

*Undated letter from Denomy
Written from home, to RCAF Headquarters*

F/O B.C. DENOMY, D.S.O.
13 Pegley Street,
CHATHAM, Ontario.

Group Capt. Conn.,
Airforce Historian,
A.F. HQ. OTTAWA, Ont.

Dear Sir:

In reply to conversation and wires received from Flight Lieutenant Peach, I am writing this story as instructed. I am writing it in the first person and shall try to include everything that happened. I shall leave it to your discretion to strike out the parts that are unnecessary. First of all, I shall give you a picture of the background.

The crew consisted of the following:

F/L. D. Hornell	co-captain
F/O B. Denomy	co-captain
F/O S. Matheson	Navigator
F/O Campbell	1st W.A.G.
F/S Bodnoff	2nd W.A.G.
F/S S. Cole	3rd W.A.G.
Sgt. D. Scott	1st Engineer
Sgt. St. Laurent	2nd Engineer

We were a complete crew of 162 Sqn. R.C.A.F. based at Reykjavik, Iceland. During the month of June we were based at Wick, Scotland, on temporary duty. We were flying Canso aircraft.

On the morning of June 24-1944 at 0930 hours, we took off from Wick, Scotland on another routine patrol. We were finished our patrol and had started on our return home when at 1900 hours, Flight Sergeant J. Bodnoff sighted a submarine on our port side. The U-boat was bearing 090 red five miles. When F/L Hornell was informed of it, he sounded the klaxon and immediately turned in for the attack. At four miles the U-boat commenced firing its guns and did a slight turn in order to put the stern of the U-boat on us. As we closed the range, the firing from the U-boat intensified. At 1200 yards, our front gunner, F/O Campbell opened up fire. Despite the violent evasive action which Hornell was taking, Campbell managed to get continuous strikes on the conning tower and some of the U-boat crew appeared to be hit. At about 1/2 mile from the U-boat, is when we first noticed that we had been hit by enemy gun fire. We had two large holes about 24 inches in diameter in the trailing edge of the starboard wing. There was a hole about eighteen inches in the starboard side of the fuselage by the radio set. The starboard engine had been hit and began to vibrate badly. Oil was pouring from the damaged engine and soon caught fire. Despite the heavy damage to the aircraft and the continued heavy fire, Hornell pressed home the attack just the same. At a range of about 500 yards from the U-boat, I managed to feather the damaged starboard engine which came to a full stop just before we reached the U-boat. At about 200-300 yards the U-boat ceased firing and did a violent turn to port. The reason for this was to make as difficult a target as possible for bombing. We had been making our attack from astern and this would alter the bombing run to abeam. Despite this

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turn, Hornell was able to turn the aircraft and drop the depth charges in a perfect straddle about forty feet from the bow of the U-boat. The straddle was witnessed by myself and F/O Matheson, navigator. The explosion of the depth charges was witnessed by Sgt. Scott who said the U-boat seemed to lift right out of the water then settle back. At this moment let us pause to say that all during our attack we had been sending out our "465 report", and after being damaged so, our "S-0-S" report. However, as proved later, our aerals had been shot away or our radio set damaged because none of our wireless messages were received by anyone. During this attack F/O Matheson and F/S Cole had both been wounded but managed to carry on under their own power.

At this point we had just completed our attack on the U-boat. With the release of weight we managed to gain height to 250 feet. However, at this point the starboard engine which had been successfully feathered began to vibrate violently and fell out into the sea. This changed the trim of the aircraft so much that we realized it was impossible to stay airbourne. The fire had increased also until all the fabric on the trailing edge and the starboard elevator was burned away. Fortunately we were little out of wind, and Hornell managed to turn into wind and swell for a ditching. Everyone was braced as well as possible under the circumstances. It took two of us to make the landing at this stage. The first attempt at landing on the top of a large wave, bounced us one hundred and fifty feet. As we left power off, the second time we bounced fifty feet and the third and last time we remained on the water. Both pilots went out the emergency exit hatches. The remainder went out the blisters. I walked around on the starboard special equipment aerals and the fire was too severe and I had to return. I then went around the port side and entered the port dinghy. Previous to this Scott had inflated the port dinghy and Flight Sergeant Cole had passed him the emergency rations and a can of water. Into and hanging onto this dinghy, went all the crew except St. Laurent. He had thrown the starboard dinghy into the water and jumped in after it. He had drifted one hundred feet away from us before he was successful in inflating it. We, in Sgt. Scott's dinghy, fearing explosion from the gas tanks, began to row away quickly. F/S Cole although wounded and weak, jumped into the water to swim back for the dinghy radio. However, fearing explosion at any split second, we grabbed him and pushed him back into the dinghy. At this point, everyone took off their flying boots, ordinary shoes (for fear of puncturing dinghy). Hornell took off his trousers as well. It was immediately decided that it was necessary to reach the other dinghy, now about two hundred feet away. Hornell, Matheson, and myself slipped into the water to kick with our feet and thus propel ourselves to the other dinghy. After about eight or nine minutes, we were successful in reaching the other dinghy. As we began to get into the dinghy - Campbell in it, Matheson and St. Laurent halfway in - it exploded. I tied the remains of that exploded dinghy onto the remaining good one. Everyone got into the good dinghy except Hornell, Matheson and myself. This is the way we stayed for the first two hours. F/O Campbell took Hornell's trousers and tied the legs together in order to make a bailing bag. I took Matheson's flying helmet, and hanging on with one hand, I bailed with the other. After two hours, when we were becoming numb, Hornell and I got into the dinghy and Scott and Campbell got into the water. I then started to bail with a regular bailing bag provided for this purpose. After about one hour of this, we decided it was necessary to get everyone into the dinghy for survival. We were successful in getting everyone in except Scott who had to leave his feet in the water. As we carried on in this manner, I would bail for ten minutes and rest for five. In order to bail, someone would have to slip into the water in order to make room for free movement. This continued for twelve hours.

