

## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME

Local People Remember  
War and Peace

Veterans Stories 2

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Funding for this project has been provided through a grant by the [National Literacy Secretariat](#)



This is a project of the Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley Community Learning Initiative.

The Community Learning Initiative thanks the Veterans, War Brides, and other people who shared their stories for this project. The CLI also thanks the Students and Staff of the Duncan MacMillan High School, Sheet Harbour, the MacPhee House Community Museum, Sheet Harbour, and the Administration of the Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital, Sheet Harbour for their help in the production of these books.

Research by Julie Meyers, Porter's Lake  
Written and Edited by John Wood, Sober Island

Published March 2001 by  
The Musquodoboit Valley and Eastern Shore Learning Initiative  
Site 3 Comp. 17, RR1 Head of Jeddore  
Nova Scotia, Canada. B0J 1P0  
Tel 902 889 2243

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# *FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME*

## LOCAL PEOPLE REMEMBER WAR AND PEACE

### **Introduction**

This is a project of the [National Literacy Secretariat](#), and the Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley Community Learning Initiative. These stories are intended to assist **Level 1 and 2** adult literacy learners and their tutors. Each book of stories has a work book that goes with it. Copies may be made of any material in these books for the purpose of assisting literacy learners. Copyright is held by the Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley Community Learning Initiative. Materials outside the ownership of the CLI and its contractors are used by permission.

These are stories from the Second World War, 1939-1945, and the years that followed. The story-tellers are from, or are now living along, the Eastern Shore and Musquodoboit Valley of Nova Scotia.

The stories reflect the attitudes of the story-tellers, and their times. It is not the intention of the [National Literacy Secretariat](#), or the Community Learning Initiative to give offence to anyone in the telling of these stories.

There are maps either with the stories or at the front of the book.

***VETERANS STORIES 2 - STEVE JENNER (1)***

## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

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**MAPS**

**GREAT BRITAIN**



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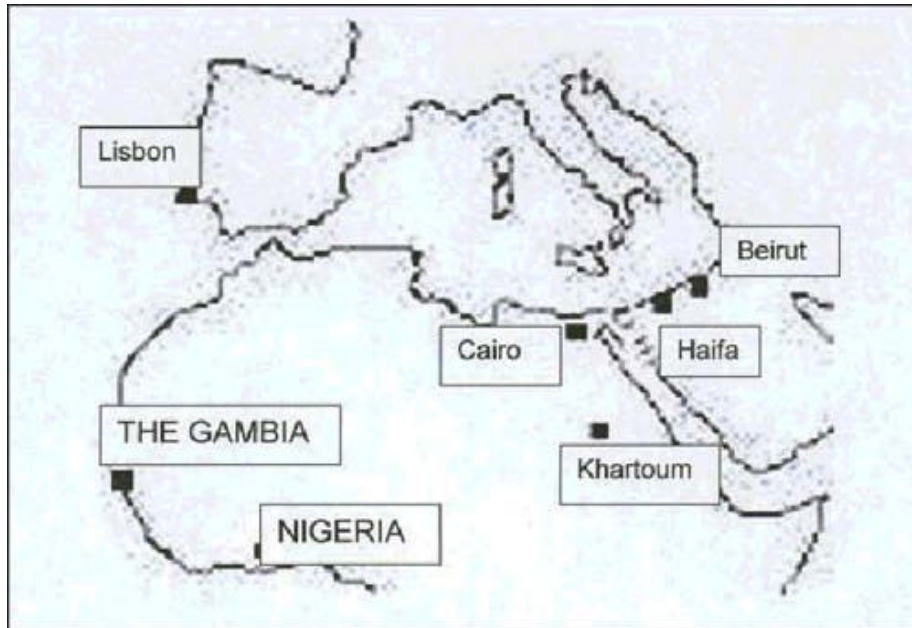
**FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2**

**EUROPE**



***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

**THE MEDITERRANEAN AND NORTH AFRICA**



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## Who wants to fight a war?

