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Remembering 1942
By Lloyd C. Rees

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An account of the torpedoing of the ore carriers S.S. Saganaga and the S.S. Lord Strathcona by U-boat 513 in the waters off Lance Cove, Sept. 5, 1942, and the similar dispatching of the PLM 27 and the S.S. Rose Castle by U-518 in the same location the following November 2nd.

FOREWORD

By Catherine Rees, the eldest daughter of Lloyd C. Rees, who inherited his love of memoir and poetry.

Why do I believe, my father felt compelled to resurrect his survival story "Remembering 1942"? Maya Angelou, a well-known memoirist, may have had a clue. She alleged, "*There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.*"

My father, Lloyd Clifford Rees revered his pastoral community of Lance Cove, Newfoundland and loved the people who influenced and shaped his life; my ancestors. Love, I believe, is what propelled him to resurrect the precious particulars of the folks who slumbered in the harbour of his heart amidst the horrific circumstances thrust upon them during WW ll.

Details such as:

> The way his father, my grandfather, could whistle a ditty without puckering his lips as he walked three and a half miles to and from his forge every day and took immense pride in the many gardens he created, tended and the bounty of which he shared with others. How that frightful day, September 5th, 1942 he was catapulted from his gardening leisure and thrust into the terrifying scene that was taking place in front of his home.
>
> How his mother, my grandmother, transcended from a terrified pregnant mother running away to her own mother's house for fear of her life and her children's, to a woman who surrendered to the crisis taking place in her beachfront home, then did what she could to minister to the needs of the terrified and wounded seamen.
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> The scene of Pop, a quiet, gentle sailor, sitting on the wharf with gifts he'd purchased, propped at his feet, which would never be delivered to his loved ones; the first man my father watched die.
>
> Dr. Templeman navigating with skill and compassion as he shuffled from home to home doing what he could to save lives.

These are but a few of the people brought to life in this memoir.

Writing "Remembering 1942" was my father's act of rebellion against the atrocities; an act which awakened real people with real lives, so they would not be ghosted in the transience of time.

I am deeply grateful for my father having written this story, a story I knew nothing about until he put 'pen to paper', for in his day men didn't talk about tragedy. He crossed the abyss of fifty –seven years to recollect and knit together enough details to submerge us the readers, into a shocking, horrific event that took place in his hometown when he was a teenage boy. His descriptions leave us with a palpable feeling of the incredible courage, the unrelenting labour, and most of all the awe-inspiring spirit of both himself and his community in how they responded to a war they never could have conceived, would arrive on their doorstep.

Was there a sense of premonition, an intuitive beckoning, from him, when he wrote in one of the many letters we exchanged *"Where is it that I end and you begin*?" It appears I heeded the call when I wrote the following poem just a little over a year after he died.

Remembering 1942 – (The Battle of Bell Island)

Lance Cove, Newfoundland, mining iron ore
World War ll prime target, allied ships offshore
German U Boats slithered, as warrior wolves, below
Stalked her with torpedoes, hidden in the cove.

My father's home, a hospital; oil bunkered men
Shivering and shell shocked, moaning for lost friends.
Belching oily seawater, naked head to feet
Local heroes ministered to their tragic need.

Guns discharged bullets; red flames marked the sea.
Ships cracked like matchsticks, sunk to phantom deep.
A Body floats forsaken, in the eerie fateful tickle
A solo scream now silenced, haunting and indelible.

At fourteen years of age, eye witness to it all
Bare foot in pajamas on the darkened gravel road.
His soul now sullied and scarred, battle seeped within
A legacy for his children; the weapon's silent sting.

Just days before his passing, Dad whispered with a pen,
"Where is it that I end my child and where do you begin?"

This quote by Linda Hogan portrays the merit "Remembering 1942" holds in my life. "Walking. I am listening to a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands."

After I'd arrived to live on Bell Island, in September 2017, I became aware that his memoir was hanging by a thread on a website with the last two pages missing. With the support of Dale Jarvis of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, "Remembering 1942" is now protected here, in the archives of Newfoundland, in its rightful place.

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In the little Newfoundland coastal village where I grew up, war was a thing of history books; of distant places and of other times. It was the hearing of stories of deeds of valor by young men who "went off to war," and it was a sad remembering each July 1st of those who never returned.

All of that was to change within an hour one very ordinary autumn afternoon. September 5th, 1942, a German U-boat ventured into the adjacent tickle where ore ships waited on the anchorage ground and suddenly the air was filled with the frightful roar of exploding ships, of angry gunfire and the screaming of drowning men. This event was soon followed by another of even more treacherous and tragic proportions. War had come to our very doorsteps. It was the only place in North America to have experienced so directly the horror of its modern capacity for death and destruction.

The following is an account of this event as witnessed by a sixteen year old lad and recorded by him while still vivid in his memory. It is dedicated to his parents and to all the people of his community whose compassion and caring during those fateful days stand in stark contrast to the enigma of man's inhumanity to man.

I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.

~ Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

A Wolf At The Door - (Part One)

September 5th, 1942, was one of those Newfoundland days that started out with a cozy-grey promise of Indian Summer loveliness. A light mist lay over Lance Cove tickle, softening the outline of the distant hills, but seeming to magnify and cast in stark relief, Little Bell Island, the ore ships riding peacefully at anchor, and the Port de Grave fishing boats with their peculiar little barked spankers and raised fore-cuddies, tending their trawls in the early morning silence. The only sounds were the muffled clanking of wakening shipboard activity and the greedy squawking of seagulls, swooping in search of breakfast over the undertow swells that hove ashore and receded in a never ending rattle amongst the polished stones of the landwash that lay only a few yards beyond my bedroom window. They were the familiar sights and sounds of Lance cove, and, though not always noticed, whispered unobtrusively in the background of our playful or busy din that all was well.

Five ore carriers, the SS Saganaga; SS Lord Strathcona; PLM 27; SS Rose Castle and the SS Drakepool were in port that morning. Both the Saganaga and the Lord Strathcona had finished loading and were waiting on the anchorage grounds for instructions to join one of the main convoys between St. John's and Halifax. In 1942, enemy U-boat activity was at its peak in the North Atlantic and many thousands of tons of allied shipping were being lost every day. The Rose Castle and the Drakepool were in the process of being loaded and were tied up at the piers, while the PLM 27 was standing by; awaiting her turn in her usual spot just off the wharf in Lance cove.

During the night a small British coal freighter, the Evelyn B, had arrived and was anchored at the western extremity of the anchorage ground, which - as things were to turn out - was a lucky circumstance for some of the other ships in her company. The Evelyn B, bound from Sydney, N.S., was carrying a cargo coal for the DOSCO's (Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation) coal yard from which most of the island's residents obtained their main fuel supply, and for the company's auxiliary power plant located at the Dominion pier.

All of us younger lads recognized the coal boats and welcomed them when they arrived because during the summer holidays that meant the chance of getting hired on for a shift or two with the unloading crew. It was dirty work and hard work unless one were lucky enough to get taken on as a “checker.” But the pay was good: $27 for a forty-eight hour week. One of my proudest memories is of presenting my first full week's pay to my mother: crisp Newfoundland bills neatly folded in a little brown envelope that had been handed to me by Peter Pitts from the paymasters wicket. For a “gaffer,” such as I was, to line up with the men on pay day was an experience that had to be as loaded with mixed emotions as almost any primitive “coming of age”

ritual. However, even without the pay cheque I dare say that being caught up in the "rough-and-tumble" camaraderie at one of the piers would have been sufficient reward for most of us young fellows.

Today though, my dad had other plans in store for me. His forge was located at the foot of Steel's Hill, about three and a half miles distant. Instead of walking there as he did every day - except Sundays - he suggested that since it was such a nice day; it was Saturday and I was home from school, we would harness old Dan to his box-cart and take him with us to work. But it was not for the ride! He had fenced the small parcel of bog land behind his forge with the intention of making it into a garden in his spare time. Already he had more than enough gardens under cultivation to occupy all his spare time, but that was his way. Gardening was a leisure activity and never regarded as being real work. To walk "in over the hill" on a Sunday afternoon to "see how the gardens were doing" was a pleasure that discounted with a logic that escaped me then, the fact that he'd been working there on Saturday evening until after dark.

