

## Able Seaman Percival George Carey V-10506



Able Seaman Percy Carey. Source: For Posterity Sake

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Regina SK, 15 October 1915**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Queen*, 12 November 1940**
- **Civilian Occupation: Service Station Attendant/Mechanic, British American Oil Company**
- **Death: Lost at Sea when HMCS *Valleyfield* was torpedoed and sank on 7 May 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; the Second World War Book of Remembrance, page 268, at the Centre Blocks of Parliament, Ottawa, and Carey Island in Deschambault Lake, SK is named in his memory**

Percival George Carey, known as Percy or Bud, was born in Regina, Saskatchewan on 15 October 1915. His birth name was Percival George Haug. Little could be found about his birth parents or his early childhood other than what was contained in a *Regina Leader-Post* story reporting him missing at sea, and in his naval personnel file. He was raised in Eston, Saskatchewan, about 112 miles west of Regina where he completed grades 1-8. After he completed elementary school, he returned to Regina (likely after the death of his parents) where he completed grades 9 and 10 at Balfour Technical High School plus one year of business college before leaving school at age 18 in 1933.

Information about George and Elsie Carey, Percy's foster parents, is found in the 1921 Canada Census. They operated a farm near Mankota, Saskatchewan, about thirty miles from the Montana border and 125 miles as the crow flies southwest of Regina. George was born in Quebec in 1894 and acquired the farm in February 1918. Elsie was born in England in 1896 and emigrated to Canada in 1919. They had two children – Benjamin in 1920 and Inez in 1923. There is no record of them in the 1926 Census, but they appear in the 1933 *Regina Henderson's Directory*.

Given the severe drought conditions which devastated agriculture in Saskatchewan it is very likely that they left the farm for economic reasons. George found work quickly as a stationary engineer in a dairy, then, in 1934, at the Hotel Saskatchewan, one of the grand hotels built across Canada by the Canadian Pacific Railway. In 1933, the Careys met Percy who was a teenager on his own and welcomed him into their family. In 1935, George became a Special Constable employed as a stationary engineer with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police – a position he held until 1942 when he returned to the hotel. In 1936, shortly after Percy's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, he, George and Elsie

entered into a legal agreement in which they agreed among other things that Percy would accept George and Elsie “*as his foster parents, and ... treat them with that consideration and obedience which a son should show and perform to his actual parents...*” and that George and Elsie would accept Percy “*as their foster son and... treat him in every way as if he were their son, and that their home shall be his home...*” Percy also agreed to change his name legally to Carey. Percy began working in a British American service station where he was an attendant and mechanic from 1937 to 1940. On 18 July 1940, Percy joined the Regina Rifles (Non-Permanent Active Militia) as a Private and served until 12 September when he requested that he be transferred to the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve. Percy’s stepbrother Benjamin found work with Imperial Oil as a clerk and stepsister Inez became a seamstress before getting married in 1942.

On 12 November 1940, Percy was sworn into the Regina Division (HMCS *Queen*) as an Ordinary Seaman (Temporary). He was 25 years old, single, 5 feet 5 Inches tall, and weighed 140 pounds with light brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. Percy began basic training in January 1941 at *Queen*, completing the course on 8 April 1941.

From *Queen* he was drafted to HMCS *Naden*, the large naval base in Esquimalt, BC where Percy first took New Entry training which consisted of drill, seamanship, gunnery, customs and traditions, and torpedo training among other subjects. On completion on 30 May 1941, he was selected for Submarine Detector training and drafted to HMCS *Stadacona*, another large naval base in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Submarine detection involved asdic, now referred to as sonar.

There were four asdic ratings: the Anti-Submarine Artificer, the Submarine Detector, the Higher Submarine Detector, and the Submarine Detector Instructor. The first were highly trained technicians (referred to as artificers) who worked ashore installing, maintaining, and repairing asdic equipment. The Submarine Detector operated the ship-borne asdic equipment and performed minor maintenance under the supervision of the Higher Submarine Detector who was the maintenance expert and senior operator on board ship. The Submarine Detector Instructor taught ratings ashore. The four training courses which were the pathways to these ratings differed only in emphasis.



**Example of the submarine detection operators and equipment (asdic). This image from the bridge of HMCS Battleford, Nov 1941. Source: Library and Archives Canada**

To succeed, a knowledge of seamanship, a grasp of underwater tactics and sea conditions, and an acute sense of hearing were required. The theories of sound propagation and electricity, operational procedure, and practical work-shop skills were covered in the courses as well. At the beginning of the War, asdic training was very rudimentary with a severe lack of equipment, instructors, and suitable accommodations. Nonetheless, Percy completed the Submarine Detector course on 8 August 1941, was rated as such, and received a pay raise of 15 cents per day.