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

When I left school in the summer of 1939 war was coming. It was all planned out what I should do. I would follow in my father's footsteps, and learn to be a doctor. He was a country doctor, and also a hero of mine. Then of course the war broke out, and so I started off then to medical school. Doctors and medical people were not to go to fight. The jobs they did were so special no one wanted them to be shot.

92 Words

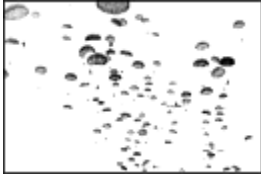


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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Parachute : Slows the speed at which a person falls after jumping from an airplane.



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Volunteer : Someone who offers to do something without being told to do it.

Cadet : Students at school who get military training.



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## Home Guard

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

The medical school was in a part of England where the Germans were expected to drop in parachutes and capture the country, and all that sort of thing. The dean was a very warlike man, about six foot six tall. He decided that all medical students should study and also watch for fires, or join the Home Guard. We weren't very keen on doing this because we thought we were in a very special job, and didn't want to fight and all that sort of stuff. The Home Guard was sort of a local defence force. The people who joined the Home Guard did so because they wanted to, they asked to do so. This is called being a volunteer. I'd done a lot of work in the cadets in school and so I thought I'd volunteer for the Home Guard.

141 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Home Guard



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Pitchfork : A fork with a long handle. It has two prongs (tines) and is used for lifting (pitching)



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Troops on beach at Dunkirk wait for rescue.

## Shock!

### Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

The Home Guard had very few real weapons with which to fight any invaders. We were supposed to do it with pitchforks, supposed to fend them off! We went on for about a year like that. Then one Sunday we were out training, and a car hit me crossing a road. I got sort of laid out for about three or four months. Shock! I'd never come across shock before, and work was pretty intense at the time. We were working for medical exams. It was all rather high speed, and I was having difficulty keeping up. All the people I'd been in school with had been off and captured in France, or been taken Prisoner of War back in Dunkirk. So my father said, "Look you know if you really want to, if you go off and join up, that will be alright. You can always come back to medicine after the war. That won't be any problem". So I went down, and volunteered for the war, and into the Navy.

173 Words

## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Boot Camp : Where beginner soldiers get their first training.



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Hammock : A net slung between two supports to make a bed. Popular in the navy because they sway as the ship rocks on the sea, so keeping the sailors asleep.



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Billet : A home where people visiting from away can sleep.

## Clean sheets and dried eggs

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

I joined the Navy as an ordinary seaman. The first training was in a vast boot camp on the south coast of England. We slept in hammocks with just blankets. After that I find myself drafted to a coal burning mine-sweeper on the north sea. We went north in the charge of some leading seaman in a train to Hull. At the station an officer said "You'll be billeted for tonight. It's a sailor's hostel in Hull." Hull had been bombed, and there was a lot of damage. We went there and had clean sheets. I hadn't had sheets since I joined the Navy! So we spent the night there, and we had scrambled eggs made from dried egg for breakfast, and cockroaches dropping off the ceiling.

126 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

W.V.S. **W**omens'  
**V**olunteer **S**ervice

Mine-sweeper : A  
small ship with  
special gear for  
getting rid of mines.



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### **W.V.S.**

#### **Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour**

Anyway the next day we were taken to our mine-sweeper in Grimsby, where the ship was refitting. The Women's Voluntary Services, the W.V.S., were the people who drove us there. So the six of us ordinary seamen piled all of our bags and hammocks in the back of these ladies' two cars, and off we all went. It was only twenty miles or so, but there was a ferry to cross the Humber river, and more bomb damage to get around when we arrived.

82 Words.



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Chaos : Without any pattern or order.



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Starboard : The right hand side of a ship.

Incredible : Cannot be believed

Philharmonic : Lovers of (musical) harmony.

Orchestra : Group of people playing music. Usually "serious" music.



