

Stoker 1st Class Harvey Morris Carlsen V-75523



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- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Ravenscraig SK, 12 June 1925**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Discovery*, 29 November 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Welder and Propeller Repairer, Propeller Repair Shop**
- **Death: Killed when HMCS *Esquimalt* was torpedoed and sank on 16 April 1945**
- **Commemorated: Burnaby (Forest Lawn) Memorial Park, Dale Sec. Lot 65. Grave 4; HMCS *Discovery* Memorial Plaque and HMCS *Esquimalt* Memorial Cairn**

Harvey Morris Carlsen was born in Ravenscraig, Saskatchewan to Nils Carlsen and Mary Lillian Ohland. His parents appear to have separated early in the marriage and there was no indication of a stepfather. He had no brothers or sisters. Ravenscraig is a forlorn place that is isolated well off the Red Coat Trail in deep southwestern Saskatchewan and described in one source as stark and lonely. He was single at the time of his enlistment in HMCS *Discovery*, but his obituary in the Vancouver Province dated 20 April 1945 indicated that he had a fiancée, Miss Aileen Temple.

He was educated in Vancouver schools completing grade 10 in 1940 at the age of 16. His best subjects were motor mechanics and machine workshops. He left school to seek employment and was for a time a truck driver and subsequently a repair man on ships' propellers. This involved expertise in welding and the records indicated that he had three years of experience. He was employed by Propellor Repair Shop in Vancouver and had worked for them for two and a half years.

He was taken on Divisional Strength in HMCS *Discovery* on 29 November 1943 and at the time was described as 5' 7 1/2" in height with brown hair and brown eyes with a medium complexion. His religion was stated as Church of England. He was 18 years of age.

He was rated as Stoker 2nd Class on enlistment and remained in HMCS *Discovery* until the 14th of December 1943. During this period of indoctrination and preliminary training he scored "178" on the M test which was very high. He indicated to his training officer that he enjoyed baseball and boxing. The comment made on this initial period of training by Sub Lieutenant Coure was:

"An intelligent reliable sort of chap. Quite quiet but interested in his work. Shows indications of initiative. Good power of command."

He left *Discovery* on the 14th of December 1943 and was taken on strength in HMCS *Cornwallis* on 29 January 1944 for further training which lasted until the 9th of March 1944. On the 28th of March 1944 he returned to Esquimalt, B.C. for most of April for further training as a Stoker. He was then sent to HMCS *Avalon* in Newfoundland for his first ship, HMCS *Esquimalt*, which he joined on the 2nd of May 1944. He served continuously in HMCS *Esquimalt* until her loss on the 16th of April 1945.

His marks during basic training in *Cornwallis* were excellent. To upgrade his education, he was



HMCS Esquimalt

<https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/ships-histories/esquimalt.html>

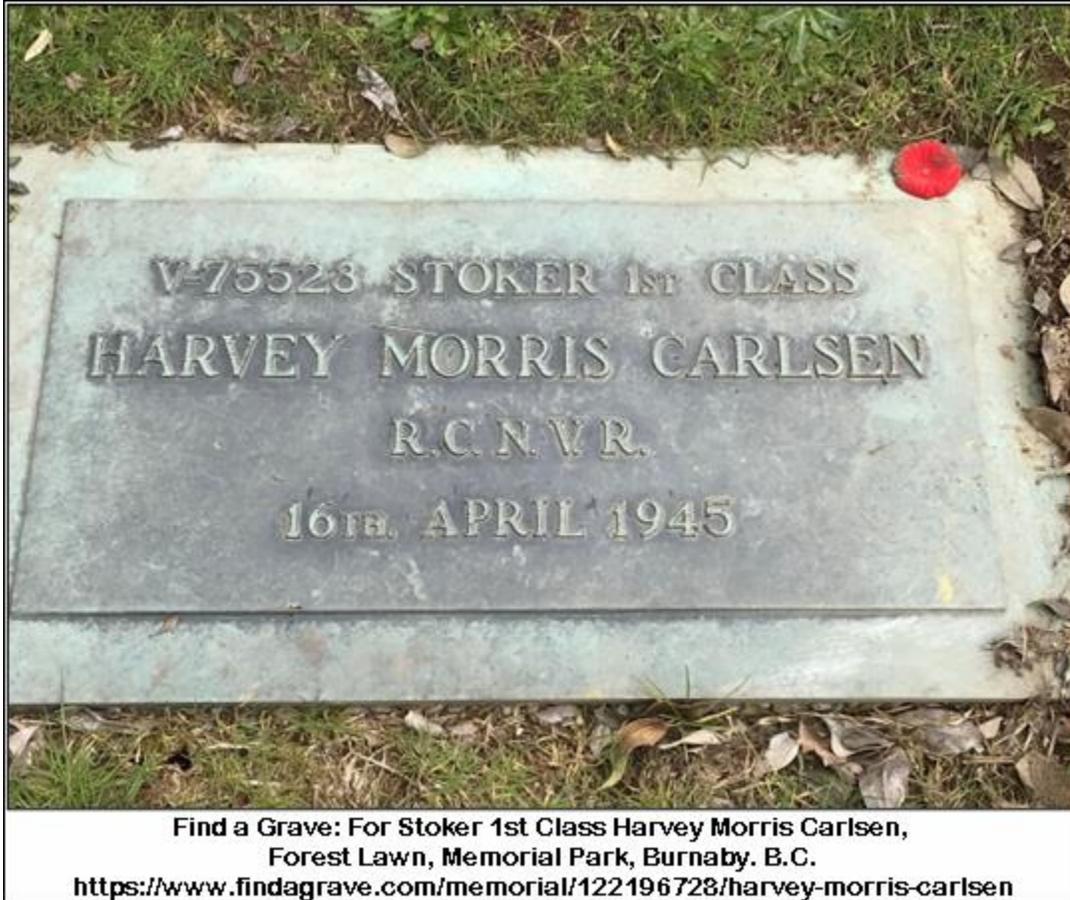
given instruction in English, Arithmetic and General Knowledge scoring marks in the 70% to 85% range. His ability was assessed as "Very Good". In Gunnery and Discipline, he scored 75% and was assessed as "Good". While serving in HMCS *Esquimalt* he was rated as Stoker 1st Class on 31 December 1944. On the 16th of April 1945 the commanding officer of HMCS *Esquimalt* rated his character as "Very Good" and his efficiency in his trade

