



NAVIGATING THE WAR
A CENTENARY EXHIBITION OF THE RICHEY ARCHIVES

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2017

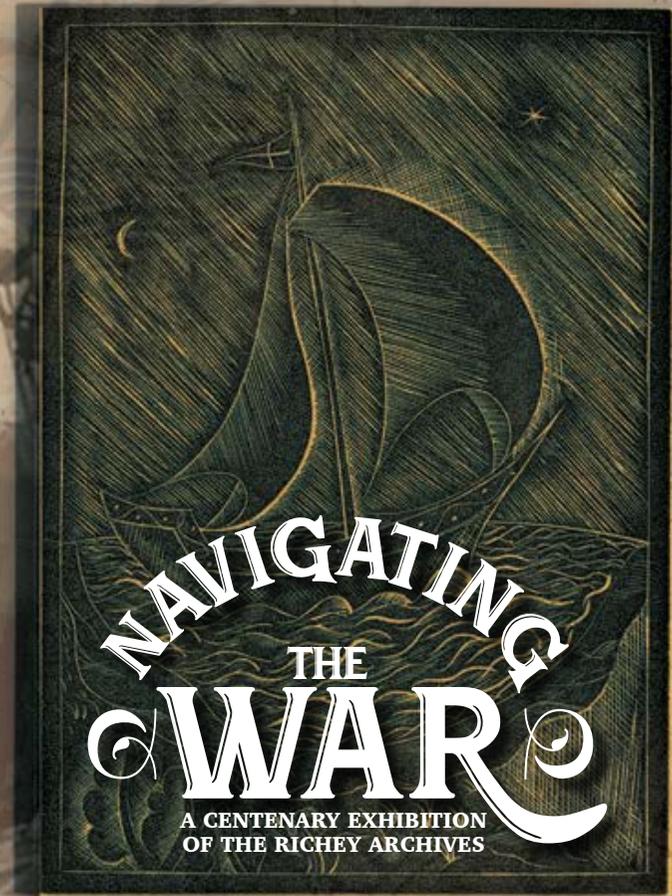
The Fairchild Gallery of the
Booth Family Center for Special Collections
Joseph Mark Lauinger Memorial Library
37th & O Sts., N.W., Washington D.C. 20057-1174

See the exhibition online at
library.georgetown.edu/exhibitions.