Old Dan was our Newfoundland pony, about twenty years old at the time and weighing not much more than six hundred pounds. However pound for pound, like other members of his now almost extinct species was probably the strongest, most durable, and most gentle of any four-legged creature on the face of the earth. Mine and Dan's job that day was to gather up top soil and cart it into the garden to cover over the bog.

I don't recall being particularly thrilled with the prospect of having to spend my day off school with a pick and shovel, but neither do I recall feeling being much "hard done by." Having to pitch in and lend a helping hand with whatever work needing to be done was something learned early by all young people growing up in Newfoundland in those days.

As we set out up over Pitts' Hill the mood was cheerful. Dad was whistling some ditty or other in his peculiar manner of being able to do so without puckering his lips: a habit I suspect he cultivated to keep himself company on his long walks to and from work. Not much else was stirring. Everything looked so peaceful: almost drearily so. In that sense it was good to be going to the forge where at least there was never a dull moment. How could anyone possibly suspect or even imagine the high drama being unfolded - even at that very moment - in the murky silence beneath the glassy surface of the tickle!!

That night while we slept, a German submarine, the U-513 - brand new off the Deutche Werf, Hamburg; on her first patrol - had followed the little coal freighter, Evelyn B, into the bay. Having observed that freighter anchor, the U-boat then settled down on the muddy bottom to await the dawn.

When daylight arrived, Korvettenkapitan Rolf Ruggeberg brought his craft to periscope depth to survey the confines of the harbour in which he had daringly ventured in the darkness. Having been at sea since August 5th without yet making a kill, his delight can be well imagined when he spotted not just one, but five freighters within range. Two of those freighters were only a few yards in the distance and laden deep in the water with their precious cargoes of iron ore. Understandably, the stalking of the little Evelyn B was temporarily abandoned.

Because of the inexperience of the crew - they, with the exception of their captain, were all new recruits - and the shallowness of the water in the tickle which severely limited the U-boat's ability to manoeuvre, there was much confusion on board. Add to this the excitement of their first engagement with "the enemy" and it is not surprising to learn that the firing of the salvo of torpedoes directed at the Saganaga turned into a real fiasco. They were discharged without their electric drive motors having been switched from "charge" to "fire"; resulting in their sinking harmlessly to the bottom. Then, no compensation having been made for the alteration in buoyancy, the U-boat bobbed to the surface and in that vulnerable position came perilously close to meeting an ignominious end. She had been spotted by gunners Eugene Walters and Pete Meade on the Evelyn B who were able to get off a couple of shots - one of them narrowly missing - before the U-boat managed to scurry back beneath the surface. To add embarrassment and further peril to the confusion on board, after Ruggeberg had sunk the Saganaga with two shots fired from his stern tubes and while manoeuvring his craft into position to attack the Lord Strathcona, he collided with the stern of that ship, damaging the U-boat's conning tower and causing it to bounce down heavily on the bottom where, fortunately for him the bottom was muddy and not rocky as was indicated in his chart. When the Lord Strathcona was finally dispatched by the two remaining torpedoes in the U-boat's bow tubes, her watery grave was so shallow that her remains were clearly visible lying on the bottom.

But all of this information came to light only after the U-513 had herself been sunk on July 19th, 1943 by an American PBY aircraft. Seven of her crew of fifty three, including her then commander - Friedrich Guttenberger who had sunk the HMS Ark Royal - were rescued by the USS Barnegate.

I had managed to load up old Dan with a couple of loads of topsoil for the garden before the twelve o'clock whistle blew and now it was lunch time. Dad and I were sitting on the hob; toasting our sandwiches over the hot coals when young Billy Stone came running down the hill from his house with the message that dad was “urgently wanted on the phone.”

The party on the other end of the line was my mother with the incredible news that an ore ship had blown up, there were a lot of men in the water and a lot of shooting going on. Some people were saying that it was the boiler on the ship that had exploded but she didn't think that was the case. Any uncertainty about the cause of the explosion was quickly dispelled when in about thirty minutes later a second ship blew up.

My younger brother, Don, was ill at the time with what was later diagnosed as rheumatic fever and which was subsequently the cause of his early death. He was sleeping in a cot downstairs where he could be more easily tended. Jim, my youngest brother, was a baby not yet three years old, and my mother was five months pregnant with my baby sister, Vivian.

Our house, perched precariously on the seashore and being closest to the terrifying commotion in the tickle, must have seemed like a frightfully vulnerable place to my mother. Fearing for the safety of her children, she believed it would be best if she took them in over the hill to her mother's place, which - with the assistance of my sister Vera who was thirteen at the time and Fanny Vaters our maid and friend of many years - is what she did. In the meantime our house would have to be left unattended; so my mother wanted my dad to return home as quickly as possible.

It was not only my mom who was frightened by the blasphemous chaos erupting in Lance Cove that fateful Saturday morning, for surely it must have also been an equally terrifying experience for all the women and children who witnessed it. The men folk were at work, many of them deep in the bowels of the earth beneath the sea and unaware in the shuttling cacophony of their noisy workplace of the tumult raging above their heads; unmindful too, no doubt, in their busy preoccupation of the bitter irony in the close proximity of the two. The ore they were busily mining was a vital commodity in the struggle to eradicate the lair from which had sprung the predator, now, unbeknownst to them, seeking vengeance on its would-be destroyer at the very doorstep of their loved ones.

The horror of seeing ships, hardly noticed before in their familiarity, exploding and sinking beneath the sea, the screaming of terrified and drowning men in the cold water, the chilling screech of shells whizzing past from the shore battery; melded with the thunderous roar of the guns on the Rose Castle, PLM-27, and the Evelyn B as she scurried in frenzy amidst the white geysers tearing up the placid surface of the bay.....Is it any wonder that my mom wanted to flee with her children to some safer place. But not so the next time around! She and Fanny Vaters and all the women in Lance Cove would be much too busy then, ministering as best they could to the cold, wounded and dying men who came or who were brought into their homes to be any longer afraid.

Having received this shocking news, my dad immediately phoned Pop Russell - the head constable of the Bell Island constabulary - who, surprisingly, had not yet been informed about what was happening. In a matter of minutes he was at the forge in his police car to pick up my dad and together they sped off towards Lance Cove. I was left with instructions to lock up the forge and bring Dan home.

Needless to say, old Dan returned to Lance Cove at a much quicker pace than his leisurely trot earlier in the day. With me standing in the box-cart and hanging on for dear life to a secured loop in the reins, he galloped straight out almost all the way and soon we arrived at the rise in the road just before Tom Lahey's store. From there I had only a partial view of the tickle, but I could see clearly the widening circle of debris marking the spots where the ships had gone down. There were also some small boats bobbing around and gunfire other than that from the shore battery, but I couldn't tell from there where it was coming from.

Hurrying on, we soon arrived at the top of Pitts' Hill. From there the scene that lay before me, now all in clear view and much closer, seemed more like a bad dream than anything that could be real. What was the most incredible sight was that of the Evelyn B. zigzagging around the tickle like something gone berserk: her gun blazing away almost non stop, and each time she swerved into a sharp turn it looked as if she were teetering on the brink of capsizing. I never imagined a ship like that could move so fast. It was unbelievable!

Because of the spunky action of that little ship and the alertness of her gunners, fewer men were to die that day than would have otherwise almost certainly been the case, and the Rose Castle and PLM-27 given a temporary reprieve. Foolhardy indeed would have been commander Ruggeberg had he dared to expose the periscope of his craft once more in the presence of such fury. The PLM-27 was still in range and the Rose Castle and the Drakepool still tied up at the piers. These latter two, as noted in his log, he had spotted on his way in the tickle earlier in the morning and he planned to deliver to them - and to the piers - a coup de main on his “way back out.” How terribly frustrating it must have been for him to have this extraordinary opportunity foiled by such an unlikely adversary as a little coal tramp.

The U-513, being of the IXC type, carried a complement of 22 torpedoes. The six positioned in her firing tubes were now discharged, so there was need to rearm. Either Little Bell Island or Kelly's Island would have provided total protection from the shore battery in order to carry out whatever preparations were necessary for the continuation of the attack. A low fog bank hovering over the calm water limited ceiling visibility to a mere couple of hundred feet, so there was little chance of her

being spotted by patrolling aircraft, and it would be several hours yet before the corvettes and Q-boats which had set out from St. John's would arrive on the scene. But there was the Evelyn B in frenzied pursuit of the predator that had dared to molest its sanctuary. Commander Ruggeberg chose discretion as the better part of valor and while ensuring that his ship remained submerged, retraced his course out of the tickle and into the relative safety of the open bay. The surface ripple caused by the retreating U-boat was observed by captain Saunders of the ferry boat, Maneco. It passed under the guns of the shore battery and within only a few yards of the ships at the loading piers.