On 12 August 1941, Percy was back on a train bound for HMCS *Naden*, Esquimalt, BC where he would serve until 26 October 1943 – a period of over two years. While in *Naden* he became part of a manning pool engaged in a wide variety of tasks associated with the operation of the base

while he waited of an operational draft. That may seem like an inordinate period of time to be stuck in limbo. It is important to remember, however, that when war was declared the Royal Canadian Navy consisted of thirteen ships and 3,843 officers and ratings including reservists and that it counted on the seventeen naval reserve divisions then operating across Canada to recruit and initially train men. At the onset of the War this training was not standardized, and Naval Reserve Divisions were short of training equipment, accommodations, and instructors. As a result, HMCS *Stadacona* and HMCS *Naden* were soon overcrowded with recruits being largely retrained because of the inadequacies of the system.

In addition to training issues, the production of ships to man was fraught with difficulties. The ambitious program to build 122 vessels (including 64 corvettes) ranging from motor launches to destroyers announced in 1940 failed to deliver on schedule. This failure was due to the extraordinary expansion in shipbuilding taking place at the same time as expansion in other fields such as aviation. This created competition for resources. So, while it was relatively easy to recruit men, it took time to train them and even longer to produce the ships in which they would serve.

While in *Naden* Percy was promoted to Able Seaman on 1 April 1942.

Finally, on 26 October 1943, Percy was again drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax. On arrival he was sent to HMCS *Hochelaga II*. *Hochelaga II* was a "stone frigate" in Montreal which provided administrative services to men assigned to ships under construction and not yet commissioned in the Montreal – Quebec City area.

From *Hochelaga II*, Percy was drafted to a newly built ship, HMCS *Valleyfield*, on 8 December 1944.

HMCS *Valleyfield* (K-328) was a River-class frigate named for Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec, situated on Grande-Île in the St. Lawrence River. The ship was built at Quebec City and commissioned on 7 December 1943.



**HMCS Valleyfield**  
Source: Government of Canada

Percy was awarded the First Good Conduct badge on 28 January 1944. The three-year period of good conduct included his time in the Regina Rifles.

Following work ups *Valleyfield* was assigned to Escort Group C-1 as a convoy escort and made three eventful North Atlantic crossings before her final tasking. On 27 April 1944 she departed from Londonderry, Northern Ireland with convoy ONM.234; a 73-ship convoy with 18 escorts, traveling between 9-13 knots (17-24 km/hr) destined for various ports in North America.

In the early hours of 7 May 1944, as was standard practice, *Valleyfield* and the other escorts of the Mid-Atlantic Escort Force handed the convoy of 73 merchant ships over to the Local Escort Force. They parted company with the convoy



**HMCS Valleyfield's Unofficial Badge**  
Source: Badges of Distinction

south of Newfoundland at the Western Ocean Meeting Point and set course for St. John's, Newfoundland.

At 0432, the five escort ships were approximately 50 miles south of Cape Race when *U-548* fired two Gnat torpedoes at the five ships. *Valleyfield* was hit by one torpedo on the port side of the boiler room. The ship broke in two and sank within four minutes. It was still dark when the ship was hit, and *Valleyfield* had been astern of the other ships of the group. Consequently, it took some time for her sinking to be noticed. Then while three ships of the Escort Group conducted an unsuccessful search for *U-548*, HMCS *Giffard*, was dispatched to search for survivors. She approached the area cautiously thus unavoidably delaying rescue from the cold Atlantic Ocean. Including Able Seaman Percy Carey, 120 members of *Valleyfield's* ship' company perished in the sinking and five more later died of exposure onboard *Giffard*. Only 38 were rescued and survived. Percy Carey was 28 years old at the time of his death.

Percy like most of the others killed has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 11, and on Page 268 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance. Carey Island in Deschambault Lake (Lat 54° 53'N Long 103° 14'W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.

For his service, Able Seaman Percival Leslie Carey the 1939-45 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His foster mother, Mrs. Elsie Carey, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

#### Prepared By:

John Dalzell, Capt(N) (retired), Commanding Officer HMCS UNICORN 1983-88 & Citizen Sailors Virtual Cenotaph Research Team.



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