



# Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF  
THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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May 2014

## Liberty Ships: the ugly ducklings that helped win the war.

One of the proudest accomplishments of the US shipbuilding has to be the Liberty ship building program during World War II. The German submarines were strangling the flow of needed supplies to the Allied forces in Europe and the shipbuilding industry stepped up and made President Franklin D Roosevelt's prediction of a "bridge of ships" a reality. He also at one point described them as "Ugly Ducklings"



More than 2700 Liberty ships were built in US shipyards between 1941 and 1945. The construction was directed by Henry J. Kaiser. Mr. Kaiser did not have any experience in running a shipyard so he sought advice from Cyril Thompson, a British ship builder who had been building an English version of the Liberty ship. Thompson's Empire Liberty, built in 1941, was the prototype for all Liberty ships to follow and also gave the class its name.

The 7000 ton vessels were 441.5 feet long, had a beam of 57 feet and a cargo capacity of 10,500 long tons. The ships were called "Kaiser's Creeping Coffins" by German U-boat crews because of their low 11-knot speed. Liberty ships were propelled by a 2500-hp triple-expansion steam engine turning a single 18.5 foot propeller.

The real miracle of the Liberty ship construction was the shipbuilders workers. Before the war started there were very few experienced men working in the shipbuilding industry. After war was declared, the draft severely depleted the number of men even more. They had to be replaced by thousand of men and women, many of whom had never even seen a ship. Women made up approximately 25 percent of the shipbuilding force. By 1945 the shipbuilding force had grown to approximately 650,000 in 18 different yards around the country.

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### CMHS Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

**Tuesday,  
May 20th  
2014**

**7:00 pm**

At the  
Petty Officers' Mess  
HCMS Tecumseh

**Sabretache**  
THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The  
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
is a non-profit registered society  
which fosters the study of the  
military and the police, and the heritage of  
Canada, the British Empire, and the world  
as well as the preservation of military  
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month  
at:

Petty Officers' Mess  
HMCS Tecumseh  
1820 - 24th Street SW  
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

All are welcome to attend

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## Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

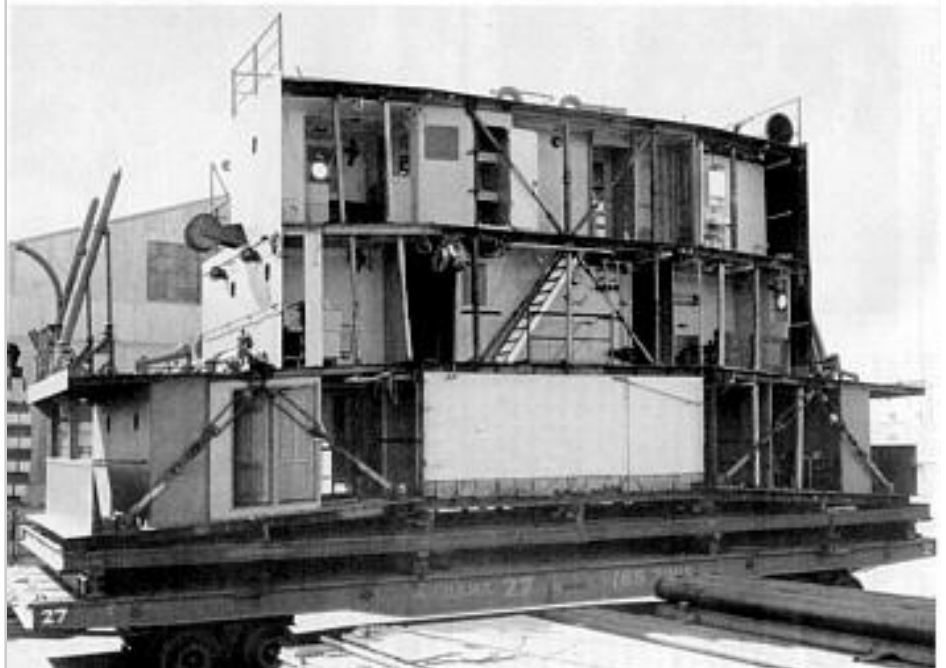
**Tuesday, May 20th, 2014**  
**19:00 (7:00 pm)**

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.  
Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is  
considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:

- Introduction of guests Minutes of last meeting
- Correspondence Membership report Treasurer's report
- Old business / New business Break
- Show and Tell, Adjourn

The President, David S, would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting  
for an informal time of fellowship.