The Evelyn B having spotted the enemy U-boat and having fired upon it, quickly got up anchor and was underway by the time the Saganaga was hit, but not before lowering and manning lifeboats in an effort to save some of the men of that stricken ship. In recognition of his gallantry and that of his crew, captain Clayton L. Guy, a native of Burgeo, Newfoundland, was cited in British Admiralty dispatches and was later made an officer of the Order of the British Empire. But here I am ahead of my story.

A great crowd of people had gathered on the seashore near the wharf: many of them obviously crew members of the sunken ships. The risk of being so exposed to the presence of real danger appeared in all the hubbub and confusion to be a matter of no concern, or if so, there was no evidence of it. Had the U-boat been brought to bay and forced to surface, the temptation on the part of a fanatical Nazi crew to lob a shell into that assembled mass might have been too much to resist. Amongst the vehicles I could see were several canopied army trucks from the island's militia base and a few private cars and trucks from the mines. Pop Russell's white police cap was clearly in evidence in the melee, and it was he who seemed to be in charge of whatever procedures were being carried out for the evacuation of the survivors.

Out on the tickle, most of the rescue boats - life craft launched from the Evelyn B and from the Lord Strathcona, and fishing boats from the shore - were gathered around where the Saganaga had gone down. Butler's customs boat was the only one of those small craft that I could recognize. It appeared they must be looking for floating bodies amongst the flotsam, since all the survivors had by then arrived on shore.

The guns at the shore battery were still firing and now I could see that the other gunfire I was hearing - besides that of the Evelyn B - was coming from the ships at the piers. The PLM-27 had disappeared somewhere out of sight, presumably heading out the bay in order to seek the protection of the approaching corvettes. I looked to see where the shells were landing; expecting to catch a glimpse of the submarine, but to no avail. Shells were exploding all around the tickle, and because the low elevation of the guns; particularly those of the ships, some of the shells were skipping

unexploded off the surface and landing on the opposite shore. It seems almost a miracle that there were not also some casualties from friendly fire.

Later in the afternoon when it appeared that the submarine had been driven off, the Evelyn B retreated for safety to the far side of Little Bell Island where she remained until the following day when she was escorted to St, John's by a navy ship. Members of her crew who were not required to man the ship in case of emergency slept ashore on Bell Island the night before. However, undaunted, the brave little Evelyn B. returned to unload her cargo and then set out once again, without convoy, for Sydney, N.S.

Because of the unexpectedness of the attack and the suddenness with which she sank, there was great loss of life on the Saganaga. Of her crew of forty three, twenty nine perished and of those only four bodies were recovered.

The crew of the Lord Strathcona were more fortunate. After the torpedoing of the Saganaga which had been anchored within hailing distance, they expected the fate of their ship to be similar and immediate. However, because of the clumsy manoeuvring of the U-boat, there was adequate time for the order to abandon ship to be completely carried out. Of her crew of forty five, not a single man was lost or injured.

The following day saw the largest funeral service yet witnessed on Bell Island. The three bodies, all of British seamen, recovered on the day of the sinkings, were provided with coffins by the mining company and waked overnight in the Wabana municipal building. Hundreds of local residents as well as the survivors of the sunken ships and crew members of the ships remaining in harbour, military and civic dignitaries and a guard of honour accompanied the funeral procession as it wended its way towards the Church of England cemetery where the remains were laid to rest. A fourth body, that also of a British seaman which was recovered later, was interred in the same place.

The water where the Saganaga went down was so shallow that the tip of one of her masts remained protruding above the surface for many months afterwards. Besides being a serious hazard for other shipping in the tickle, this made it very easy to locate her position and often when the water was calm and clear some of us younger lads used to row out there to look down upon her shattered hulk. It was an eerie and unsettling experience that not everyone dared, and especially so since the body of one of the victims could be clearly seen spread-eagle on the foredeck with one of its arms trapped beneath a piece of the wreckage. That body remained visible there until an accumulation of seaweed, snagged by the wreck, concealed it from sight.

I had arrived in our yard and was unharnessing Dan with the intention of putting him in the barn when my dad appeared with instructions that I was to take him in over the hill to the “big garden” pasture. Not wanting to miss any of the excitement I rebelled at this order, but the look of chastisement I received in return warned me that this was not the time to argue my case. At first I assumed that it was because of the saturated and exhausted condition of Dan that my dad was so edgy, but realized later that it was more likely because he wanted me removed from whatever it was that was going on in and around our house.

The thirteen survivors and the three bodies from the Saganaga were brought ashore to the wharf in Lance Cove. Another survivor, Captain McKay, was absent because he had been attending a convoy briefing in St. John’s. Dr. Walter Templeman who was quickly on the scene examined the rescued men, and those needing further medical attention were rushed immediately to his surgery. The others were taken to the homes closest to the seashore where they were provided with reviving nourishment and dry clothing. Later that day they were assembled in the town hall and provided with new outfits by the Women's Patriotic Association, an assemblage of virtually all the women of the community who devoted their skills and spare time to providing warm knitted clothing and other necessities for the boys overseas. The three bodies having been examined by Dr. Templeman were laid temporarily in our back store. It was this, presumably, that my dad did not want me to see.

The back pasture was far enough away so that it was almost an hour before I could return once again to the seashore. By then the guns had ceased firing and the Evelyn B had disappeared on the far side of Little Bell Island. The PLM-27 was nowhere to be seen and the shipwrecked sailors were all removed. Those who remained were milling around in shiftless bewilderment; trying to unwind from their ordeal in the reassurance and consolation of each other's company.

For that first foray by a marauding member of the “Atlantic wolf-pack” into the seclusion of our inland haven, the services of our homes in Lance Cove were not much required. The day was warm; it was broad daylight, and even though the water was cold the surviving men who were exposed to it were soon cared for and whisked away to warmth and shelter by the civic and military personnel who were quickly on the scene. It was to be very different when the wolf returned for its second kill.

Amongst the crowd still lingering about the harbour wharf, the talk was no longer about it's having been overheated boilers that caused the explosions. Although it would be some time yet before the reality of it could sink in, everyone knew what it was that had really happened. Death and destruction on such a brutal scale, so unthinkable and so alien to the pastoral serenity of our little community, was not

something that could be easily assimilated any more than it was easy to accept that war - believed to be so far away - could come so close to our doorstep.

If there was apprehension hanging in the air in the coming days as we looked out over the tickle, and concern for the ships that continued to come to their moorings there - increasing rather than diminishing in numbers - there was never in anyone's mind a shadow of doubt of what the inevitable outcome would be. O yes, the blackout regulations were taken more seriously; the rationing and other minor inconveniences treated with greater tolerance, but now there was a better understanding of what it was that some of the best of the young men in Lance Cove - off to war in their navy uniforms - were having to contend with, and a deep seated certainty that in the end they would prevail.

Though history might have taught him differently, this was something, perhaps, that Korvettekapitan Rolf Ruggeberger could not comprehend. Neither, presumably, could his mighty Fuehrer comprehend the stubborn rejection by Britain of his "magnanimous" offer of peace terms following the humiliation of Dunkirk and the swift and catastrophic fall of most of Europe before the terrifying onslaught of his "Invincible blitzkrieg." Winning a battle was a far cry from winning a war and thus, no doubt, was lost on Ruggeberg - as it was on his Fuehrer - the scathing contempt in Churchill's reply to the threat that Britain's neck would be wrung like a chicken's: "Some chicken...some neck!".

At 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, Dec 7, 1941, the Japanese launched their perfidious attack on the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbour. The following Thursday, 3:30 p.m., Dec. 11,. the Nazi warlord, emboldened by the daring of this axis ally and - across the Alps - the preposterous posturing of the other, declared war on the United States of America and thus insured, even more expeditiously, his ignoble end.

