



... for a December Morn Long Ago

The year was nineteen-seventeen;
World War I was raging on.
Some dads and lads would ne'er be seen –
To God their souls had gone.

In Halifax the merchant ships,
Like many times before,
Would make one of many trips
To help our troops once more.

The convoy moored in Bedford Basin,
The IMO close at hand;
Norway was its origin –
Haakon From was in command.

To New York it would expedite
To load relief supplies –
Helping Belgians in their fight
Because they were allies.

Loaded up in Gravesend Bay,
Mont-Blanc would then set sail;
It caused the crew so much dismay,
But courage would prevail.

Before its trip to Europe's shore,
To Halifax it would come.
The cargo they could not ignore:
Explosives ton on ton.

Aimee LeMedec was the man in charge.
As captain of the ship,
Though the challenges were very large,
He had to make the trip.

With a cargo of death, no one was lax –
German U-boats could be near.
But, full speed ahead to Halifax,
They would have to persevere.

Making their way in waters cold,
They sailed the choppy brine.
Nova Scotia they'd soon behold,
But their fear did not decline.

Halifax Harbour was now in sight;
Submarine nets in place.
Mont-Blanc would have to stay the night;
Tomorrow the Narrows they'd face.

The IMO left at day's first light;
Mont-Blanc was coming on –
IMO closed in; they saw their plight
'Bout an hour after dawn.

The IMO struck the starboard side;
The Mont-Blanc was ablaze.
"Abandon ship!" the captain cried –
The crew was in a daze.

The next few minutes seemed surreal;
They sky was bathed in fire.
Noises like a battlefield:
Mont-Blanc a funeral pyre.

It drifted in the current,
Ending up against Pier 6.
As the people watched, their hearts were rent
As they stood as if transfixed.

At 9:04, the Mont-Blanc blew –
The Scene - apocalyptic –
As with fate it made a rendezvous:
It was over in a flick.

Building after building fell –
Shards of glass in flight.
The thousands watching could but dwell
On a sky turned dirty white.

North-end Halifax lay bare;
A vision so unreal.
Many knelt in solemm prayer,
Their tears they could not conceal.

"Twas 84 years ago this day –
So many people gone,
Though the tragic times were far away –
The memories linger on.

Those who survived, throughout the
years,
Told their history well –
Of the day Halifax suffered many fears,
Yet her spirit did excel.

At 9 a.m. you'll hear the bells –
A memorial for those
To whom we bid a fond farewell:
Rest in peaceful, sweet repose.

Written, illustrated and overall design by
OWEN McCARRON

Copyright© CBC 2003.