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## Coal dust and white flowers

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

We arrived alongside this ship in dock in Grimsby and it was chaos. The ship was coal burning. If you have never been on a coal burning ship you can't imagine the dirt. I mean it was unbelievable, and the dockyard too. So anyway, we got put into our watches, the "coal watch" and "starboard watch". I happened to be the watch on shore that night, so I went a-shore with a friend of mine and we went to a concert. It was given by Malcolm Sargent, in a spotless tail coat, with a white carnation. It was totally incredible, the London Philharmonic Orchestra or something thing like that. We felt pretty crummy, wearing our navy clothes. Anyway, we thoroughly enjoyed the concert. We went back to the ship at night and stumbled around and slung our hammocks. It was ungodly.

141 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

### First Action

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

Pitching : The bow of the ship lifting up then going down. (What a forkful of hay does at the end of a pitchfork.)

The next day we sailed to escort a convoy in the North Sea to Harwich. Just as it was getting dark a German aircraft came across. I was part of the crew firing the four-inch gun near the bow of the ship. We fired a shot or two in anger when we saw the airplane, but I don't think they went anywhere near it. The sea started to get rough and we felt sea-sick. So we sat there rolling and pitching and throwing up. The chief mate came out and he thought we would all want something to eat. Supper was liver and bacon sandwiches. It was unbelievable actually. Anyway, we survived the night, and we weren't sunk.

114 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Coaling ship: Putting coal into a ship. In this case, to re-fuel it.

Collier : A ship for carrying coal.



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### **Coaling ship**

**Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour**

Our mine-sweeper used coal for fuel. Coaling ship is something else, and we did it at sea. We used to go along side of the collier once a week to get coal. Everybody worked at it. No one was excused except for the radio operators, for some reason or another. I am not quite sure, it might hurt their "Morse" code hands, that was their excuse! The Captain was excused too, but everybody else went down the hold. We had to dig through the snow to get to the coal. Then we filled up 560 lbs bags of coal that were then lifted in a net over to our ship. It took all day to coal ship. Then you would try to get clean afterwards.

126 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Watch : In the navy a watch is not just a number of hours. The sailors who work those hours are called a watch too.

Watch-keeping : Able to be in charge of a watch.

Certificate : A paper saying that a person can do a certain thing. A "Certificate of Education" says that you have learned certain things.



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### **A new job**

#### **Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour**

After the mine-sweeper I went to Officer's Training School on the South Coast of England. The school was in a swimming pool! We were there for three months. It was a very hot summer in 1942. There had been a lot of our submarines sunk in the Mediterranean sea. The war in Mediterranean was not going well. Up to then the only men taken in to work in submarines had a watch-keeping certificate. Now they were so short of junior officers that they decided to take men without watch-keeping certificates. So they asked for volunteers. I hadn't yet heard of "Do not volunteer for anything", so I put my hand up!

110 Words



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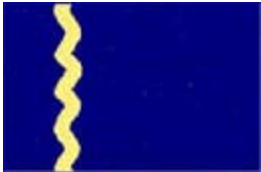
## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Surgeon : A doctor trained to do operations where a person is cut open.



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Wavy stripe : Navy officers have stripes of braid on their coat sleeves. The stripes for Regular Navy officers are straight. The stripes for Reserve Navy are wavy.



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## Not what you know, but who you know

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

My father was a doctor. He was a surgeon for the navy. Many of his patients were sailors on leave who were sick. He knew the captain of the submarine school at Gosport. And so when I volunteered to go to submarines, I got accepted. I suddenly found myself in training to be a very junior submarine officer. My uniform coat had one wavy stripe on the sleeve.

65 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Chief: A Cheif  
Petty Officer

Petty: From the French for small, Petit. Here it isn't a size thing. A Petty Officer is a senior sailor with a lot of know how, but not with the rank of a full officer

### Wasn't that a party?

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

The place we learnt about submarines was a boy's reform school at Blyth on the North East coast. It was a single storey building, very suitable for young officers with a lot of energy. There were probably fifty or sixty of us in training at the time, all between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, and full of "piss and vinegar". A splendid collection of Chiefs and Petty officers were the instructors. The great thing about it was that sometimes submarines went on patrol from here. The shore base was duty free. It was a great party anyway, there were duty free goods, and there was horse racing nearby. We would take trips into Newcastle, we had a high old time, it was very fun.