But by then Britain had already known her "Finest Hour." The Commonwealth had rallied to her aid and not the least amongst them was little Newfoundland - the cornerstone of the Empire - which, relative to her size and resources, (as in 1914-18) made, in terms of emptying her coffers and reddening the sands of Beaumont Hamel and Normandy, the greatest contribution of all. The fat Reich Marshal's mighty Luftwaffe had been driven from the skies over England and the Battle of Britain won. The sea lanes to Murmansk and elsewhere in the broad Atlantic had been kept open in defiance of Doenitz's lurking predators, albeit at mind numbing sacrifice by men of the Merchant-marine and the valiant volunteer sailors manning the little corvettes that escorted them. The Desert Fox was about to meet his "El Alamein" at the hands of Monty's Desert Rats. The humiliation of Dunkirk was being avenged in no uncertain terms and the fate of its perpetrator already inexorably sealed.

So it was on that September night when U-513 stalked its prey into the peaceful waters off Lance Cove. Our windows open to the wholesome sea breeze and the somnolent whispering of waves lapping on the shore, we slept blissfully unaware of the evil in our midst and about to defile those waters with the litter of sunken ships, and the gentle loveliness of a new Autumn day with the screaming of drowning men and the terrifying thunder of gunfire. Commander Ruggeberg would win a victory that morning, but because his cause was so perverse he could not know that it was but a prelude to the terrible retribution which the mighty hand of Freedom would exact from his misguided Fatherland.

The chastened crew - boys really, since few of them were more than twenty years of age - manning the U-boat's bow tubes; having flubbed so embarrassingly their first engagement, set about preparing the two remaining bow tubes for firing. In the meantime, their Captain had brought their submerged craft around so that the two stern torpedoes could be brought to bear upon their victim. Here the torpedo men had better luck and those two ran true, exploding almost simultaneously into the belly of the Saganaga. In less than thirty seconds, even before the smoke had cleared or all the flung debris settled back upon the water, she had disappeared from sight. It's hard to imagine how anyone could have escaped uninjured from such a holocaust, yet, by some miracle, thirteen of the forty two who were on board did.

Had the first torpedoes in the U-boat's arsenal not been wasted, the fate of the Lord Strathcona would certainly not have been so long delayed. Many questions have subsequently been raised as to why - unlike the Evelyn B and the PLM-27 - this ship made no attempt to escape when, as it turned out, there was probably a fair chance of her being able to do so. The pros and cons of this argument are well documented for those who wish to pursue it further. Apart from the fact that not a single man was lost on this ship, there are only two things I would note here.

Firstly: the captain, unlike in the case of the Evelyn B and the PLM-27, was legitimately absent, so that the decision to abandon ship had to be made by officers who were not anticipating having to deal with such a grave crisis. There was no Naval protection near by to count on, and they were anchored like a sitting duck within only a few yards of their torpedoed companion.

Secondly: Chief engineer, William Henderson, one of the most senior officers involved in the decision to abandon ship - far from being a coward - was a man of exceptional courage and devotion to duty. For the following voyage of the Rose Castle to Wabana Mines, her chief engineer was suffering so much from stress that he was obliged to remain on shore. Officer Henderson, although eligible for retirement, volunteered to take his place. It was to be Henderson's last trip, as indeed it was. He went down with the Rose Castle when she was torpedoed in those same waters on

November 2nd. This man's unselfish deed deserves to be better recorded, for it speaks eloquently for the many thousands of nameless others who by similar acts of unselfishness, bequeath to us the freedoms we now enjoy.

The dud firing of U-513's first two torpedoes turned out also to be a lucky circumstance for the PLM-27 which, as has been noted before, was anchored in close proximity to the two loaded ships. Now all six of the U-boat's readied torpedoes had been fired and it was necessary to reload: time for the PLM-27 to get underway and out of range. For Commander Ruggeberg to have any hope of overtaking her, it would have meant coming to the surface where the U-boat's powerful diesel engines could drive her in excess of eighteen knots, as compared to only seven while submerged. There were eight torpedoes remaining in his arsenal, plus eight more strapped down on deck for later use but, to his chagrin, these would have to await another time. With the pugnacious little Evelyn B still in hot pursuit and being now almost directly under the guns of the shore battery, his top priority became one of executing an escape without further mishap being caused by his inexperienced and now jubilant crew.

Upon returning from taking Dan to his pasture, I did not tarry long at the seashore but went instead to my grandmother's place to see how my mother and the others were doing. I found them all standing around the front-yard gate, gazing in bewildered silence at the subsiding chaos upon the distant tickle. My mother, with baby Jim held closely in her arms was weeping; still very much shaken by the harrowing event that had brought her here.

Looking out from there upon the littered surface of the tickle, once more restored to relative calm and quiet, it was hard to grasp the nightmarish reality of the past four hours; hard to imagine that this secluded place we called home was no longer a safe haven from the ravages of war; hard to imagine that the flotsam drifting incongruously on the outgoing tide was all that remained of the ships we saw this morning riding peacefully at their moorings; harder still to imagine that beneath that shimmering surface lay, silenced forever, the voices of so many young men who such a short time before awoke with us to welcome the splendor of that beautiful autumn day.

My dad arrived, and together we all returned to our home on the seashore: changed forever now - as were all the homes in Lance cove - by an event that robbed us of the innocence of our isolation. Nothing would ever be the same again - nothing could ever be the same again. The world had suddenly become a much smaller place; the concept of distance and of being far removed from that with which it was almost impossible to identify, rudely redefined. The long arm of an alien evil had reached into our midst and could return. We knew that now with a certainty soon to be

confirmed by an even more treacherous act of cruelty. But this time, there would be no time for crying.

SS SAGANAGA:
5,454 gross tons
built 1935 by D&W Henderson & Co. Ltd., Glasgow
owned by South Georgia C. Ltd.
port of registry - Leith
location of sinking - 47035'N / 52059'W

SS LORD STRATHCONA:
7,335 gross tons
built 1915 by W. Doxford & Sons Ltd., Sutherland
owned by Dominion Shipping Co. Ltd.
port of registry - Halifax, N.S.
location of sinking - as above

No Time For Crying - (Part Two)

Sunday , Nov. 1st.. 1942 was All Saints Day and while the C of E folk in Lance Cove were attending Church Service at 3 p.m., the ore carrier SS PLM-27 had moved up from the loading pier to the anchorage grounds. The only thing unusual about this was how close she was to shore when she dropped anchor, so close in fact that after church I stood on the wharf and called out to Tony, a young black deck hand not much older than myself, whom I had met while he was on shore leave during one of the earlier visits of his ship to Bell Island that summer.

There was another seaman on the PLM-27 whom some of us got to know or at least to recognize because, besides being one of the few white crew members, he was so different in other ways. We called him Pop for he seemed to us to be an old man, although it is doubtful if he would have been much over fifty. Pop would come ashore with the rest of the crew who were on shore leave and set out with them for the taverns and shops at the Mines, but always returned alone, long before the others, to sit on the wharf "gum" (bollard) and there await the arrival of the launch that would take him and his companions back to their ship.

On summer evenings just about every young lad in Lance Cove gathered on the wharf to jigg tomcods, "conners" (blue perch), flatfish and sculpin. Late in the evening was

the best time because it was then that “seacats” (catfish) and huge “maiden-rays” (skate) came in to shallow water to feed. I can clearly recall Pop on some of those summer evenings sitting on the gump; always the same one - the one farthest out on the S.E. corner of the wharf - and the packages with which he had returned placed near his feet and guarded carefully. There he sat, sometimes for hours on end watching us play, but I must confess - as young boys are apt to do - we sometimes teased him. It was not, however, in a cruel manner but rather more in an effort to communicate with him which of course we couldn't do because of the language barrier. He seemed like such a gentle and kindly man who tolerated our mischievousness with a smile as if he too in his obvious lonesomeness wanted only to make friends.

Pop was the first person whom I had ever watched die. The men who brought him on shore, scantily clad and fouled with bunker oil, placed him on the daybed in our kitchen. In the midst of men crying from the cold and retching from the oily sea water they had swallowed; of women trying to comfort them and cover their nakedness with bed sheets or whatever else they could find that was not already sopping wet, and at the same time trying to get close enough to the stove to keep the kettles boiling for hot tea: downed by the shocked and shivering sailors as fast as it could be brewed. That was the surroundings in which Pop lived out the last few minutes of his last visit to Lance Cove. Dr. Templeman sat beside him, wiping away the grime from his still gentle face and holding his hand with such obvious tenderness and compassion as to much defy my poor ability to describe it. It was a profoundly moving scene and all the more so because of the shocking incongruity of its setting.

