

Sinking the

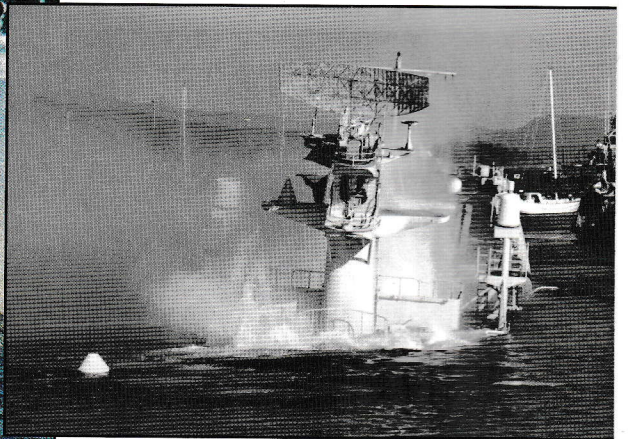
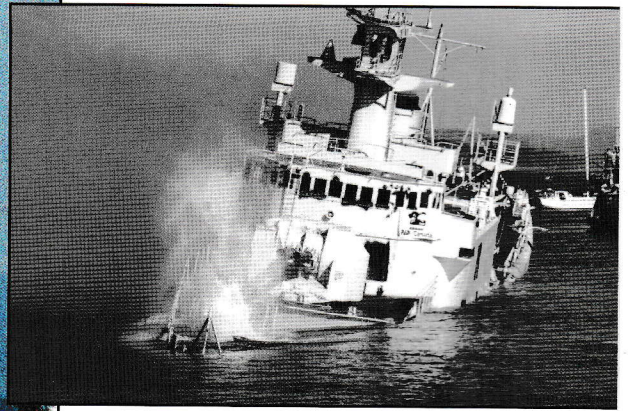
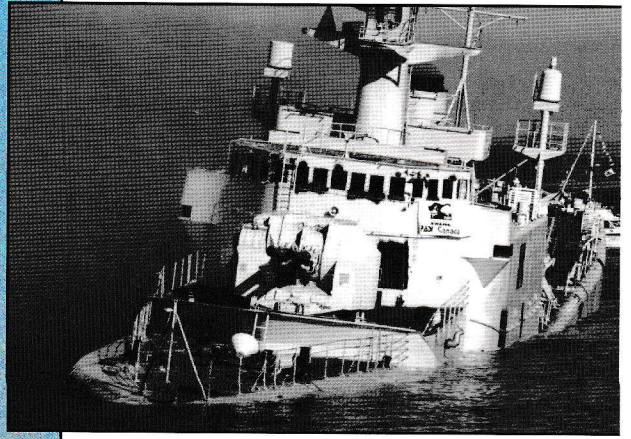
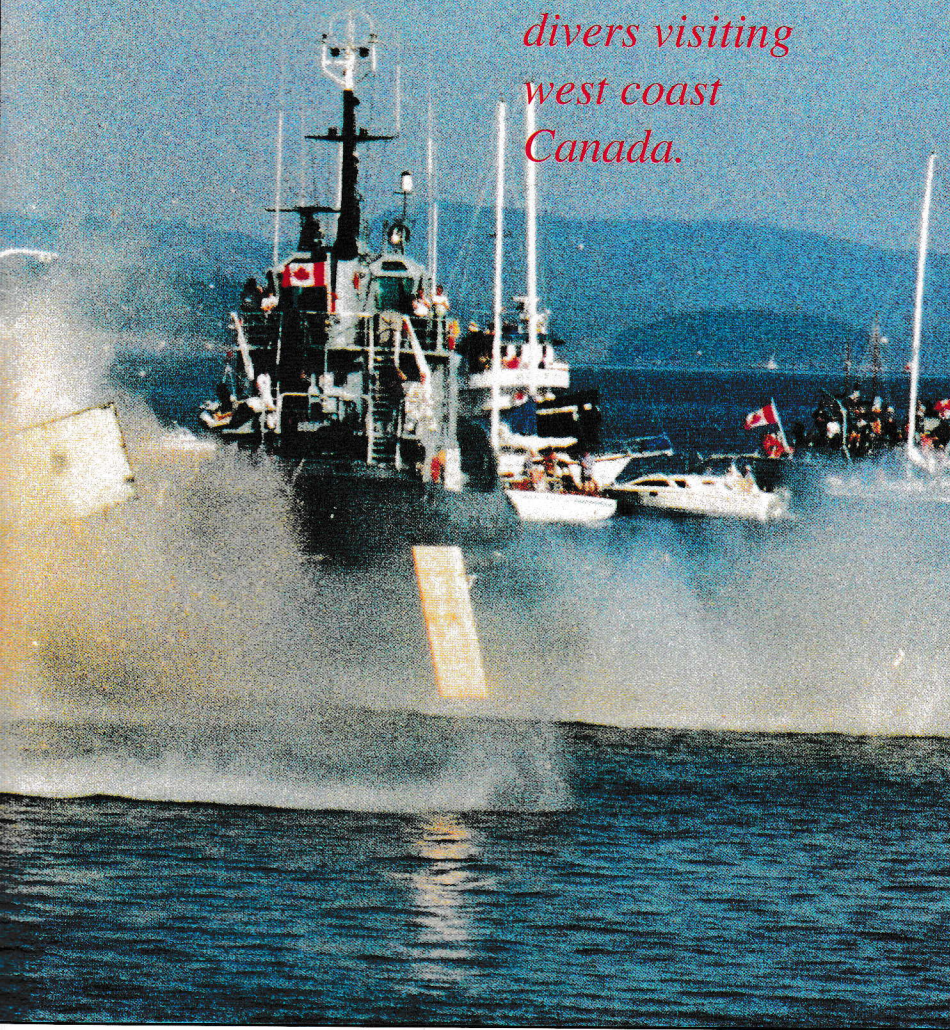
The creation of a