126 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Draft : Told to go somewhere without being asked about it.

Neutral : Not taking sides.

Sanitary : Having to do with keeping things clean. arbage men are sometimes called "Sanitary engineers".

### **Under Cover**

**Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour**

Submarine training was over. Suddenly we were off to join the real world. Much to my surprise I found myself drafted to a submarine squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean. There were three or four of us going. We were told to get on a train in London, and go to Bristol. We spent the night in a hotel. We did not have our navy uniforms. We had to be in plain clothes because we were going to the war through neutral countries. We went through Ireland and Portugal. So we had to wear plain clothes, and to pretend were not in the forces. I forget what our papers said. I think we were called sanitary engineers, or something like that.

123 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Bi-plane : An aircraft with two sets of wings, one above the other. This was an early way of building planes. Some bi-planes are still built today for stunt flying.



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Flying boat : An aircraft made so that the body can land on water. There are floats at the ends of the wings as well.



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Casino : A place for playing betting games, gambling.

## No rationing

### Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

We got in a bi-plane from Bristol to somewhere in Ireland. We spent another night in a hotel there. I remember the name. It was called the Dunraven Arms. In England everything was rationed. Of course in Southern Ireland nothing was rationed at all, food was coming out of your ears. There was roast beef at dinner. I had never seen anything like it since the war started. We made some pigs of ourselves! The next morning we got on a flying boat to Lisbon. We landed in Lisbon on my birthday, the 23rd of December. In a hotel, there was a casino, and we gambled what money we had.

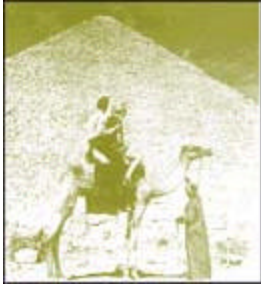
109 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Transit : On the way to somewhere else.



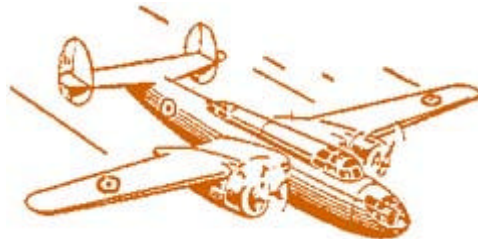
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Giza, Cairo.

### Flying across Africa

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

It was too dangerous to fly at night. We got back on the plane the next day. We flew South down to Africa, and we had breakfast in The Gambia. The Gambia is on the very far Western tip of Africa. We spent Christmas in a golf club in Nigeria. It was the officers transit camp, and we spent five days there. Then we got on another airplane, there were no seats, just mattresses on the floor. We flew all across Africa from West to East lying on those mattresses! It took three days before we got to Khartoum. I remember seeing Lawrence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in a film about Lord Nelson. Then we flew North down the Nile river. That took us all day. We flew down the Nile to Cairo. I remember going to Luxor to the Valley of the Kings, then we landed in Cairo. Cairo was sort of a real melting pot. It is too hard to say what it was really like, it was a real zoo.

173 Words



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Maze : A puzzle with many different pathways. You have to find your way out.



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## Quick changes

### Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

I hadn't been in the Navy very long, and we had come such a long way. It was all a bit of a maze. I was in such a whirl. We were not needed in Cairo. The Germans had nearly got to Cairo. That was before the battle of El Alamein. That was where General Montgomery's Eighth army drove the Germans back across North Africa. The submarine base had been moved out of Egypt to keep it safe.

76 Words



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General Sir Harold Alexander and General Sir Bernard Montgomery

## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Squadron : A group of ships or aircraft. A group of soldiers is sometimes called a squad.

Depot : A place for keeping supplies. A **deposit** in a bank is your supply of money.



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Submarine Depot  
Ship.