As I stood there filled with remorse; feeling terribly guilty about the times we had teased Pop, I wondered too as I have many times since, for whom the gifts he purchased on his shore leave were intended. I like to think that they were for his own children in some far off place, and if so, he would have understood our thoughtless ways and know that we meant no harm or disrespect. After about fifteen minutes or so, I heard the good doc say, “he's gone” and then hurry off to do what he could for the injured and the dying needing his attention in some of the other homes in Lance cove.

Pop's body was quickly removed to make room for others who needed that place on the daybed, and in the haste of the moment was placed on the floor of the pantry where it hindered access to whatever might still have been remaining on the pantry shelves. I can recall Fanny Vaters pleading with some of the men to take enough time off from their rescue work to remove the body to some more respectful place.

During those hectic war years, shore leave for some of the other ships' crews was not always as orderly as those of the PLM-27. Greek sailors were particularly boisterous and if they happened to be around when there was a dance at one of the schools a row was inevitable. On one occasion I saw them fight amongst themselves with beer bottles and one old man have a bottle smashed on his bald pate but, apart from being a little bloodied, he seemed none the worse for the blow. They were a tough and rowdy bunch to be sure! On other occasions they would sometimes return from their visit to the taverns intoxicated and in a mood for "raising Cain" by terrorizing any young girls who happened to be around and by attempting to take fishing boats from the shore without permission when no one would volunteer to row them back to their ships in that condition. This sometimes resulted in fisticuffs with the locals which on one occasion turned into a real brawl that might have ended in bloodshed had not cooler heads prevailed.

It happened when a group of about twenty Greek sailors returned intoxicated from the taverns and failing by offers of money and by threats to persuade anyone to row them out to their ship, they tried to take some small fishing boats that were tied up at the wharf and thereby inviting a fistfight with some of the local boys who were on hand.

The area around the wharf and the place we called uncle Solly's meadow, where there was a small field for pitching horseshoes, was the hang-out place for all the young people in Lance Cove in those days, and a rendezvous for the lads and girls who were of courting age. On summer evenings it was a jolly place to be, for, besides fishing off the wharf and pitching horseshoes, there were many other games such as hide-and-seek, burrow-up and "bazzing marbles" that were engaged in; depending on the age of the group and the mood of the moment. The constant traffic of foreign sailors to and from the ships that were nearly always anchored off shore added only another dimension to the ongoing excitement and fun.

The local boys were handling themselves pretty well in the fight and no doubt it would have soon ended in exhaustion and a handshake had not a contingent of the Home Defense from the local militia come marching on the scene with shouldered rifles and fixed bayonets. To our horror, the sailors turned on the soldiers and in a matter of minutes had completely disarmed them, whereupon they shouldered the rifles themselves and marched around taunting the soldiers and terrorizing those who stood there watching. Fortunately everyone kept their cool and eventually the sailors tiring of their game, threw the rifles aside and launched an old fishing skiff that had been lying abandoned on the shore for many years and was anything but seaworthy. Needless to say they didn't get more that fifty yards from shore before the leaky old boat swamped; leaving the hapless crew to swim for their lives. By now it was dark and the dunking in the cold water having restored them somewhat to

sobriety, they quickly dispersed somewhere out of sight and sound. The next morning when Mrs. Sandy Bennett went to her barn to milk her cows she found some of them asleep in her hayloft.

Because of the noisy clatter on shipboard, it is unlikely that Tony would have heard me call out to him from the wharf, but he did see me there and waved to me from the railings on the foredeck. After then I walked over to Hussey's store where some of the young folk usually gathered after church for ice cream and other treats. The conversation was mostly about the PLM being so unusually close to shore and speculation as to whether or not if she should get sunk the water there would be deep enough to cover her. We were to find out that indeed it was and deeper than the water farther offshore where the Saganaga and the Lord Strathcona lay on the bottom.

That night when I went to bed I had a strange feeling of unease; whether it was caused by the conversation earlier in the day or because of some premonition, there is no way that I can tell. However, as I was to discover later, I was not the only one lying awake with a feeling of foreboding.

The SS Rose Castle was a freighter operating out of Sydney, N.S. and owned by the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation. She was then employed in the business of transporting iron ore from the DOSCO mines at Wabana to the DOSCO smelters in North Sydney and carried a crew of forty three: most of whom were Canadians and Newfoundlanders.

The Rose Castle's chief engineer who was suffering from the terrible stress caused by his hazardous occupation remained on shore for this fateful last trip of his ship to the Wabana mines. Officer Henderson who had been the chief engineer on the Lord Strathcona when she was torpedoed and sunk on Sept. 5th of that same year, volunteered to take his place though he was due for retirement. This was to be his last trip. Officer Henderson too had a feeling of impending disaster that night and talked about it with his friend, Ananias Rees, who was the company's superintendent at the piers. He seemed so distressed that Ananias invited him to spend the night ashore as a guest in his home, but the brave officer not wanting to leave his shipmates during a time of crisis declined the invitation. Officer Henderson was also a musician and what he did do was to ask Ananias to take his collection of sheet music home with him for safe keeping; sending along with this gifts of chocolates for the two Rees girls, Doris and Enid. The music collection was saved and later returned to his family, but that night officer Henderson went down with his ship.

From my bed I could see through my bedroom window the PLM-27 cast in silhouette by the light of a crescent moon. High clouds were scudding overhead with a light

breeze blowing from the west and a feeling of frost in the air. It was a typical fall night.

I was still lying awake at 3:30 a.m. when my bed was shaken by a violent explosion and I knew in an instant from the direction of the sound that it was the Rose Castle that had been hit. She was lying off "the point" about half way between Lance cove and the piers. Running to my sister's bedroom window which overlooked the eastern portion of the tickle, I arrived there before the debris flung in the air had settled back upon the water. The Rose Castle, deeply laden with her heavy cargo of iron ore was mortally wounded, but after only a few seconds she was hit by a second torpedo, tearing her apart in a blinding flash, and with bow and stern sticking almost vertically in the air she quickly vanished beneath the surface. The loss of life on board was horrendous for there was little time for the men who were sleeping below decks to escape. Those not killed instantaneously by the explosion, crushed by flying debris or drowned by the in-rushing water, would have been caught in the scalding horror of superheated steam bursting from the ruptured boilers. It's impossible to imagine how anyone could have escaped such devastation, but miraculously some of them did. Of the eight Newfoundlanders who were on board, five were lost; including one young man from Bell Island, John Fillier, who had joined the ship only that evening. Altogether, of her crew of forty three only fifteen survived.

Hurrying from my sister's bedroom, I paused at the top of the stairway where I could see through my bedroom window that the PLM-27 was taking up anchor and already starting to move in an attempt to get away. Looking back, I've sometimes thought about that action on the part of captain Chanel to save his ship as being a foolish act of valor, for surely he must have realized that being anchored in such narrow confines and in the near presence of an enemy U-boat - likely surfaced where it could travel at a high speed - his chances of being able to escape where practically nil. There was no place he could have turned that would not have brought him in even closer range of his adversary. His previous good fortune in being able to escape on Sept. 5th., when his ship was similarly threatened, was more a consequence of the inexperience of the U-boat's crew than it was a consequence of his being able to get out of range before that U-boat could rearm. Had a flare from his ship been sent up earlier, revealing the surfaced submarine, and his guns been readied, the odd might have been a little more even, or - what might have been a wiser decision - had the order been given to abandon ship, as in the case of the Lord Strathcona in a similar situation, it is unlikely that any lives would have been lost. This, however, is the wisdom of hindsight, and in any case captain Chanel had little time to debate his choices. As it was on this occasion, the alarm having been sounded by the torpedoing of the Rose Castle, there was at least time enough for most of the crew to get on deck and consequently fewer lives were lost.

My immediate concern was again for my young brother, Don, who was still sleeping in his cot downstairs. Seeing that the PLM-27 was getting underway, and being fearful that if a torpedo should miss it would come on shore and our house demolished, I wanted my dad to move Don to the cellar where I believed he would be safer. This, of course, was not a very sensible suggestion , because there in the dampness, the cold and the darkness, his chances of dying of terror were at least as great as our house being hit by a torpedo. Dad was hastily dressing to join the rescue party that would soon be gathering on the beach. I didn't see him again until after daylight.

The time it takes to describe the brief interlude between the sinking of the two ships is much longer than the time it took for it to actually happen. I was still standing at the head of the stairway, watching the PLM-27 when she was struck by the first torpedo, but instead of remaining there I ran downstairs and out the front doorway onto the road; still barefoot and still in my pyjamas.

