



Bay Seniors NEWSLETTER



IN THIS EDITION

Veteran recalls horror of war-time convoys

Make a date for our Mini-Expo

Searching for a Santa: can you help?

Wrestling ref gets to grips with pickleball

We must see the folly of war, says Merchant Navy veteran

By Captain Earle Wagner

When World War II began in 1939, I was 15 years old. At age 17, I volunteered and was accepted into the Merchant Navy.

As a merchant mariner, I felt very proud to serve my country. I was only 19 years old when I became a ship's officer. My wartime experience gave me the opportunity to follow a seafaring career.

The Merchant Navy consisted of tankers, troop ships, freighters, colliers and small coastal vessels.

They ferried troops across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and carried all essential war supplies – ammunition, guns, tanks, airplanes, food, oil, and other supplies – for overseas troops and civilian populations. Our government recognized the Merchant Navy



Merchant ships assemble in the Bedford basin in April 1942, ready to convoy across the Atlantic. (Photo: Library and Archives Canada). Earle Wagner

(right) was a teenager when he joined the Merchant Navy. In this special article for Remembrance Day he recalls friends made and friends lost, and says he will never forget the devastation he saw.



as a fourth service after the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It was the transportation service. My first job was ordinary seaman aboard the oil tanker *Reginolite*. The ship was 469 feet long and 9,069 gross tonnage.

It operated between North America and South America, carrying oil for Canada, mostly used by the Army, Navy and Air Force. We had 42 officers and crew.

It was fitted with a 4-inch deck

Continued on Page 2

‘Wet, cold, scared sick and lonely’ - the life of the merchant seaman

Continued from Page 1

gun for defence against attacking enemy submarines, and anti-aircraft guns for shooting down enemy aircraft.

Seamen were expected to do manual labour and keep the ship clean and well-painted, even in wartime. Dangerous jobs, like going aloft to paint the mast, the funnel, or the hull, were routine. One slip and you could fall 100 feet to the deck or into the ocean. Life at sea in wartime was dangerous. Merchant ships were prime targets for enemy torpedoes, bombs, mines, and gunfire.

To avoid detection, ships were painted dark grey, and at night, no lights were shown.

Ships were massed together in convoys of only a few up to a hundred or more.

Weather conditions in the North Atlantic created storms, gales, fog, ice, freezing rain or spray, snow, and occasional hurricanes. Vessel collisions were common due to poor weather, equipment failure or human error while steaming in convoy.

To make matters worse, vessels rolled, pitched, and tossed about during bad weather. Seamen were often wet, cold, seasick, scared at times, and lonely.

At any time, the enemy might attack, sinking vessels and casting crews into lifeboats or life rafts to perish or, if lucky, to be picked up. This resulted in the



Survivors of two merchant ships crowd the decks of a rescue trawler at St. John's, Newfoundland, April 1943. (Photo: Gerald M. Moses, Library and Archives Canada)

highest casualty rate of any of the armed services in World War II.

Enemy submarines were our greatest fear.

In 1942, steaming in one day of daylight, I saw 14 Allied vessels sunk, lying on the ocean bottom, only parts of the ships above water.

This occurred along the Atlantic American coast in sight of land.

I will never forget this devastation and tragedy of lost ships and seamen by submarine warfare.

During World War II, approximately 50 to 60 million lives were lost.

In both World War I and World War II, 2,200 Canadian merchant seamen and 127 Canadian and Newfoundland vessels were lost by enemy action.

I lost relatives and friends; some are buried in Europe, others in unknown graves at sea.

Somehow, people of all countries must realize the folly of war, and must learn to live peacefully with one another to avoid future wars and holocausts.

Earle Wagner: serving in war and in peace

Upon retiring after 48 years of marine service, Captain Wagner was an active member and president of the Canadian Merchant Navy Association, and chairman of the Master Mariners of Canada, Memorial Fund, Maritime Division.

He helped lead the fight to make Merchant Navy Veterans eligible for pension and program benefits from Veterans Affairs Canada.

Captain Wagner championed the development of a Wartime Service medal for Merchant Navy personnel. He also served as chairman of the Memorial Fund, where he was responsible for the National Merchant Navy War Memorial on the Halifax waterfront.

In addition to many other awards and medals, he was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal for his lifetime of service to Canada and his comrades.