### Safe base

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit  
Harbour

The squadron we were joining was in Beirut in Lebanon. They couldn't put us on the train at once. I think we spent about two nights in Cairo, then we went by train to Haifa. We got picked up by car and taken to Beirut. The submarine squadron at Beirut had been based in Egypt, but the Germans were pressing in towards Egypt. There was a depot ship called Medway in Egypt. They moved the depot ship and all the submarine squadron up to Beirut. As soon as the depot ship left harbour it got torpedoed by German submarines and sank. Our submarines made it safely. So we had submarines, and needed a base. We took over the port of Beirut as a submarine base. That was very exhausting.

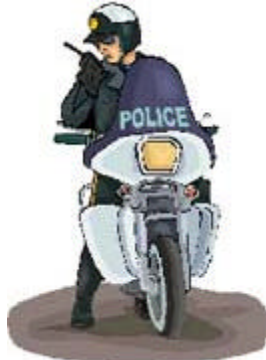
130 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Patrol : Going to do something in war that keeps you away for a time. Not just out and back. Police also go on patrol from the police station.



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### **The Paris of the East** **Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour**

I spent a year based on Beirut. It was everything it was cracked up to be. It was really the "Paris of the East". There were night-clubs and everything you could imagine. In the winter you could ski down to the sea and swim. There was no shortage of cars or gas. So when we came in from patrol we went on leave. I went twice on leave to Damascus. I saw Josephine Baker in a night-club. She was sort of one of the real superstars of the time. She came to perform in Damascus. I also met a friend I went to school with. He was in the army camp just outside of Damascus, and I had a visit with him.

123 Words



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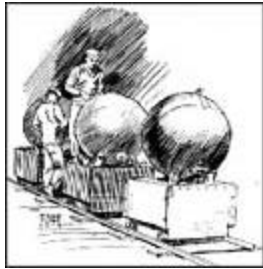


## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Mine



Casing :The outside of the submarine.



Mines on a track for laying.

Trim : Balance.



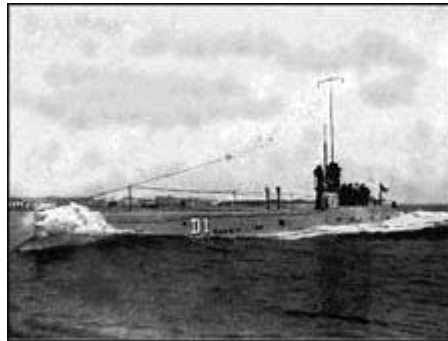
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## Mines

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

The submarine I joined in Beirut laid mines. When she was on patrol she could take fifty mines. A sea mine is a metal ball about three feet across, filled with explosive. There are horns sticking out that set off the mine if a ship hits them. Each mine has a cable to an anchor on the sea bed. We used to carry fifty mines. They ran on a little railway in the casing and they dropped off the end. You would lay them in line. Each mine was quite heavy, so we had to be able to make up for lots of extra weight once we had laid the mines. To keep the submarine in trim you had to adjust for the weight.

123 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Siege : With enemies all around stopping you getting supplies.



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Bully beef : Corned beef, in cans.



CLI File Photo

Leper : Someone with the nerve disease Leprosy.

Colony : Place where a group of the same kind of people live.

## Helping Malta

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

Malta was really under siege. We supplied Malta with food. We could carry all sorts of relief stores. We had all the weight of the mines we laid to make up for. We took huge amounts of canned milk and stuff. Beans, bully beef and canned milk we lashed into the casing where the mines went. They would not be affected by the sea water. We did this every trip. Malta was an unbelievable place to stay. Some of us stayed in the Lazaretto. That was the old leper colony, and some men were based there.

97 Words



Malta

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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

### Making do

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

Quart : A little more than a litre.

Pint : About half a litre.

In the navy when you don't have something, you find something else that will do the job. This is called "making do". Here's how we "made do" on Malta. There were no cups or glasses. What we used was all sawed off beer bottles. We drank our tea out of the big sawed off quart bottles and small drinks out of sawed off pint bottles. We took as much beer as we could to Malta. It came from Australia. I don't know how it came. I suppose it was rationed, but there was always some for us.

98 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

German Dive  
Bombers used  
against ships.



