

Page 10 - "Cap" Cowley - A Salvage Tug Captain

ISSUE: Issue 54

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1990/6/1

they came in here, and they circled round me and put up a smoke screen, and the next thing I knew, I had a torpedo. And we sunk in a couple of minutes. Now, I was standing on the port wing of the bridge when a torpedo hit. And it blew me up in the air. It happened so fast, I didn't really know what was happening. But the blast took me up in the air like that. And I must have--I flopped over, and came • back on the deck below, standing on my feet. Talk about lucky. And the water came up so fast, before I knew where I was, I was afloat. And I thought, "Geez, I'd better swim for it as fast as I can." I remember I had a tin hat on and lifebelt, because we were--just be? fore all this happened I had rung "Action Stations," and everybody had their life jackets on, thank God. So, found myself in the water, and the light came on on the (life)jacket. It was 2 o'clock in the morning--pitch black. And I saw a few other lights around me, eh. And then the next thing I knew, the bloody Ger? mans came in with their E-boats. I thought they were going to pick us up. Instead of that, they started firing at the lights. Emploi'ers Are Educators, Too! At U.C.C.B. CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION WORKS The light on the life jacket--a little red battery light. So I jerked mine right out. And then the oil started to come up, and you were covered with black oil. So, they couldn't see you then. (The oil from your ship, the Sesame.) Yeah. And then I realized, with the tide running, we were in what they'd call the swept chan? nel. The Germans had laid minefields all around. But the English minesweepers had gone in and swept the channel. And that's what we used to take to go up to those pre? fabricated harbours--go through the swept channels in the German minefields. So I re? alized there was a 4-knot tide running. No good swimming--just stay afloat. The tide was carrying you over the minefields. And I thought, "Now there's no chance of ever be? ing picked up, because nobody can come into the minefields." So this is 2 o'clock in the morning. And I thought, "Now, geez, the tide doesn't run the same way forever. It's going to change. So by golly, when the tide chang? es, it'll carry me back across the mine? fields." At 8 o'clock the next morning, I found myself back in the swept channel. And here was a minesweeper coming down the channel, and she picked me up. And I had just about had it when she picked me up. We were covered with black oil from head to foot. It turns your hair all crinkly-- you look just like a coloured man, eh? It works for studer}ts. Ar)d it works for };ou! As a Co-op employer, you will benefit from: Reduced Hiring Risks • Reduced Recruitment and Training Costs • Higher Employee Retention • Students Available on a Year-Round Basis • Better Utilization of Personnel • You will work with U.C.C.B. to develop a highly trained work force, keeping our Technology Programs relevant to YOUR needs. information & possible funding: Co-operative Education Department University College of Cape Breton P.O. Box 6300, Sydney, Nova Scotia BIP 6L2 (902) 539-5300, ext. 109/350 Industri; & Education Working Together! So, they hauled me up over the side, took me to the galley to get warm, and shoved a big glass of rum into my hand. When I got into the galley, I looked up and there's about 6 fellows there. And I thought, "My God, 6 col? oured fellows. They must have come off an American tugboat"--we had



Americans also were in the racket. So, finally got talking-- they were my own crew! They didn't know me and I didn't know them, because of the oil. (So you spent practically the whole of the Second World War on BATTERED WOMEN AND YOUR CHILDREN: If you need help, call 539-2945 TRANSITION HOUSE