

War veteran's lost stories told

By: Matthew

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A retired Merchant Navy Veteran has told stories of his voyages in World War 2 to the Arctic Circle 74 years after he served.

Jess Boulton, now 91, has described his most memorable voyage to the Arctic Circle after he received his medal 70 years later. This comes after the government introduced the Arctic Circle medal in 2013 to commemorate WW2 navy personal who took the daring journey up to the top of Russia and were not recognised for their services all those years ago.

Mr Boulton, who now lives in Hereford, was born in Mow Cop in Staffordshire. He joined the Sea Cadets when he was young and dreamed of becoming a royal marine. Due to medical issues of a Lazy eye he was unable to do this but was guided towards the Merchant Navy, which Jess had never heard of at the time. He joined the Navy when he was 15 and a half. He commented on this by saying "My mother signed the papers and I was in."

He went on to say this "At 16 years old I set off on my second voyage" his most unforgettable by far. "it was certainly unforgettable, unbelievable really." "I joined the SS Fort Highfield for a journey to Murmansk in Russia." Mr Boulton went on to say that himself and the rest of the crew were more worried about the ship holding itself together long enough for them to get to Russia than the rest of the war happening around them. "After we had sailed from Manchester to Loch Ewe in Scotland and dropped anchor, an American Ship collided with our vessel damaging our mid-ships." Mr Boulton went on to say that they had to travel to French Islands to get the vessel repaired and also added: "All the lagged water piping was damaged and it ruined most of our food including the Fresh potatoes we had just got."

After their ship had been fixed Jess said that the convoy was 12 hours ahead of them and that their ship was much slower. "The convoys ships were travelling at 10-12 knots whereas ours could only travel at 5, so we had to travel alone, 12 hours behind the convoy all the way to Russia." He continued on to say that when he was younger he didn't think about it but now he looks back on it he was extremely lucky as there was a lot of U-boat activity in that area at that time.