It was while I was standing outside the door that a second torpedo hit the PLM-27; ripping her asunder as if she were made match-wood. Could Tony or anyone else still on board have survived such a fearful blast I wondered. Her bow section swung up vertically and sank in a few seconds, but the stern remained afloat, tipped at a steep angle; it's propeller and rudder grotesquely high in the air. Flames were starting inside the hull remnant and what seemed strangely odd was that electric lights were being turned on inside and around the bridge.

The PLM-27, unlike the other ore ships with which we were familiar carried her bridge and smokestack aft. It was from there that a flare was sent up; illuminating the tickle in a bright eerie red glow that clearly revealed the submarine, completely surfaced, as it moved slowly westward towards the east end of Little Bell Island. It was directly opposite our house, the PLM-27 in between, so that if a torpedo had missed its target my fears would most likely have been horrifyingly realized ; particularly if the torpedo had impacted against the wharf which was also directly in front of our house.

Standing there on the roadway in my pyjamas, spellbound by the horror of the scene before my eyes, I waited ; expecting every moment to see shell bursts from the shore battery erupting around the surfaced submarine. It was such an easy target - so much bigger than the objects sometimes towed around the tickle for target practice - and seeming not in the least concerned with being exposed so vulnerably by the flare from the PLM-27 in her would-be avenging death throes. Brazenly and leisurely the U-boat cruised along the surface as if daring anyone to challenge its presence there. Slowly the flare fell back into the ocean ; slowly the stern of the PLM-27, lights still burning, slid beneath the surface, and slowly the evil demon from the deep slithered

off into the darkness. Instead of gunfire, the only sound was the screaming of men struggling in the cold water and a strange low frequency pulsing noise which I assumed must have been coming from the submarine. By now the men from Lance cove were arriving: running from every direction towards the beach. I returned to the house to light the fire in the kitchen stove.

The fire in the hall stove was already going: it was lit as soon as cold weather arrived and kept going all winter. Thinking I'd have lots of time to get dressed after I got the kitchen fire lit, I was very much unprepared when, before the kindling was sufficiently hot to place on the coals, the first survivors came stumbling through the door to crowd huddling over the cold stove. Some of them, shivering uncontrollably, kept trying to hold me in their arms for warmth; leaving me helpless to attend further to the fire and soon I was as wet and almost as cold as they were. I have no recollection of when where or how I finally managed to get dressed and get the fire in the kitchen stove properly under way.

The PLM-27 was either owned by or operated under the auspices of the British Ministry of War Transport and was manned mostly by black members of the Free French. All of the first survivors to arrive at our house were crew members of the PLM-27 . Having been aroused so rudely from their bunks, they were clad only in their briefs or else stark naked, except for their life jackets which many of them had torn in two parts and attached to their feet to provide some protection while walking over the beach stones.

Any attempt on my part to describe the situation existing in our house that morning would be futile and might better be imagined. The babble of foreign languages; of men moaning from their injuries, from the shock and the cold, and from the nauseous sea water they had swallowed; the hectic pace of those who were trying to help and to console... Needless to say there was barely standing room on the floors that were soon covered with discarded clothing, oily sea water and vomit that was at times and in places almost ankle deep. Besides my mother who was then five months pregnant with my sister, Vivian, and Fanny Vaters, our house keeper, many other women whose homes were farther removed from the seashore came to help; bringing with them food and dry clothing.

Now, if it can be imagined, in the midst of all this commotion, the main power switch was turned off; creating a total black-out on the island and leaving us in darkness. Apart from flashlights and candles, the only other available light was a single oil lamp that was always kept in readiness for emergency purposes. It was then that I remembered the tin oil lamp that I'd hung on the wall in the barn besides the cow stall - it usually being my chore to do the milking which did not always get done before dark; especially on winter afternoons when there was hockey on the pond.

Upon feeling my way into the barn over what I supposed was a heap of discarded clothing, I soon reached the lamp but found that the head of the nail with which it was attached to the wall was larger than the hole through which it protruded . Not wanting to damage the lamp, it was some time before I could wriggle the hole big enough to free it and by then my eyes had become adjusted to the darkness. With the lamp finally freed I turned to head back to the house but was horrified to see that what I'd walked in over near the doorway was not only a heap of discarded clothing but the bodies of two men: Pop's and that of a black man whose eyes were still open and staring blankly in death. In the gray dimness of the false dawn and the waning moon, it was a gruesome sight. Foolhardy I may have been on occasion but brave I was not. It was constable Fury who heard my calling out for help and arriving with his flashlight he was able to light me out without the necessity of my having to step on those bodies again.

I have other memories of constable Fury and all of them fond. He was a member of the Newfoundland constabulary who was posted in Lance Cove at the beginning of the war. Prior to his arrival, a Ranger had been posted there but he operated out of a boarding house and was not much involved in the ordinary events of the community. Constable Fury was our policeman, but he was also our friend. His little guard house, equipped with a telephone, emergency first-aid equipment and a tiny little coal stove was located on the seashore, close to the wharf and only a stone's throw from our house. Many's the hour some of young people spent with him there; enjoying his company and his hearty good Irish humor.

One day early in the summer while I was chopping down a dead tree in the glebe for kindling wood, a portion of the top broke off and in falling a sharp spike from one of the branches pierced the skin on my skull just above my right eyebrow; tearing an ugly gash. Temporarily blinded, I was sure that I'd lost an eye. Constable Fury saw me come running down over Pitts's hill, my face covered with blood, and was in our house with first-aid kit in hand almost as soon as I arrived there. It wasn't long before he had me patched up and assured that no serious damage was done other than a little flesh wound that would soon heal. I still have my scar as a souvenir of that event.

On June 10th, 1940, after the fall of France and the Dunkirk humiliation, Mussolini, convinced of the certainty of German victory, came slinking into the war with the hope that his great friend, the Fuhrer, would share with him some of the spoils. Britain was now at war with Italy and so, automatically, was Newfoundland: a British colony at the time.

On that day there were three ore boats anchored off Lance Cove, one of them manned mostly entirely by Italians. I have a vague recollection that the ship was also Italian,

but I am not certain about that. What I am certain about is that on that day constable Fury commandeered a flat-bottomed fishing boat that was tied up at the wharf and, carrying only side arms, rowed back and forth to the ship until he had brought all the Italian crew to shore. At the time I thought it was a wonderfully brave thing that he had done, but upon later reflection it was plain that the Italians were more than delighted to be "captured" and removed to safety from their hazardous trade. That at least was the impression that they gave as they stood unguarded on the wharf; laughing and chatting cheerfully amongst themselves while they waited for their captor to complete his round-up and paddle the last of their compatriots to shore.

But, back again to the events of Nov. 2nd, 1942. One of the worst handicaps grievously hindering the rescue operations that morning was the heavy bunker oil oozing from the wrecks and congealing on the surface of the cold water in a thick gooey mass. Not only was maneuvering through it extremely difficult, but soon the little boats and the men themselves were covered with it while trying to remove the hapless victims from its horrible grip. The oars too became so slimy that it was almost impossible to hold on to them. Under those circumstances, the obviously dead were temporarily left so that the rescue boats could make every effort to reach those who were crying out for help.

If there is one thing that stands out most vividly in my memory, it is the screaming out there in darkness of terrified and drowning men. As the night moved slowly towards the dawn and as more and more survivors swam to shore or were otherwise rescued, the screaming gradually ceased until finally, just before daylight there was only one voice left. That lone voice seemed to be coming from away in the distance beyond where the PLM-27 had gone down; as if whoever it was that was calling out there had swum away from the shore in panic or else had drifted there clinging to a piece of wreckage. After what seemed like endless minutes, that voice too was stilled. Of all the tragic events of that awful morning, it is the cry of that one last lonely voice that haunts me still. Was that cry for help finally answered, or was it finally silenced in the icy waters - I will never know!!

The Rose Castle being farthest from the shore and much farther from the wharf, rescue work around where she had gone down was the most difficult. The survivors from the PLM-27 were more fortunate. Those who were not too seriously injured were able to swim to safety before being trapped in the deadly goo and were not so long exposed to the cold water. That, and having received prior warning which enabled most to escape from below decks, resulted in the death toll amongst her crew being relatively low. Of her crew of fifty, only twelve were lost.

