

Lieutenant Malcolm Seafield Grant, O-28760



Lieutenant Malcolm "Curly" Grant. Photo: Canadian Virtual War Memorial

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Bristol England, 26 October 1914**
- **Enlisted: Montreal Division RCNVR, 8 March 1941**
- **Civilian Occupation: Sales Engineer, Phillips Electrical Works**
- **Death: Killed when HMCS *Alberni* sank on 21 August 1944**
- **Honours: Mentioned in Despatches (posthumous)**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 10; the Royal Roads Cenotaph, Colwood, BC and Brockville First and Second World Wars Roll of Honor at the Brockville Memorial Civic Centre**

Malcolm Seafield Grant was born on 26 October 1914 in Bristol, England. Malcolm was the fifth of six children born to Lawford Stanley Foster Grant and his wife Nancy (nee Nelmes). Lawford was an electrical engineer in the U. K. and travelled considerably before moving to Canada and settling in Lachine, Quebec. Malcolm's one brother, Donald was born in Malta. Both his brothers attended Royal Military College in Kingston Ontario.

Malcolm attended Bishop's College School in Lennoxville, Quebec where he acquired the nickname 'Curly'. The 1931 Bishop's College School Magazine contained the following description of Malcolm in 1931:

"MALCOLM SEAFIELD GRANT. "Curly" came to the Prep in 1926, where he spent two years. He succeeded in making all the first teams in his first and second years there. He won the boxing championship and the all-round athletic championship and was also a prefect. He came to the Upper in 1928 and made the 3rd teams in hockey and football. He was also on the 1st cricket eleven in 1929. Curly has been on all first teams for the last three years and captain of the football and basketball teams the past two years."

The magazine went on to report Malcom; third in the gym competition in 1930, winning the bowling average and the batting average (cricket?). In 1930, he was also a lieutenant in the cadet corps and in 1931, promoted to captain. He came second in the 1931 senior cross-country running and won the tennis doubles. In 1930, Malcolm was a prefect and in 1931, head prefect and won the school heavy-weight boxing championship and the senior all-round.

In the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Malcolm followed in his father's footsteps in the field of electrical engineering and sales with the Phillips Electrical Works in Brockville Ontario. Malcolm's father Lawford was President of the Philips Electrical Works at the time.

On 14 May 1938 Malcolm married Helen Lois Graham, the granddaughter of Senator George P. Graham of Brockville, ON. Senator Graham had been both an MPP in Ontario and an MP in Ottawa before his appointment to the Senate of Canada. He also ran the local Brockville newspaper. The Brockville Recorder and Times reported the event as follows:

"Old St. Peter's Church will be the scene of a charming wedding ceremony this afternoon at three o'clock when Miss Helen Lois Graham, younger daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Hunter, Inglewood Drive, Toronto, will become the bride of Malcolm Seafield Grant, third son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawford S. Grant, "High View", Hartley Street, Brockville. ... The bride will be given in marriage by her paternal grandfather, Rt. Hon. Senator George P. Graham, P.C., LL.D."

Malcolm and Helen had two children, Perry, born 28 June 1940 and Hunter, born 25 July 1942.

On 8 March 1941 Malcolm enlisted at the Montreal Division RCNVR. His "Attestation form for Officers of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve", identifies Malcolm as six feet, one half inches tall, 166 pounds with light brown hair, grey eyes, and a fair complexion. He was enrolled at 27 years of age, as a probationary Sub-Lieutenant.

By September 1941, Malcolm was at HMCS *Royal Roads* in Victoria, BC where he underwent four months of intensive officer training. This training continued from January 1942 until 18 August 1942, at HMCS *Kings* in Halifax, NS. In January 1942, Malcolm's probationary status as a Sub-Lieutenant was removed. Further training took Malcolm to HMCS *Cornwallis* in Halifax for a short, two-week, anti-submarine (a/s) course, thence to HMCS *Stadacona* briefly, before reporting aboard HMCS *Alberni* in October 1942.

Alberni was Malcolm's first and only ship. Malcolm reported to HMCS *Alberni* as a Lieutenant. On 22 April 1943, Malcolm earned his watchkeeping certificate. With this qualification he was able to serve as the senior officer of a watch in charge of operating the vessel. On 23 November 1943 he was appointed Executive Officer of the ship, the *Alberni's* second-in-command.

