

New Macmillan film and music are a family effort



Composer Scott Macmillan with his son Ian at a screening of *Within Sight of Shore* in Charlottetown. The Macmillan family has roots in that area.

-by Joyce MacDonald

It was a family affair in Charlottetown on Saturday, as composer Scott Macmillan released a recording of his new piece of music about the sinking of HMCS *Esquimalt*. His son, Ian Macmillan, created a film to go with the music. Scott Macmillan's father, Robert Macmillan, was actually the captain of the *Esquimalt* when it went down off the coast of Halifax in 1945, sunk by a torpedo from a German U-boat. It was the last Canadian ship sunk during the Second World War.

"We put everything together into two stories, about the sinking of the *Esquimalt* and the process of writing a piece about it," said Ian Macmillan.

The film *Within Sight of Shore* was screened on April

16th at Charlottetown's City Cinema, during East Coast Music Week. It was also the 66th anniversary of the sinking of the *Esquimalt*. Work on the project started in 2006, and the piece was played live for the first time last November, in a church in Lunenburg. The CD was recorded not long afterwards.

Scott Macmillan said the process was one of discovery for him, because his father rarely talked about his experiences during the war.

"It would come out in various little stories from my dad," he said.

Scott and Ian Macmillan travelled to a remembrance service in the town of Esquimalt, British Columbia, where the remaining survivors of the sinking gather each year. There they spoke with the men about what happened that day. They also interviewed a man who served in the German Navy and was on U-190 on the day it sunk the *Esquimalt*. He emigrated to Canada in the 1950s and has become a friend of the

Esquimalt survivors. In the film, the Canadian sailors say that they knew the German sailors were just doing what they had to do.

"I definitely thought that was an important thing to include because there's so many misconceptions about that," said Ian Macmillan.

HMCS *Esquimalt* was doing a sweep near the mouth of Halifax Harbour on April 16th, preparing to escort a convoy to Europe. It had not detected the U-190, which was lying offshore on a mission to tie up ships in North America. But when the crew of the U-190 saw the *Esquimalt* was headed toward them, they thought they were caught. They fired a torpedo, taking the *Esquimalt* unawares.

The 71 men aboard spent six hours in the icy North Atlantic before the HMCS *Sarnia* arrived on the scene. 27 men survived; 44 were lost.

A 22-minute version of the film will air on CBC's *Land and Sea* on May 1st. Copies of the CD and the DVD are available from scottmacmillan.ca.