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Recycle : Use  
something again, but  
maybe not for what  
it was used for the first  
time.



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Bilge : The very  
bottom of the inside  
of a ship where  
everything drains to.

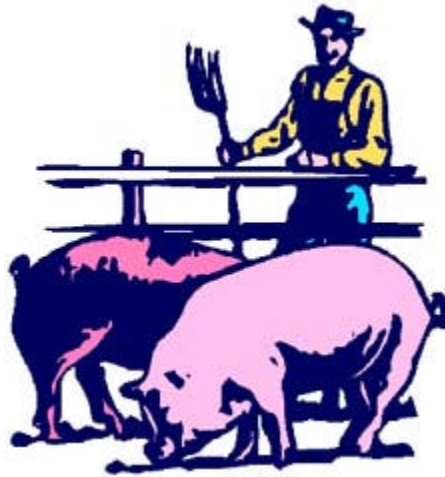
## Recycle

### Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

Ships were bombed if they sailed to Malta. Food and water were rationed. There was no heating oil, and we needed hot water. The engineers made some sort of furnace which would heat the water. They used dirty oil that came out of the ships' bilges.

We grew pigs there. When went to Malta we would usually take some fresh pork. The pigs were fed the scraps off the plates. It was all very recycled! It was the way you lived in a siege.

83 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Aegean Sea  
The Dardanelles -  
look at the map on  
the previous page

Tanker: A ship for  
carrying oil.



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### **Dawn target**

**Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit  
Harbour**

We used to go on patrol up to the Aegean Sea. I always remember my first patrol. We arrived off the Dardanelles at dawn. A large tanker was coming out of the straight. We sank it, and I thought, "How clever of the captain to get us here just at the right time." The captain had not guessed. We had got the German codes. We could read their secret messages. The captain knew the tanker was coming.

77 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Enigma : Something unknown and hard to figure out.

Lieutenant : The second to lowest officer rank. Flight lieutenants are Air Force officers. A "Flight" is a group of three aircraft.



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## **Enigma**

**Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour**

In Beirut there was something called "The Box." All the secret stuff, the decoded German messages, came in through "The Box". It was run by two flight lieutenants. We considered them rather elderly. They must have been all of about forty. We juniors didn't know exactly what they did. It was plainly something too secret that we didn't care about. All these secrets became known after a time. There were very many spies around the Aegean. There were all sorts of secret, private armies. People sent messages in many ways to stop other people finding out what was sent.

99 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Clobbered : Hit



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Fascinating : Very interesting.



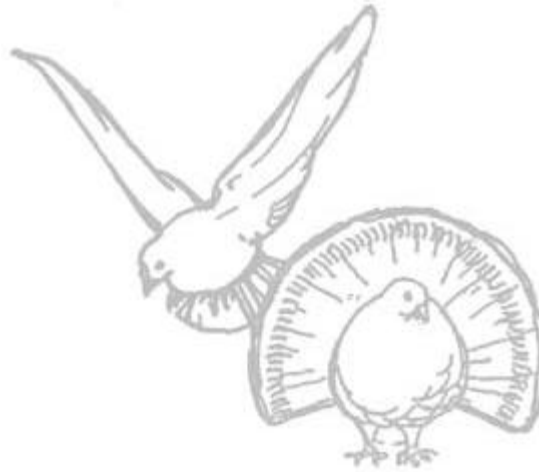
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## Pigeons

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

Sending a message from a submarine by radio was dangerous. You can not do it while beneath the waves. On the surface you could be bombed. Once you pressed the wireless key, the enemy was listening. He could tell where the signal came from. You could expect to get clobbered quite soon by enemy aircraft. We took carrier pigeons to try to get messages off. Once we sent a message off by half a dozen of them. We got an answer back. So one of them made it to Beirut from the Aegean. That's really quite fascinating.

98 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Laying : Put down in rows or layers.



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Eggs are "laid", so is carpet.



