. You can't just leave people there, so I just dove in and helped them aboard. (When you got survivors on board the Grandmere, what kind of conditions were you finding them in?) Well, some were not too bad, but then others--you had to put them in a bunk, or lay them down and cover them with a blanket, they were in such a bad condition. One died. Hedden: They were absolutely petrified. The sad part, the ones that just floated by, had gone. Rigby: No use wasting time on them, because they were gone anyway. People that are alive, those are the ones that you have to look after. After I went in, there was another 2 or 3, they went in. (How did you get people up onto the vessel?) Hedden: Scramble net. Rigby: Bring them over to the net, then they were helped up from fellows that were aboard. I just brought them to the side of the ship. Hedden: A scramble net is a big heavy mesh thing that they drop over. Use it just like a ladder. (Anybody aboard the rafts who wasn't living?) Rigby: Yeah, we had one, one that we brought aboard, that was dead. And I think another one died after we brought him aboard. (And the condition of the people that you were bringing on board?) Some of them were in very poor condition, very very poor condition. They had been in the water quite a long time. In fact, a fellow we talked to last night--6 hours.... Well, the fellow that dropped the wreath--he said, "The prettiest thing I ever did see was when I saw the Grandmere coming towards me." Hedden: They made a gigantic pot of soup for them, to get something in them. Probably a lot of rum. Rigby: Some of them could feed themselves, but others couldn't, because of their condition. Took the survivors into Sydney. Got there in the afternoon. (What did the Grandmere do after that incident? What was your next role?) I think we went up off of Labrador way, up the North Atlantic run somewhere, it seems to me. We were taking convoys up that were going to Ireland. (You didn't stay on as an escort vessel for the next ferry to Newfoundland.) No. I don't remember ever going back there after that. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE Stores To Serve You CAPE BRETON SHOPPING PLAZA SYDNEY RIVER mH' Featuring AWf17 " OErAMTMENT STONES OErMTMENT STORES The Crossroads of Cape Breton' Sobeys & Shopper's Drug Mart



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