Lest We Forget

Hannah was first Canadian casualty of World War II

During our interview with Captain Earle Wagner (see Page 1), he mentioned that Hannah Baird, a Scottish-born Canadian stewardess on board passenger ship *Athenia*, en route to North America, was the first Canadian casualty of World War II.

Athenia was sunk on September 3, 1939, the first official day of the war, off the northwest coast of Ireland, by a German submarine, U-30.

The submarine's commanding officer, Oberleutnant Fritz-Julius Lemp, torpedoed *Athenia*, under the mistaken impression she was an armed Merchant Navy ship, and failed to offer aid, even after he realized his error.

Hannah Baird is one of eight women mariners who died serving their country in wartime.

Her name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial and on a plaque of remembrance in Langford, BC.



Memorial plaques in Halifax and BC include the name of Hannah Baird, the first Canadian casualty of World War II.

Mini-Expo at next monthly meeting

Our next monthly meeting will include a Mini-Expo. Make sure you join us to learn more about Bay Seniors' current offerings, with brief presentations, information tables, and displays.

The Mini-Expo will feature, among other things, fitness, computer tablet training, placemats, tote bags and masks; rug-hooking; writing; home repairs; woodworking; book club, pickle ball; jewellery; card-making; and volunteer opportunities.

Enjoy a coffee or tea, and catch up with other Bay Seniors members!

Bay Seniors meetings and activities are presently restricted to members only. We look forward to welcoming the wider community in the future. COVID precautions, including masks and proof of double vaccination, are required.

Need help with home repair project?

The home maintenance organizing team is continuing to plan project phases with several community partners.

Come and discuss your ideas or needs with our planning volunteers at the November 4 mini-expo at Shining Waters.

Maintenance Program Manager needed

The Seniors Association of St. Margaret's Bay has a contract position available for a Seniors Home Maintenance Program Manager.

The application deadline is November 10. Visit the Bay Seniors Facebook page to learn more about this opportunity. Please do not apply until you have reviewed the requirements and are sure you qualify: www.facebook.com/bayseniors.

MAKE A DATE
Monthly Members' Meeting
and Mini-Expo
Thursday, November 4
2 to 4 pm
Shining Waters

Appointments needed for flu shots this year

Flu shot clinics are available by appointment only this year. Book an appointment with your pharmacy by phone or online.

PharmaChoice Hammonds Plains pharmacy is also offering the high-dose flu shot to seniors.

The high-dose shot is not widely available, and costs \$85, as it is not covered under Nova Scotia Health.

Call 902-832-0494 to book an appointment at PharmaChoice. Or drop by your local pharmacy and find out how to book an appointment.

Sewing Volunteers needed - Bay Seniors

The sewing team is looking for a few new recruits. Right now, the team is making fabric placemats. You supply the sewing machine, and we supply the instructions and materials. Sewing volunteers work at home, and donate whatever time they have available. To volunteer or for more information, email centre@bayseniors.ca.

Sewing Volunteers needed - Unicorn Theatre

The folks at the Unicorn Theatre are hoping you'd like to sew some costumes for young actors in the theatre's upcoming production of *Frozen, Jr.* Contact info@unicorntheatre.ca, or call 902-826-1687.



Christmas in the Bay

Susie Reindeer needs a Santa

Christmas in the Bay is back. On Sunday November 28 we'll have a tree-lighting, choir, hayrides for kids and other events in front of the CEC in Redmonds Plaza. (Proof of vaccination will be required and Covid-19 precautions will apply).

And on Sunday December 5 we'll show the highlights, and much, much more, on Facebook Live when Susie Reindeer (above) returns to host Christmas in the Bay Online.

But Susie needs your help. The event organizers need a Santa. In addition to the classic twinkling eye, kind smile and rich voice, organizers would love to have a Santa with an authentic white beard and real-Santa physique.

The job involves being interviewed on camera by Susie, and possibly hosting one or more video chats with small groups of local children, so a Santa who is comfortable on camera is exactly what's needed. Email outreach.smbcec@gmail.com for more information or to volunteer.

We also need 30-second videos of children answering the question "What do you love most about the holidays?" Contact sharon@bayseniors.ca for details.

And we need help with logistics

Bay Seniors members are invited to join the Christmas in the Bay Logistics Team at the November 28 event.