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About four hours after we had ditched, an allied aircraft, Catalina flown by Lt. Johansen, a Norwegian, was sighted. F/O Campbell fired three of the two star cartridges so provided in the dinghy. It was our third and last flare that the aircraft saw. The aircraft dropped sea markers or smoke floats periodically to keep us in sight. At this stage, the waves were about 18 feet high and the wind about 20 knots. After about 30 minutes, the aircraft flashed to us "Courage - H.S.L. on way - help coming." It then went about two miles away and returned flashing "V's" also "U-boat killed". This of course, gave us considerable courage and F/O Matheson, our navigator, kept working out an E.T.A. for the high speed launch. After about eight hours in the dinghy, we saw a body supported by a yellow maewest, which we knew to be German, about fifty feet away. Our first impresslon was that he was alive so we began to paddle away. After watching him for awhile, we realized he was dead so just let him drift by. Shortly after, a piece of board we thought to be decking from the U-boat also drifted past. Just prior to this we had throw over our ration box and oars, etc. only keeping the water can. At this stage the waves were about 25 feet high and wind about 30 knots. Hornell and Campbell were sea sick and Hornell began to suffer from cold quite a bit. Campbell had a half package of dry cigarettes which we rationed to the entire crew. Someone also had a few barley candies which helped considerably. Durlng the next few hours, the waves and wind increased greatly until at one stage the wind was between 45 and 50 knots and the waves fifty feet high. In order to keep the dinghy upright, we invented a game, "Ride 'em Cowboy", to ride the waves. We would shift our weight from one side to the other as we went up and down the high waves. Unfortunately, after fourteen hours at sea, a wave broke as were at the top of it, and capsized our dinghy. We all managed to re-enter the dinghy but we had lost our bailing bag and water can. This left us at the mercy of the seas entirely. At this point St. Laurent and Hornell showed serious signs of weakenlng. Hornell, suffering from intense cold, became temporarily blind. Sgt. St. Laurent became delirious and soon passed away. We then slipped his body out of the dinghy to make room for Sgt. Scott who had remained partly in the water. After about 16 hours in the dinghy a Warwick was successfully homed to us and attempted to drop an airbourne llfe boat. However, the winds were too strong and it drifted away. It was about 500 yards away and could only be seen when both it and we were on the crest of a wave. Despite the state of the sea and the distance, and his own physical state (very weak and blind), Hornell wanted to swim for it. I refused him the chance because I thought it to be an impossiblity. At this stage, winds and waves were gradually decreasing in strength and size. Sgt. Scott who had been in the water for such long times, grew very weak and about nineteen hours after our ditching, he died. We also slipped his body out of the dinghy. We were all very weak and becoming discouraged, however, we carried on by exercising ourselves as much as possible. Cole and Bodnoff seemed to regain strength from nowhere; Campbell and Matheson seemed to lose strength rapidly. Cole worked on Matheson, Bodnoff on Hornell and myself on Campbell. Cole attempted to make a sea drogue with his airman's field service cap. This did not prove a great deal of success. We continued to work on one another until at twenty hours and thirty five minutes in the dinghy, our rescue launch was sighted by F/S Cole. In about ten minutes time, the launch was beside hauling up Matheson, Campbell and Hornell. Bodnoff and Cole walked up the rope ladder with the assistance of the sailors and I managed to get up by myself. On board, they immediately began work on Hornell and the rest of us. They worked on Hornell for about three hours but were not successful. He never regained consciousness. The launch took us to Lerwick Military

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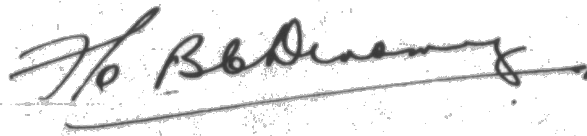
hospital in the Shetland Islands. F/Lt. Hornell is buried there in a military plot. Cole, Bodnoff and Campbell were discharged from the hospital in four days, myself and Matheson after eight days.

Outstanding about F/Lt Hornell, was his marvellous ability in flying such a badly damaged aircraft especially in the face of strong enemy fire. His courage and bravery throughout marked him as a great man. Words cannot do justice to the fine job he has done.

I have tried to relate to you the entire story and I hope from that you can rewrite the story as you want it. If there is any information that is lacking and you want it, please feel free to write me and I shall do my best to find you the answers. I hope the above has met with your approval.

I remain,

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "F/O B.C. Denomy", written over a horizontal line.

F/O B.C. Denomy, D.S.O.