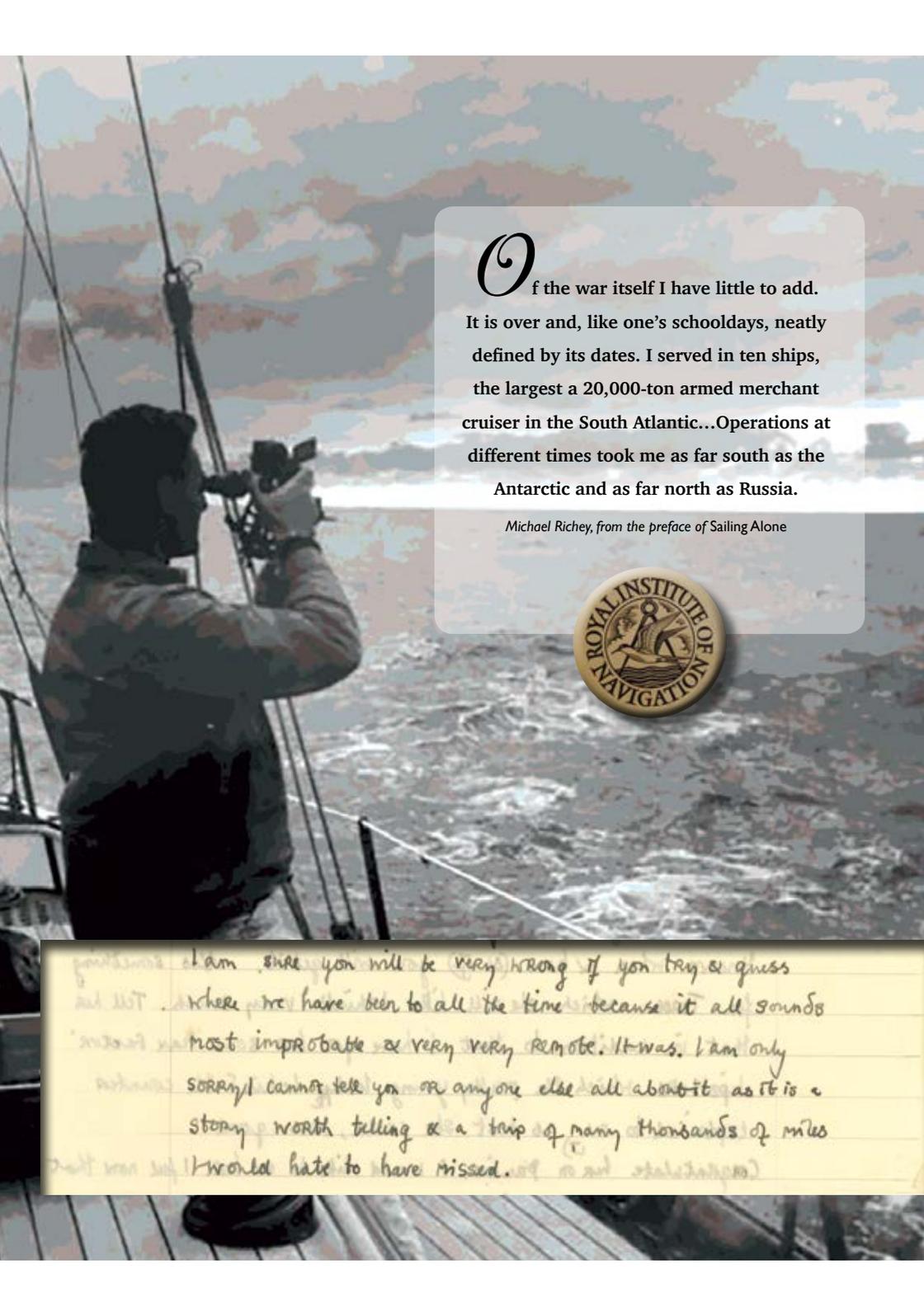


GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2017



THE FAIRCHILD GALLERY | BOOTH FAMILY CENTER FOR SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



Of the war itself I have little to add. It is over and, like one's schooldays, neatly defined by its dates. I served in ten ships, the largest a 20,000-ton armed merchant cruiser in the South Atlantic...Operations at different times took me as far south as the Antarctic and as far north as Russia.

Michael Richey, from the preface of Sailing Alone



I am sure you will be very wrong if you try & guess where we have been to all the time because it all sounds most improbable & very very remote. It was. I am only sorry I cannot tell you or anyone else all about it as it is a story worth telling & a trip of many thousands of miles I would hate to have missed.

NAVIGATING THE WAR

A CENTENARY EXHIBITION OF THE RICHEY ARCHIVES

Michael Richey (1917-2009), first director of the Royal Institute of Navigation (UK) in 1947 and founding editor of its prestigious *Journal of Navigation* in 1948, served in the Royal Navy throughout the whole of the Second World War, most of it at sea in the North Atlantic. For one extensive interlude he was in the South Atlantic. From there, as we read in the epigraph, he went really South—nearly as far south as polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton and his team—for a secret expedition on HMS *Carnarvon Castle*, the ship on which he served as Assistant Navigator (RNVR) between 1942-43 under Captain Edward Wollaston Kitson. This was Richey's fifth ship, following a stint in the Free French Navy on the corvette, F. S. Roselys. Based in Freetown, Sierra Leone, they were offshore for significant stretches, with average trips at sea lasting a month or more.

By the end of the war, Richey had completed his specialist course at the shore-based Navigation School, HMS *Dryad*, and was appointed Navigator of ships involved in the D-Day landings at Normandy and the U-boat surrenders at Loch Eriboll. But what of his passage? How did he get there? What do we actually know of his wartime travels and what records of this did he leave, given censorship during wartime, the secrecy of positions, and the erratic nature of postal deliveries at sea?

Thanks first to the conservationist efforts of his mother Adelaide, and subsequently Georgetown University Library's manuscripts librarian Nicholas Scheetz, there is now a considerable Richey archive lodged in the Booth Family Center for Special Collections, as part of its collections on British Catholic authors. After attending the Catholic boarding school Downside in Somerset, Richey had seriously considered a monastic vocation before going to artist Eric Gill's printing press and lettering workshop at Pigotts in Buckinghamshire, where he apprenticed as a stone carver and letter cutter from 1936 to 1939. This highly formative period led to lifelong friendships with

a literary and artistic circle that included Tom Burns, Harman Grisewood, René Hague, and David Jones, all of whom are also represented in the manuscript collections at Georgetown.

During the war, Richey wrote some first-rate letters from various ships and naval bases (as did his brother Paul, author of the classic book *Fighter Pilot*, an account of the Battle of France, first published anonymously during the war in 1941 and subsequently by Scribners in 1942). Michael Richey also wrote superb first-hand accounts of two events: the sinking of his first ship HMS *Goodwill* and the expedition of HMS *Carnarvon Castle*. The first, "Sunk by a Mine," having been refused by the British naval censors "on the grounds that it might 'lower morale,'" was published overseas in *The New York Times Magazine* on May 11, 1941; it won him the first John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize for Literature in 1942. The second, "A Taste of the Antarctic," was written as a broadcast and read by (Sir) Ludovic Kennedy for the BBC. Kennedy became a well-known broadcaster after the war, and this was his first broadcast.



Michael Richey (second from left), with brothers Paul (left), George (right), and father George (middle).

Post-war, Michael Richey became a legend for his single-handed transatlantic sailing adventures in his famous little boat, *Jester*, which he bought in 1964 from Herbert "Blondie" Hasler, wartime hero and inventor of the first practical self-steering gear for yachts. He had signature postcards printed for his solo voyages: on the front, a black-and-white photograph of himself sailing the boat; on the back, the incomplete address in black type, "Yacht *Jester* at _____".

This centenary exhibition is a snapshot of one of the most distinguished British navigators of the twentieth century, and one of its most reluctant autobiographers. The epigraph for this brochure has been taken from an unfinished work, *Sailing Alone*. The title was suggested to him by his great friend, the novelist Graham Greene, whose centenary Richey celebrated at Georgetown in 2004.