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Sydney Harbour in World War 2 Newman Dubinsky: This was the lifeline. I always said this: you can have the bravest of airmen, the bravest of sailors of navy boats, men or women of the army; but without the merchant marine the whole caboodle was nothing. You remember the famous saying of Churchill: Give us the tools, we'll do the job? Esther Dubinsky: Well, the tools came over on those convoy ships, on the merchant marine ships • the airplanes and all the am? munition, the guns and everything. Newman: The food, of course. Esther: Everything that was needed to conduct a war came on the merchant ships. Newman: Sydney was a slow convoy gathering port. All ships going to England. Slow means the ships were old and they were not fast. Esther: Like some ships would go 12 or 15 knots an hour; maybe the ships that went to Sydney went about 8 or 9 knots an hour. Newman: Or 6. Esther: And there were only two places that they gathered in North A- raerica to go overseas. Sydney and Halifax. Newman: They'd gather first in different little convoys • like Boston, Rio de Janeiro • and come down here. But the last convoy, the total convoy going overseas, would be made up here in Sydney. And Halifax. Hali? fax was a fast convoy, those over 10 knots. Newman: And after the first few times com? ing to Sydney, you knew damned well that once you got down with your cargo • could be sugar, war materials, food, like we said • you'd know this was the only home most of thera had. And that's why all the old mer? chant marines • Yugoslavs especially • but all of them • we were very close, very very close • and we'd know • you and I would know if we were on these ships • we'd meet. That's one place we'd have to go • Sydney • because we were a slow ship, we were under 10 knots. And you'd build up friends here' If you make it to England and back again with an empty convoy • then load again. As the months wore on you came here maybe 6 or 8 times. Many people didn't come back. But you'd know Sydney, Nova Scotia as your jumping off point, your home. They can go to Glasgow, Wales, London, Dover • all those ports to unload that cargo. You didn't know which one. The only thing you knew was you'd be back here, in Sydney* So Cape Breton be? came their home. , Esther: Vie lived up above our store. And while we lived there I can honestly say that we never sat down to a meal without somebody off a ship eating with us. And al? most every night was parties in our house Cape Breton's Maga2ine/27