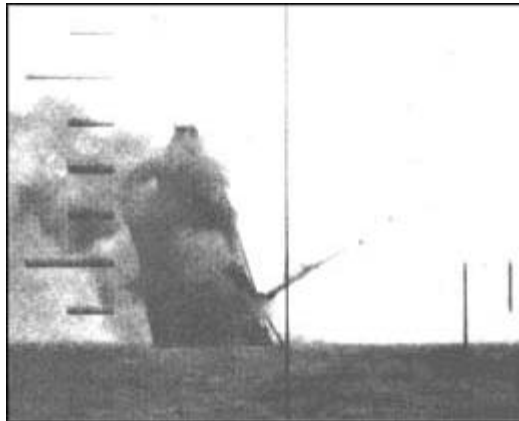
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## Laying mines

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

I spent a whole year there in various submarines, but mostly in Rorqual. This was in 1943. It was a bit of a muddle for me because it was all very new to me. I learned pretty fast mind you. The patrol would be, you leave Beirut to get mines. We would go down to Haifa. Haifa was the mining depot. Load up with mines, go up the Aegean, lay the mines. This was the main task, to get rid of the mines. There was a lot of German and Italian ships up there. So we laid little mine fields somewhere in the Aegean. Then we would be free to go and operate somewhere else.

115 Words



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## ***FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2***

Caiques : Say this  
like "cakes"



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### **Seek and destroy**

**Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit  
Harbour**

What we did after laying mines was to seek and destroy. We blew up the local motor-sailing ships called Caiques. These were used for taking cargo between all the islands. We sank those, and German and Italian destroyers too. There might be tankers coming out from the Black Sea. These tried to get to Italy or where ever. Sometimes there was an oil train going to Italy. We would shoot up anything that got in range of our torpedoes or guns.

82 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

M.T.B.



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Depth Charge : A bomb like an oil drum that goes off under water at a depth set before it is dropped. Used against submarines.



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### Plenty of action

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

There was plenty of action. The last couple of days of patrol we'd go and beat up some place. We looked out for M.T.B's. M.T.B's are **M**otor **T**orpedo **B**oats. They are the sort of fast light craft which were a perfect menace to us. They had depth charges and torpedoes, and guns. They were very dangerous for us. We would go and shoot up where they docked. We wanted them out of the way for certain. We also destroyed the places where the Caiiques were built, refitted and bottom scraped. Where train tracks ran along the coast, we would shoot up the trains. We had a four inch gun, and the last two days on patrol were spent venting our spleen on everything German we could find. It was really good fun. It was a wild life. Very well ordered, very exciting.

142 Words



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## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Yugoslavs : People from Yugoslavia.



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Bicycle : A bike.



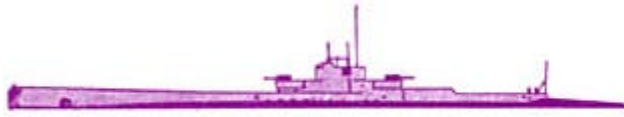
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## Twice the punch

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit Harbour

Some Yugoslavs had escaped to Egypt from Yugoslavia in an old submarine. It had been built in England after the First World War. The only thing I knew about the builders was that they made bicycles before the war! The great thing about this submarine was it had two guns on it. The authorities really wanted this up in the Aegean because it had two guns. It could do twice as much damage.

73 Words



HRABRI. NEBOJSA.

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Yugoslav two-gun submarine

## FAR AWAY BUT CLOSE TO HOME - VETERANS STORIES 2

Pistol : Hand gun.



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Port Said : Say Sah  
Id, not Sed.  
For map following  
page.

### A lack of trust

Steve Jenner : Musquodoboit  
Harbour

I got sent to the Yugoslav submarine for two months. They had a whole crew. We did not trust the Yugoslavs a-shore. They were always getting into trouble a-shore. They would go and fight in the night-clubs and shoot one another. They all carried pistols. My captain, the British captain, put a British crew on as well. But we never got that submarine to work properly. We had to change the batteries. We did this in the dockyard in Port Said. Our crew took the ship down by sea, and the Yugoslavs came by bus. We did the work, they polished the brass. Then they made a mess of the clubs in Port Said!

116 Words



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