as "Superior". He was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal on the 15th of April 1945. This was one day before the ship was lost.

HMCS *Esquimalt* was a Bangor Class Minesweeper operating out of Halifax. She was assigned to Newfoundland Force until September 1944, when she was transferred to Halifax Local Defence Force. Late in September 1944 she underwent a three-month refit at Halifax. On completion of the refit, she returned to duty with the Halifax Local Defence Force and remained with them until 16 April 1945. On that day, she was torpedoed and was sunk a few miles off Chebucto Head, Nova Scotia, becoming the last Canadian warship lost to enemy action in the war.

On the evening of 15 April 1945, *Esquimalt* sailed from Halifax for an anti-submarine patrol in the harbour approaches and then to rendezvous with HMCS *Sarnia*. In the early morning of 16 April, she was attacked by U-190, a German U-boat that had been operating around Halifax since early April. U-190's torpedo struck *Esquimalt's* starboard side near the engine room: the explosion knocked out the onboard power instantly, preventing any distress signal being sent. She started to list heavily to starboard, this pushed the lifeboat under water, but the crew managed to get four Carley floats clear of the ship. *Esquimalt* sank in less than five minutes. Because of the lack of distress calls or signals from *Esquimalt*, and the unfortunate timing of the attack itself, the rescue

effort was substantially delayed and many men lost their lives to exposure. The crew was adrift



on the Carley floats in frigid waters with only light clothing for about six hours. Thirty-nine men died as a result of the attack and the exposure that followed. The remaining crew members were rescued with the arrival of *Sarnia*, who unsuccessfully attacked U-190 after making contact with the submarine. *Sarnia* rescued 27 men and recovered the bodies of 13 others. In total, 44 sailors were lost.

The body of Stoker 1st Class Harvey Morris Carlsen was among those recovered but the only item of his personal effects that was forwarded to his mother was his wristwatch with the notation that there had been water damage. His body was returned to the west coast, and he was interred in Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Burnaby, British Columbia, Grave Reference: Dale Sec. Lot 65. Grave 4. He was 19 years old at the time of his death.

Harvey Carlsen, unlike many of his shipmates, had made a Will in favour of his mother, Mrs. Mary



Ohland. This was dated 29 November 1943 and registered in New Westminster, British Columbia. There had been two allotments from his pay, one in the amount of \$25 to his mother and the other for \$16.80 for the Receiver General of Canada to support the 7th Victory War Loan. These were stopped. There were small amounts in two bonds and backpay and kit upkeep for a total of \$33.42. His taxable income for the year was \$1698.63 and there was a refund of \$90.05 against tax already paid. Funeral costs amounted to \$90. The War Service Gratuity payable to his mother was \$263.53.

He is commemorated on Page 501 of the Second World War Book of

Remembrance. The HMCS *Esquimalt* Memorial Cairn is located on the front lawn of the Esquimalt Municipal Hall. It was erected on April 10, 1989, by the HMCS *Esquimalt* Memorial Association, in honour of the crew members lost on the HMCS *Esquimalt* on April 16, 1945. It only lists the names of sailors whose bodies were not recovered.

He was posthumously awarded the 1939-45 Star and the War Medal. His mother, Mary, was awarded the Canadian Memorial Cross.

Prepared By:

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