Liberty ships are famous for their all-welded construction, extensive use of prefabrication and the application of production-line techniques to shipbuilding. Above we see a section on a railway flat car moving to join the rest of the ship. This technique used when building Liberty ships resulted in a production rate far in advance of what was thought possible before the Second World War.



Henry J Kaiser. Industrialist who was involved in the consortium that built Hoover Dam, shipbuilding, movie making and also a well known philanthropist.

## Minutes of the last meeting

### Calgary Military Historical Society

Minutes of the meeting held April 15th, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM by President David S..

23 members and one guest are present.

Minutes of last meeting are discussed and moved to accept by Bob S & seconded by Tony G.

Treasures Report. Report given by Treasurer Brian H. Donations and bills discussed. Club in usual good financial order.

Membership report. Report given by Membership commissioner Brian H. 45 members current .

Old Business.

Discussion of upcoming Easter Gun Show. Show starts at 9:30 AM Friday with set up on Thursday afternoon. Total of 875 tables have been sold.

New Business.

MCCoC Facebook page . Very well done with lots of participation.

Mike C discusses idea . The 2014-15 Opera season will feature the play "Silent Night" Story of the Christmas Truce of WW1. Tickets and date not available yet. Is anyone interested in a block of tickets. If so discuss with Mike.

Al D. Discusses Veterans passing away and changes happening. Battle of Atlantic diner on May 3. Contact him if interested. \$ 65 per person.

David G. Discusses postal rates and if membership should go up. Some want email only others want mail. No consensus reached.

Don S. Auctions off catalogues from Wallis and Wallis. Mike C purchases for \$50. Thank you Don.

David S. Auctions book on Dieppe.

Break

Draw by Ticketmiester Neil. Many happy winners.

Show and Tell

David G. Items and clipping on pilot of 436 Crazy Canucks.

Al D. Story on Albert Speers.

Martin. Friend Dean of Medicine who passed away left 800 books and manuals on Navy. Shows 1st book published by Canadian Navy.

Brarry E. Harness Brass Edward V11 1901. Lewis Gun Sleeve badge. Collars Calgary Highlanders, and Artillery badge.

Allan Mck. MCCoC convention Found lost family medals

Robert. Pictures of recent tour of ships in San Diego. Visited Midway aircraft carrier and US and Russian Submarines.

David L. Chaplain Service papers and envelopes with Chaplains letterhead., Letter from WW1.

Bob McP. Civil Air Patrol badge collection. Over 112 pilots who ditched at sea. US medals

Mike C. Boer War medal and phot of cemetery. E.A. Yates QSA and KSA and stories of his exploits with New Zealand WW1 forces.

Stuart E. Story of joining RCAF, summer drill, and training in Edmonton. Took electrician course and ended up in Bomber Command in Europe. Story on receiving Bomber Command Bar.

John E. Brags about taking cruises while we froze. Visited Luke Air force base and saw air show and F35 fighter.

Gary; Storey on relative who service din Cdn. Forces. Uniforms and medals. Story on HCMS Niob

Darrel K. Book on Airborne Special Force and letters. WW1 badges and Japanese bayonet. Story on civil war in Guatemala.

James B. WW1 postcard.

Motion to adjourn. Barry E and seconded by Tony G. Approved.



The first Liberty ship, the SS Patrick Henry, was launched in Baltimore on September 27, 1941. That first ship took seven months to build. The shipbuilders quickly gains experience and the time was cut to an average of three months to build, launch, outfit and deliver a ship. The reasons that the ships were able to be build so fast was Henry Kaiser’s “daring “ technique of building sub assemblies and then bring them together on the ways and dry-docks. The speed of shipbuilding reached its pinnacle in 1942. At the Kaiser Shipyard in Richmond, California, the workers built the SS Robert E. Peary in four days, 15 hours. That “daring” pre-fabrication technique is now a standard shipbuilding method.

A Liberty ship’s Standard wartime crew consisted of 43 merchant seaman and 12 to 28 U.S> Navy personnel who manned the ship’s guns and signal bridge. Approximately 200 Liberty ships were sunk during the war, giving the merchant Marine the highest casualty rate by percentage of any other armed forces. Only two Liberty ship's survive today, the SS Jeremiah O'Brien, home ported in San Francisco, and the SS John W. Brown home ported in Baltimore. Of the two, the Jeremiah O'Brien is the only unaltered, operational Liberty ship in the world Her triple-expansion steam engines were the stand-in for the Titanic during filming of the movie. The ship is maintained by the



National Liberty Ship Memorial in San Francisco. In May,1994, the Jeremiah O'Brien returned to England for the 50th Anniversary of the D-Day landing as the only surviving ship from the original invasion force.

