

1996

## Photo Essay: HMCS *Haida*

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*HMCS Haida Naval Museum*

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### Recommended Citation

Morse, Carla "Photo Essay: HMCS *Haida*." Canadian Military History 5, 1 (1996)

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Photo Essay

# HMCS HAIDA

by Carla Morse

*HMCS Haida, Tribal Class Destroyer. Entered service 30 August 1943 and taken out of service in October 1963. The Tribals were the most powerful destroyers ever built for the Royal Canadian Navy with six 4.7-inch guns and four torpedoes. They were a short-range, heavily armed ship built for speed. Haida had a complement of 18 Officers and 230 crew. The Canadian Tribals all took their names from indigenous native "tribes." Haida's Canadian sister ships included Iroquois, Huron, Athabaskan (lost), Micmac, Nootka, Cayuga, and Athabaskan II.*

In Canada, historic naval ships are not as plentiful as in the United States but their history is just as rich. Although Canada's naval tradition is a young one, officially starting with the Naval Act in 1910, the legacy is a lasting one that continues to thrive up to the present with the commissioning of the new City Class Frigates. Canadians have chosen to preserve three of the many ships that saw service in WWII. Two of them, the corvette HMCS *Sackville* and CGS *Acadia* are in Halifax and the other, the destroyer

HMCS *Haida*, is in Toronto. The post-war vessel HMCS *Bras D'Or* is also preserved. It is very likely that other ships will be saved in this way with current plans to bring HMCS *Fraser* to Kingston, Ontario. It is sometimes hard to believe that you can actually still stand on the decks of some of the most famous ships in Canada but there is no doubt about the thrill of such an act once you are aboard. The following photo essay gives you a glimpse into HMCS *Haida*'s past but to really feel it you should come aboard.



**Above:** HMCS Haida was the third Canadian ship commissioned into the Tribal Class of Destroyers after HMCS Iroquois and HMCS Athabaskan. Commander Harry DeWolf (centre, holding name plaque) was Haida's first commanding officer. Although she joined halfway through the war, Haida went on to become Canada's most famous wartime ship having sunk 11 enemy vessels, including four destroyers and a U-boat. She began her career escorting convoys into the Arctic on their supply runs to Murmansk, USSR. She was part of the escort group that found the German battleship Scharnhorst which was sunk by HMS Duke of York in December 1943. As part of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla, she was a member of the fleet that invaded Normandy.



**Centre:** On 29 April 1944 while patrolling off the coast of France with her sister ship HMCS Athabaskan, Haida surprised two German destroyers, T-27 and T-24, off the Isle of Ushant. A fiery battle ensued during which Athabaskan was sunk. Haida's seaboats were ordered lowered but were to be left unmanned. However, crew members Able Seaman Jack Hannam, Stoker William Cummings, and Leading Seaman William McClure defied these orders and jumped in the motor cutter and managed to pick up six members of Athabaskan's crew. After a long night on the water, with the engine cutting in and out and German aircraft flying overhead they arrived around midnight the next day in Penzance after being picked up by an Air/Sea Rescue launch. In 1992, Haida's motor cutter was restored and is now displayed next to the ship.

#### GREETINGS

WHEREAS, It has been brought to the attention of the nominating committee that

The Officers and Crew of the Destroyer "Haida"

have been outstanding in their field for many years and rescued the shipwrecked crew of a B-29 Plane whose Co-Pilot was a Texan, and

WHEREAS, they would likely bring further honors to the State of Texas, they are hereby made

#### HONORARY TEXANS

This entitles them to wear cowboy boots, a ten-gallon hat and to generally conduct themselves as Texans. No bronc riding test is necessary at this time in order to conserve horsepower