MacKenzie

new artificial reef.

A new role for this retired naval vessel is to provide an attraction for divers visiting west coast Canada.



The sinking of the Canadian naval destroyer escort ship HMCS *MacKenzie* on September 16, 1995. Sequence shows the sinking following the detonation of explosives that sent the vessel to the bottom near Sidney, BC in about four minutes. Other illustrations show volunteer crew aboard the vessel as clean up ends prior to sinking, and the 'replacement guns' that will be a popular feature of a dive. About 1,500 pleasure and support boats turned up to watch the event. Divers report that she lies at a slight angle in 35 to 95 feet of water, a range that is very safe for properly trained divers. Please turn to page 39 for a further report on the events that led up to the sinking.

A celebration for Sidney, BC

The sinking of the *MacKenzie*

Horns blared, hands clapped and undoubtedly hearts raced. The explosives deep inside the *MacKenzie's* hull had detonated, boards covering future accessways were blown off and hundreds of people collectively held their breath as the 366 foot ship began to sink. Just over four minutes later the boisterous crowd exhaled and rejoiced in what looked like a straight landing.

The *MacKenzie* in fact landed at a slight

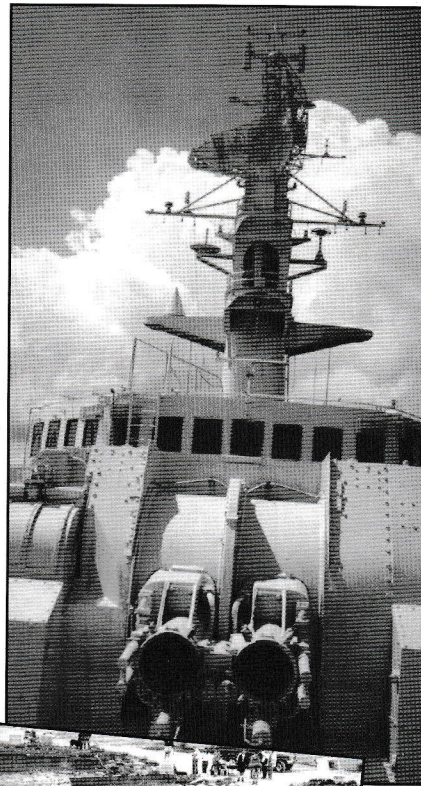


Above left: One of the first shots of the *MacKenzie's* guns which lie in approximately 60 feet of water. Photo by Gary Bridges. Above right: The bridge, guns and radar tower taken during her cleaning at New Westminster, BC. Left: Aqualung Canada's treasure hunt was a great success, drawing over 140 divers.

angle. Initial dives reported poor visibility, partly due to the ship's landing and partly to the season, but any talk was tinged with enthusiasm. The *MacKenzie* lies in between 35 and 95 feet, a good range for all levels of divers.

Project MacKenzie is a small episode in the dream of the Artificial Reef Society of British Columbia. Their eventual goal is to sink a number of destroyer escorts similar to the *MacKenzie* and *Chaudiere*—sunk near Sechart three years ago, to draw divers to British Columbia. Because diving is possible all year on the west coast and is especially good in winter, the hope is to attract tourism dollars year round. The next ship in the series is the HMCS *Columbia* slated for sinking in spring near Campbell River, BC.

The people of Sidney grasped the idea of increased numbers of visitors to their town with wide stretched arms. Every shop had a



poster in its window

promoting the sinking and supporting the efforts of the volunteers in the project. To bolster the festive spirit, lunches and pancake breakfasts were organized and a treasure hunt, part of Aqualung Canada's series, was held on the morning following the sinking. Over 140 divers signed up for the hunt with proceeds going to children's charities.

The entire event was a success and will without a doubt build enough curiosity to entice divers to the area to see for themselves the result of cooperation between a community and a group of dedicated divers.—Stephanie Bold

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