HMCS *Alberni* was one of some 80 Flower Class Corvettes built at various shipyards across Canada starting early in 1940 through 1941. These corvettes were small, armed escort vessels for the purpose of protecting convoys of merchant ships from submarines but also aircraft and other warships. HMCS *Alberni* was just over 200 feet long (62+ metres), 33 feet (10 metres) in width (beam) with a draught of 11.5 feet (3.5 metres). Corvettes were capable of up to 16 knots speed (just under 30 kilometres/hour), a range of 3500 nautical miles (just under 6500 kilometres), with 5 guns, 2 throwers and 2 rails for deploying depth charges. Full complement was 85 crew.

Lieutenant Grant had a rapid exposure to combat: HMCS *Alberni* sailed for England in October 1942 and was part of Operation TORCH (the Allied invasion of North Africa), escorting convoys between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. On 27 October 1942, HMCS *Alberni* rescued 12 crew from an American tanker the *Gurney E. Newlin* which had been torpedoed. The next day, she

rescued 81 survivors from a British whaling ship the *Sourabaya* that had been torpedoed and sunk.

HMCS *Alberni* returned to Canadian waters in March 1943 and was involved with escorting duties between Quebec City and Labrador. That autumn *Alberni* was sent to Liverpool NS for a refit; on completion in February 1944, HMCS *Alberni* sailed to Bermuda to completed "work-ups". This high intensity training prepared the newly fitted ship and its crew for combat duty. HMCS *Alberni* then proceeded to the U.K. for Operation NEPTUNE, the naval portion of the D-Day landings at Normandy, France on 6 June 1944.

On 26 July 1944, HMCS *Alberni* shot down a German Junkers 88 aircraft that attacked the ship at close to sea-level. For his contribution, Lieutenant Malcolm Grant was awarded a Mention in Dispatches (MiD), within which the following was noted, "*His organizational and training ability were largely responsible for the successful shooting down of a JU-88 in July 1944.*"

After D-Day operations ceased, HMCS *Alberni* was assigned anti-submarine duties in the English Channel. On 21 August 1944, HMCS *Alberni* was on anti-submarine patrol along the south coast of England. Just before noon of that day, shortly after hands had been piped to dinner, HMCS *Alberni* was torpedoed by U-480, a German submarine equipped with a rubberized coating that made detection by sonar or ASDIC (acoustic submarine detection similar to sonar) much more difficult. HMCS *Alberni* sank in minutes.

In the Canadian Press newspaper report of the sinking of HMCS *Alberni*, "*Survivors told ... how Lt. Malcolm Grant of Brockville Ont., reported missing, was last seen trying to help Supply Assistant Ken Evans of Sault Ste. Marie Ont. who is also missing*".

Malcolm's heroism and ultimate sacrifice were recognized through the many military awards he received and the numerous news articles, obituaries and memorials with his name. His military awards include the 1939-43 Star, Atlantic Star and Clasp, Africa Star and Clasp, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, War Medal, and Mention in Despatches. The latter is



The cenotaph at Royal Roads. The names on the cenotaph are LT Malcolm Seafield Grant; SLT Russell Henry McConnell; LT Hugh Dunbar Sutherland Russell; SLT Reginald Lloyd Ross; LT Walter Edward Shields; LT John Molson Walkley; LT George Bucknam Wright; LT George Allan McLachlan; LT Robert Ivan Loucks Annett; and LT Arthur G. Herman.

worded, "*This Officer, who lost his life at the time of the destruction of HMCS *Alberni*, consistently displayed coolness in action and unswerving devotion to duty. His organizational and training ability were largely responsible for the successful shooting down of a JU-88 in July 1944. Lieutenant Grant's exemplary conduct was always a credit to the service as a whole and an inspiration to the men serving under him.*"

Malcolm's name appears on the following memorials: the Halifax Memorial (Panel 10), the cenotaph at Royal Roads, the memorial plaque of the Phillips Electrical Works (Brockville; the plaque is now located inside the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 96 in Brockville), Brockville First and Second World Wars Roll of Honor at the Memorial Civic Centre, the Alberni Memorial and Museum in Port Alberni, and Oakland Cemetery Brockville.

Prepared By:

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Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database – Profile for Malcolm Seafeld Grant
- Library and Archives Canada Service file for Malcolm Seafeld Grant
- ancestry.ca
- Find-a-Grave
- Wikipedia
- Brockville Museum Archives
- Bishop's College School archives