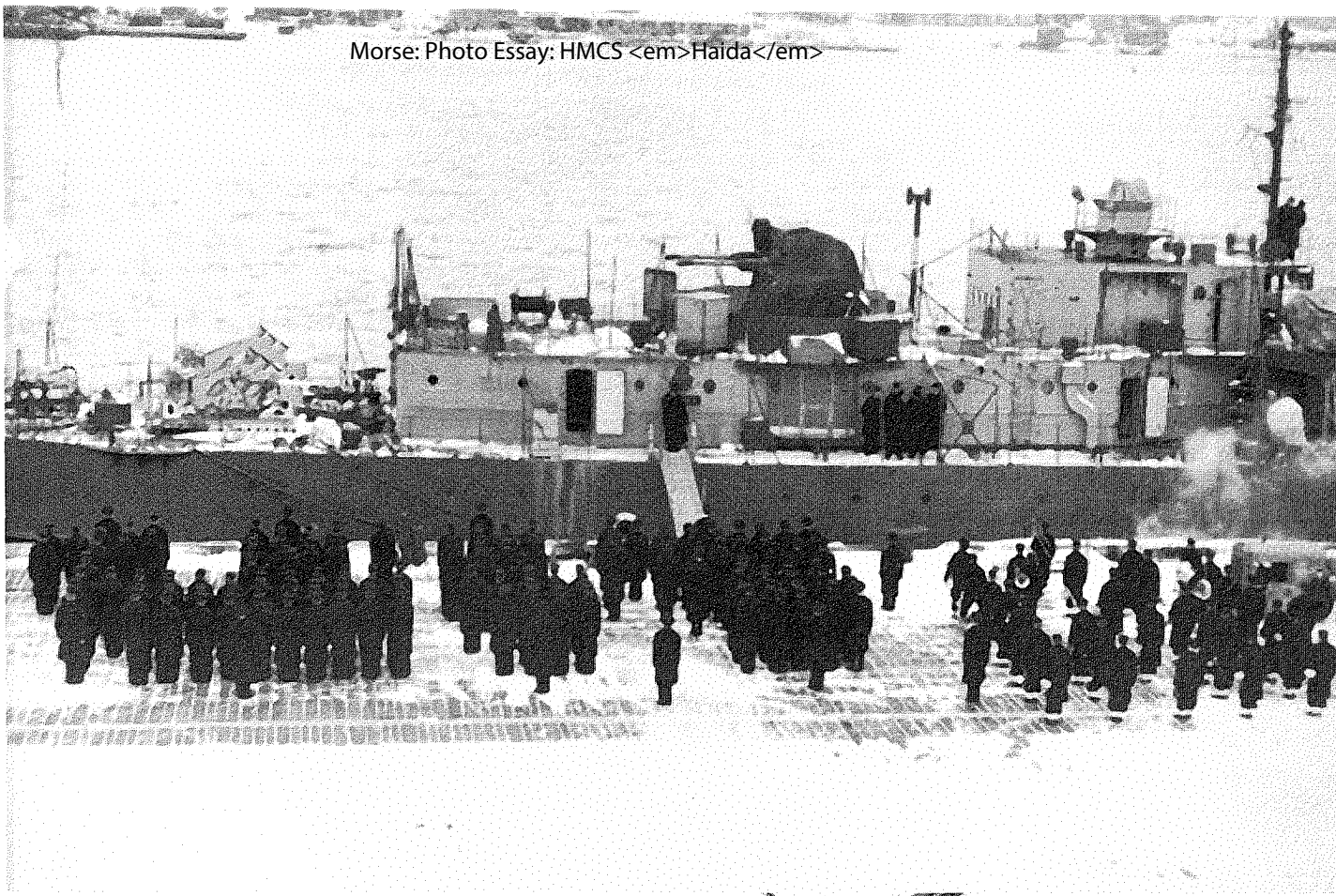


Date: Nov. 21, 1949

Ray B. Plaxman  
Hop Head - Corral Bds

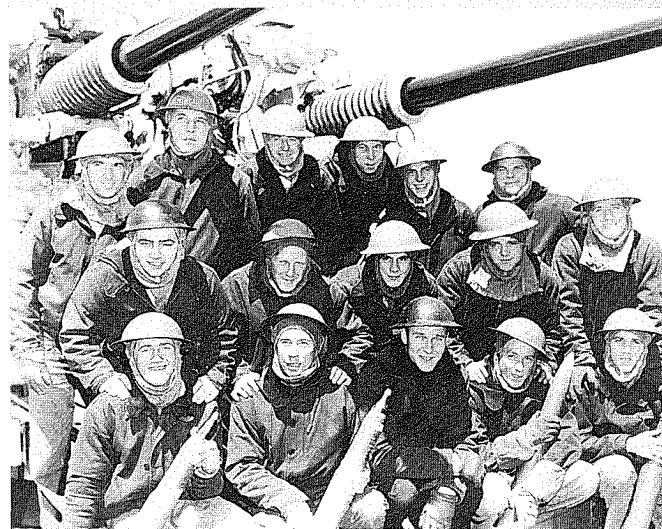
**Bottom:** In November 1949, Haida was doing maneuvers off the coast of Bermuda when an American B-29 bomber went down. Haida was the first on the scene and lowered her seaboat once again to rescue the nine downed airmen. As a result, Haida's ships' company received many letters of congratulations. The co-pilot of the plane was from Texas and for this reason the crew were bestowed with these certificates naming them Honourary Texans.