Whether or not Tony was amongst those lucky survivors, I was unable to find out even though I searched for him and inquired after him. Hopefully he was taken to one of

the several other homes in Lance Cove where survivors were being cared for. With so much going on, it was hard to tell who was where. A few survivors on a raft, and some bodies, were picked up by a corvette that arrived on the scene in the early dawn, but it is most likely that they would have been members of the Rose Castle's crew.

There was not much I could do in the house to help other than tend the fires, but with so many women bustling around the kitchen stove I was hardly needed for that; certainly it was no place for anyone who did not have some useful task to perform. Someone else had gotten the fire going in the little Franklin dining room stove.

Outside, I met up with some of my buddies who were standing together in a group. There was Dan Churchill, Thomas Hammond, Bill Rees and cousin Sterling amongst others. Two or three of us decided that we would walk down along the shore to see if we could find anyone who needed help. We had not gone far, not more than quarter of a mile, when we heard splashing and could tell from the fluorescence in the water that someone was swimming near the shore. Upon coming closer we saw that it was a huge black man who appeared to be quite capable of taking care of himself. He looked us up and down in what appeared to be a suspicious manner; so, not being able to communicate with him we kept our distance and watched him as he crawled up on shore, made slippers for his feet from his life jacket and set off towards our house. It had been at least an hour and a half since the PLM-27 was sunk, so we wondered why it had taken him so long to swim to shore, considering that many of the others had arrived in a much shorter time. Concluding that he must have swum up from the Rose Castle, we continued on our way a little farther, but the farther we went the more uneasy we became, and relieved, as I'm sure all of us were that we didn't find anyone else. It was a scary feeling and a scary place to be.

When I returned again to the house to inquire whether my mom needed me for anything, I saw amongst the crowd a young British sailor - he could not have been more than twenty years old - sitting alongside the dining room stove. He was still wearing his navy uniform, in obvious distress, and pleading for information about the whereabouts of one of his friends. I gathered from him that he was a gunner on the PLM-27 and that his friend was also a British sailor and fellow gunner. I thought I knew where his friend was but didn't say anything until I knew for sure. Sometime before while I was standing out in the yard, I saw two men carrying , in a horizontal position, along the pathway on the beachward side of the yard fence, a young white man who appeared to be dressed in a sailor's suit. Upon making inquiries, I soon found out that he was indeed a young British navy man. He had a broken back and died in the home of Mrs. Ralph Rees shortly after his arrival there. Not having any good news to bring to the young man who was weeping in our dining room, I remained away. He would find out about his friend soon enough.

Daylight finally crept into the sky and it was then that one of the strangest events of the morning occurred. Looking down along the shore towards the Point, we could see a man approaching, capless but otherwise dressed in full officer's uniform; including a great-coat which came down to his ankles. The story he told was that while leaping off the side of the sinking Rose Castle, a pocket of air became trapped inside his great-coat and it was this that kept him afloat as he swam towards the shore which he reached on the far side of the point. There, he was close to the Scotia pier but could not proceed in that direction because of the Big Head which rises vertically out of the sea, and so, turning around, he walked in our direction and was only now arriving.

That seemed like such an unlikely tale that it is not surprising that wild speculation was soon flying around that he was a German spy who knew about the U-boat's presence and intent and had hidden himself on shore before his ship was sunk. This almost certainly was nonsense and the figment of overwrought imaginations, but there were many spy stories rumoured around in those days and some well founded in fact. One such story I can personally vouch for as having at least some good grounds for credibility.

My spy story happened this way. It was during the summer following the ship sinkings, about 11 o'clock at night, and I had gone to the outhouse for a pre-bedtime visit. While I was sitting in the privy I thought I could hear voices out on the water and, sure enough, standing by the fence, I could hear more clearly that the voices were coming from somewhere in the vicinity of Dickie Kent's motor boat that was moored at the "collars". I could also see the flickering glow from a small flashlight that was being turned on and off intermittently. The men - there were at least two of them out there - were speaking in low voices and no matter how much I strained my ears, I couldn't understand anything that was being said , even though the air was still and the water perfectly calm. Neither was there anything I could see, the night being pitch-black, other than the occasional flickering of the flashlight.

Calling my dad from bed and my mom who was still up, we listened together at the fence but could make no sense of why anyone would be out there on the water that hour of the night. There were no ore boats on the anchorage that might have accounted for their presence. It seemed apparent that whoever those men were, they were up to no good, and so suspicious that my dad thought it warranted calling it in to the emergency number he had been allocated as a member of the A.R.P. My mom and I remained standing at the fence to see if anyone came to shore: no one did.

A.R.P. stood for Air Raid Patrol. Dad, Peter Pitts, and perhaps some other men in Lance Cove - I can't remember for sure - were each issued a stirrup pump intended for use in case of incendiary shelling. As members of the A.R.P. patrol, they were required to identify themselves by displaying prominently a large card bearing those

letters in a window of their homes, and to wear an armband similarly marked, but I can't recall my dad, or anyone else, wearing the armband. Fortunately, there was no occasion when the stirrup pumps had to be used for their intended purpose, although it could quite conceivably have been otherwise. Ours came in handy after the war for spraying the fruit trees in our kitchen garden.

About half an hour or so after my dad phoned in his report, a Q-Boat came racing up the tickle; her powerful searchlight probing into the darkness far ahead of her. The searchlight was beamed around Dickie Kent's motorboat; around the wharf, along the shore, and in widening circles around the tickle, but there was nothing unusual to be seen. Since no depth charges were dropped, presumably there was no indication that there might be a submarine lurking somewhere in the neighborhood. However, with four sunken hulks in the immediate vicinity, the Q-Boat's asdic detecting device would have been useless, so that if in fact a submarine had been lying there silently submerged, there is no way that it could have been detected. Whoever those men were, and what they were doing off the shore in Lance cove that night, remains a mystery.

Once again I have drifted from my narrative, but the tragic drama unfolding in Lance Cove that November morning was not an isolated incident commencing and ending there. Though almost insignificant in comparison with some of the more horrendous acts of cruelty and destruction being carried out elsewhere in the world, yet by its preamble, consequence and affinity, it symbolized the horror and the triumph, the happiness and the sadness of that tumultuous era. Reaching out and down the years, it was a time that marked our memories and the memories of those many, many thousands - both friend and foe - whose lives did not remain untouched by its passing.

When daylight came and the shore battery opened up, directing its fire towards the western extremity of the tickle, we could easily hear the whistle of the shells as they whizzed by. A number of military vehicles had assembled along the beach road to take away the survivors, and some small boats were still searching amongst the flotsam for floating bodies and possible survivors who might still be clinging to bits of wreckage.

There was no evidence of any serious attempt being made to hunt down the submarine before ten and eleven o'clock that morning. The reason for this, we were told, was that the corvettes and planes assigned to patrol the bay were away; escorting a number of cargo ships from St. John's to Westomp (Western Ocean Meeting Point) where allied shipping from the eastern seaboard converged to join the transatlantic conveys. If this was the case, it is likely that the U-boat commander would have been aware of it and have picked such a time to carry out his mischief.

When the corvettes and aircraft finally did arrive to scour the tickle, the waters were severely pounded but, as we now know, the raider they were hunting had long since departed.

Subsequent to the sinking of the Saganaga and the Lord Strathcona, Conception Bay and particularly the area around Bell Island, was patrolled on a regular basis by aircraft and by high speed submarine chasers: referred to locally as Q-boats because of the manner in which they were identified. Those little craft, mostly wooden hulled, were lightly armed for their own protection carrying only one small caliber gun on their foredeck, but they were equipped with asdic - a submarine detection and range-finding device - and, on their stern, a deadly rack of depth charges mounted in throwing traps. They were a familiar sight in Lance Cove, racing up and down the tickle, sometimes dropping depth charges which, if nothing else, brought up great quantities of codfish to float belly-up on the surface. One day a huge finback whale, measuring fifty feet in length; likely an unfortunate casualty of one of those depth charges was found floating in the bay and towed ashore at the Beach by a local fisherman. Whales were regular visitors to the tickle but not many of us had an opportunity before to examine one this up-close. The British base for the Western Atlantic Convoy-escort was located in St. John's and was manned primarily by the Royal Canadian Navy. The Canadians named this base Newfyjohn; from which derived, and stuck, the infamous label, “Newfie” : one of the more ignoble legacies of the war.