Tasks will include coordinating human and vehicle traffic, checking proof of vaccination, and helping visitors access activities, including hayrides, tree-lighting and more, while observing Covid-19 precautions.

Please send a private message to the event's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ChristmasintheBay, or leave a message at 902-820-3334.

Member's Story: Wrestling ref gets to grips with pickleball

Former Canada Games referee Patt Dunphy will be introducing folks to pickleball at our Mini-Expo on November 4 at Shining Waters

"Pickleball is a fun sport," says Patt Dunphy. "And it's good exercise, too."

Patt ought to know. He's spent his life involved in fitness and sport, as an athlete, a phys ed teacher, a Canada Games referee, a sport clinician, and the developer of several athletic initiatives in Nova Scotia, including the Junior High Wrestling Championships in Halifax.

Deciding to retire from refereeing after officiating at the wrestling tournament at the 2017 Canada Games in Winnipeg, Patt says, "I wanted to take a couple of years off, and see what was out there besides wrestling."

Joining the Black Point Community Centre, he took a course in pickleball three years ago to familiarize himself with the game.

Patt was part of starting a pickleball club there, which became very popular.

Although it's often seen as an older person's game, and a lot of seniors play pickleball, Patt says the recent Atlantic championship attracted "players 18 years old right up to 80."

Pickleball is "like table tennis on the floor, played with paddles, nets and whiffleballs," he says, "You don't need a lot of physical capacity to play, and you can stay at the intro level – a lot of people do – or you can advance levels."

If you'd like to learn more about pickleball, or if you have played in the past and would like to get back to the game, Patt Dunphy will be at our November 4 Mini-Expo at Shining Waters, ready to provide information about the game.

He is also offering an information session at the Black Point Firehall on Tuesday, November 16, from 1 to 3 pm. It's an opportunity to watch a video, see the equipment, get information about avoiding injury, and ask questions.



Patt Dunphy (left), was delighted last month to present his former student Glen Dodge with a banner acknowledging Glen's winning point in securing the Chebucto Road School the 1973-74 Wrestling Championship. Patt joked that he had to wait 48 years to make the presentation.

Check out the Bay Seniors Activities at Black Point Firehall

Card-Making Workshop

Thanks to Lynne Whyte, who is donating the materials and leading a workshop for up to 12 Bay Seniors members to make Christmas cards from 10 am to noon on November 23.

Please pre-register by November 9 to centre@bayseniors.ca or by calling 902-820-3334.

- All activities are offered on Tuesdays, 10 am to noon, unless otherwise indicated.
- Note that mask and proof of double vaccination are required.
- The large space allows for social distancing for multiple activities, and is located only 14 minutes from the Community Enterprise Centre.
- For more information on any of these programs, please email centre@bayseniors.ca or call 902-820-3334, and leave a message.

Pickleball

What is it?

- A fun sport that combines many elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong.
- Played both indoors or outdoors on a badminton-sized court and a slightly modified tennis net.
- Played with a paddle and a plastic ball with holes.
- Played as doubles or singles.
- Can be enjoyed by all ages and skill levels.

Please see Member Story on page 5 for more information.

Drop-In

Enjoy informal conversation, board games, card games and puzzles on Tuesday mornings.

Take a Walk – Indoors

As winter weather looms, you're invited to get your exercise indoors. Walk the perimeter of the Black Point Firehall during the Bay Seniors drop-in on Tuesday mornings. Nine loops around the inside perimeter of the space is 1 km.

Rug-Hooking

The group continues to meet on Tuesday mornings. If you're interested in joining, please email centre@bayseniors.ca.

- You can find out more about activities at the Black Point Firehall at our November 4 Mini-Expo at Shining Waters.

Established in 2009, the Seniors Association of St. Margaret's Bay (Bay Seniors) is a not-for-profit registered society whose purpose is to promote and participate in the development of wellness living for seniors; to research and represent the interests of seniors living in the greater St. Margaret's Bay area; and to provide housing and accommodation options for seniors. For more information about any of the topics in this newsletter, visit our website www.bayseniors.ca or contact the Seniors Information Centre: email centre@bayseniors.ca telephone 902-820-3334. The centre is located at Unit 1 – 5229 St. Margaret's Bay Road, Upper Tantallon, NS, B3Z 4R5. It's open 11 am - 2 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.