**Above:** After undergoing a refit in 1949 for conversion to an Anti-Submarine escort with improved ASDIC (sonar) and squid mountings fitted on her quarterdeck, Haida was recommissioned at a ceremony held in Halifax on a cold and snowy day in March 1952. At that time, HMCS Haida became the first Canadian ship commissioned under a queen and thus became known as "**Her Majesty's Canadian Ship**". After trials and workups she made two trips to Korea, once in September 1952 and again in December 1953, each time circumnavigating the globe.

**Centre:** One of Haida's duties while in Korea was to destroy enemy trains carrying supplies to the North Koreans. The US Navy, in an effort to boost morale, issued a challenge to all ships by forming an elite group called the "Trainbusters Club." Membership in the club was open to all ships. Haida joined in December 1952 when she scored a direct hit on the engine of a train. Haida's crew proved adept at this new sport scoring four direct hits and earning one of the top spots in the "club." Pictured here is Haida's 3"50 gun along with its crew.



**Bottom:** In February 1959, HMCS Haida and HMCS Nootka were visiting Bermuda. One night while returning to Nootka via Haida, a sailor from Nootka dropped Haida's badge over the side as a prank. In 1975, the Canadian Naval Liaison Officer in Bermuda received the following message from the British Cable Ship Sentinel: "Diver third engineer M.H. Rennie while working on ocean bed off Bermuda, found ship's plaque Haida." Maritime Command arranged the return of the badge to Haida, with help from the Royal Navy. Here Admiral D.S. Boyle presents the badge to Frank Stockwell of Haida. It had been "missing" for 16 years.





**Left:** A large part of a sailor's daily routine was cleaning, painting, and maintaining the ship. Here a group of sailors takes time out to wash down the ship's hull and apply a new coat of paint to her wartime hull number. Even though Haida no longer goes out to sea, cleanliness, painting and preventative maintenance are still priorities to combat the corrosion and structural damage brought on by the effects of the weather (**Inset**). Each summer university students are hired to work on the ship and greet visitors but also to help keep the ship in good shape with a new coat of paint.