Aircraft too kept a vigilant watch over the ore ships arriving at Bell Island, and it was not unusual to see them carrying out target practice over Little Bell Island. Sometimes while berry picking there, we would come across fragments of those small practice bombs and, occasionally, one that had not exploded on impact. Foolishly unmindful of the danger, we would drop those over the cliffside, expecting them to make a big bang - they never did. I've often wished since that I'd kept one of those brass encapsulated bombs as a souvenir, but considering the possibility of less desirable consequences, dropping them over the cliffside was probably not so foolish after all.

Besides the Rose Castle and the PLM-27, three other ships were in port on that fateful morning of Nov. 1st. Two of those ships were loading at the piers and the third, a coal boat, was anchored off the Big Head; only a short distance from the Scotia pier. Those ships were the SS Pendeen, SS Flyindale, and the SS Penoliver.

After disposing of its first two victims, the U-boat fired a single torpedo in the direction of the Scotia pier. Whether this was intended for the ship that was loading there or for the ship anchored off the Big Head, remains a matter of conjecture, although now that the submarine's log has become available for historians, the

answer to that question may be known. What I do know with certainty is that a torpedo struck the pier. Fortunately, this was in an area where it did no serious damage, but the crew of the narrowly missed ship and constable Norman Noseworthy who was on duty that night in his little guard house nearby, must have received a frightful shaking up.

The following summer, during school holidays, I got a job with the construction crew repairing the crater made in the west end of the loading dock. My job was to assist with the shoveling of the silt that was brought up by the dredge into trolley cars and removing it from the site. The crater was easily large enough to conceal a typical two story house and huge timbers from there were flung up over cliffside and into adjacent fields. Seeing that, it was easier to understand how such an explosion could rip a huge ship apart in the manner in which I had witnessed it happen.

The bow of the ship loading at the pier would have protruded some considerable distance beyond the S.W. corner of the dock, thus forming a right-angled nook into which the torpedo entered. That being the case, and from the position of the crater, it was easy to deduce that the torpedo must have been fired from the direction in which I had seen the submarine. Also, the ship anchored off the head being directly in line with that position, it was equally clear that both ships experienced a very narrow miss.

It seems strange that the U-boat commander would not have fired more torpedoes, particularly at the ships tied up at the piers. Surely he must have been aware of their presence there and realized the devastating blow it would be, not only to the island's mining operations but to the war effort, if he had succeeded in sinking them in that position. Fortunately, that did not happen and if there is any consolation in the harm that was done, it is in the realization that it could have been much worse.

Besides the ugly green sea worms that were brought up with the silt - eagerly sought after and purchased from us by Greek sailors when they were in port and used by them for fishing for conners over the side of their ship - fragments of the torpedo were also occasionally brought to the surface and dumped on the silt heap. These consisted mostly of shattered fragments of the casing and hundreds of pieces of perforated celluloid which presumably had something to do with the explosives. It was discovered that the thin metal of the casing could be nicely polished, so a good deal of this was taken home and shaped into various knickknacks by those of us who were interested in that sort of thing.

Then, one day a piece of the torpedo was dumped on the silt heap that was obviously not a part of the casing. I happened to be the closest to it and claimed it as mine: finders keepers. The object consisted of a bronze cylinder, about two inches in

diameter and four inches in length. It was capped on one end by a large hexagon nut and from the other end protruded a highly polished rod (bent) to which was attached by means of a swivel joint a shattered piece of steel rod of larger diameter and about eight inches in length. The cylinder was engraved with an assortment of numbers and various other markings. Other attachments to it were broken off, including its mounting bracket of which only a small portion remained.

When lunch time came, being curious to find out what was inside the cylinder, I hopped on my bike and took it to my dad's forge. There, I clamped it into a vise and got a bit of a start when upon slackening off the cap a heavy steel coil spring that had been jammed compressed inside was released and flew apart spattering me with the fluid contents. My dad who was watching nervously got a bigger scare than I did.

Later that evening after work, much to my dismay, two officials turned up at the forge demanding that I turn the object over to them, but they assured me that after it had been examined and identified it would be returned to me. I never expected to see my prize find again, but sure enough after several days it was returned to me and I was told that it was part of the torpedo's hydraulic steering mechanism.

Thinking that someday I would fashion this into a lamp, I stored it away for safekeeping but unfortunately never got around to doing so and soon afterwards I left home. Years later when I looked for it, it was nowhere to be found and no one knew the going of it. What I suspect happened is that sometime in the course of "cleaning-up" it was gathered up with other odds an' ends of metal junk, of which there was usually lots around our place because of our dad's occupation, and thrown over the wharf.

I've described this torpedo fragment in detail because somewhere, I know, it is still in existence, likely in the landwash at Lance Cove. Being made of bronze it should withstand many years of being exposed to the elements. Someone, sometime may find it again and if they should happen to have read this they will know what it is. What I do still have in my possession and greatly treasured as a memento of that terrible November night is a spinning wheel lamp that I made from a piece of the Rose Castle's mahogany railing that had drifted on shore and which I stored away for such a purpose.

But mine was not the most interesting fragment of that torpedo to be discovered. One morning, early, when the water was calm and not yet muddied by the dredging, someone noticed a strange object lying on the bottom off the corner of the pier that looked suspiciously like a large section of the torpedo. A derrick was rigged and after many attempts and with the assistance of a Q-Boat that was nearby, it was finally snagged and brought to the surface. It turned out to be about a four foot length of the

rear section of the torpedo with its propeller and steering rudders still attached. This was placed on the deck of the Q-Boat and carried away, presumably to the British naval station in St. John's.

The sad events of that tragic morning of Nov. 2nd did not end until the following Tuesday when funeral services were held for the twelve victims whose bodies were recovered and, in absentia, for those twenty eight who remained buried in the deep.

The twelve recovered bodies, placed side by side in their gray caskets, were waked in the Wabana municipal building where hundreds of the island's residents as well as family and friends from other places came to pay their final respects. Mining operations were suspended for the day so that workers could attend the funeral services. A guard of honour was assembled which consisted of representatives of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Newfoundland militia and the G.W.V.A. These, along with representatives of all the island's civic organizations attended the huge funeral cortege as it wended its way towards the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

Six bodies, including those that were identified as belonging to the Free French were interred in the Roman Catholic cemetery. After the war the bodies of the Free French victims, being members of the Muslim faith, were exhumed and returned to France for burial in their native land.

On the day of the funeral another body, that of the Rose Castle's third mate, John Green of Nova Scotia, was discovered floating in the tickle. This body along with the body of Captain Walter James MacDonald of the Rose Castle were returned to Sydney. The remaining five bodies were interred in the Anglican cemetery.

The five Newfoundlanders who lost who lost their lives that morning, all members of the Rose castle's crew, were: J, Fillier, Bell Island; H. King, St. John's; F. Burt and C. Hardy, Rose Blanche, and W. McLennon, Placentia. Those Newfoundlanders who escaped were: F. Rees, Bell Island; and G. Hardy, Port-aux-Basques, and J. Perry, Bauline.

As far as I can recall, few if any ships ventured up to the anchorage grounds again for the remainder of the war. Soon after the sinking of the Rose Castle and the PLM-27, torpedo nets were strung around the piers; thus creating a pound in which the ships could wait in relative safety for loading or for their convey escorts. There were no further losses of shipping to enemy U-boats in Conception Bay. The installation and operation of this pound came under the supervision of the St. John's naval base where similar protection against torpedo attacks had been strung across the mouth of the harbour. Mining operations on Bell Island continued at an even more frantic pace and a new term, “Boom Defense,” was added to our vocabulary.

A new sound was also added to the sounds of Lance Cove, and it was many days before those of us who were subjected to its mesmerizing presence became sufficiently inured to permit undisturbed sleep. A "groaner buoy" was placed over the wreck of the Lord Strathcona and, even on nights when the water was calm, the undertow swell was usually sufficient to insure we could not forget its ominous and aggravating presence. Silent buoys marked the graves of the less hazardous wrecks.

Towards the end of the war somebody mercifully silenced with a rifle shot, hopefully forever, the pestilent voice of the groaner. The ships came back again to their old familiar mooring spots, but now once more with lights aglow: shimmering like jewels strung out across the welcoming waters of the tickle; as if in celebration of a gaiety too long subdued. Peace had returned, the war was over, and the boys would soon be coming home. It was a beautiful sight.

End

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