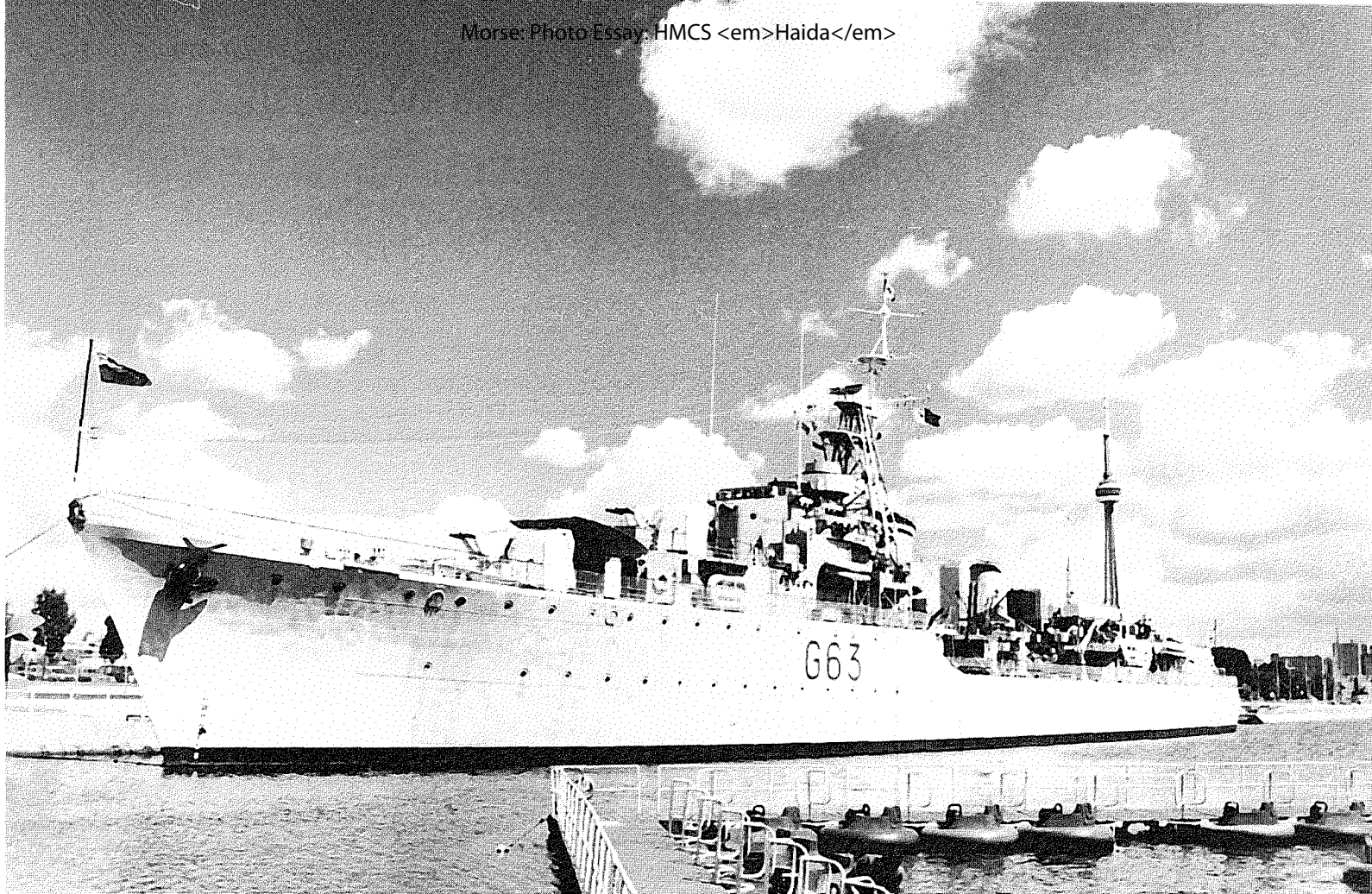


**Above right:** Honourary Company of Noon Time Gunners. During the summer season, Haida's 4" guns are fired every day at noon in a traditional salute. Often, guests are invited to fire the gun and become members of the Honourary Company of Noon Time Gunners. Gunners get fitted out in the anti-flash gear complete with steel helmet and gloves to make the biggest bang they've ever made. Members of this esteemed group include Bill Davis, Colleen Dewhurst, David Collenette, Veronica Tennant, Art Eggleton, John Black Aird, Barbara Hamilton, and Henry N.R. Jackman who is seen here after firing the gun in 1991.



**Left:** In 1964, a group of businessmen got together and convinced the federal government not to sell Haida for scrap but instead to allow them to buy the ship and open it up as a museum on Toronto's waterfront. From 1964 to 1971, the ship was moored at the foot of York St. when thousands of visitors walked her decks. It was during this time that Prince Phillip became her honorary patron. When Ontario Place opened in 1971, Haida was moved to the new park after the provincial government of Ontario agreed to purchase the ship and care for her in perpetuity.





*After 25 years, Haida still greets visitors as they walk through the main entrances of Ontario Place just off Lakeshore Boulevard. During the 1970s the ship was used as a Sea Cadet training camp during the summer months. Today, Haida is open from Victoria Day until Labour Day, as a naval museum and memorial to the men and women who served in the Royal Canadian Navy. Our enthusiastic volunteers and crew have worked hard over the years to make the ship as authentic as possible.*

**I**t has been 33 years since *Haida* was retired from active service in 1963. Over that time technological changes have brought computerized and digital equipment which has allowed our ships to get bigger, better, faster, and more comfortable. Women now serve in ships along with the men. Despite all these changes, some things stay the same. Things like our need to

know about the past and the stories we can learn from the people who served on these ships. We can only imagine what it was like to serve on Canadian ships during World War Two or even in Korea but as you walk through the passageways and breathe the air of the ship you start to get some idea. For that alone we continue to work hard to keep *Haida* in great shape so that future generations may walk the decks of one of Canada's most famous ships.

#### **H.M.C.S. HAIDA Naval Museum**

**Hours:**

May 17 - June 29      10:00 am to 6:30 pm daily  
June 30 -September 2      10:30 am to 7 pm daily

**Admission:**

\$2.00 per person (ages 5-64)  
\$1.50 for Seniors  
Children 4 and under are admitted free.

Our address is 955 Lakeshore Blvd. W., Toronto,  
ON M6K 3B9; (416) 314-9755; (416) 314-9878 FAX

Carla Morse is Curator of the H.M.C.S. HAIDA Naval Museum. She has an Honours BA in Canadian History from Acadia University and a Masters of Museum Studies from University of Toronto. As H.M.C.S. HAIDA she is responsible for exhibit development, care of the collection, education programmes, collections documentation, fundraising marketing and programming