

Leading Writer George Douglas Houison V-23114



Photo credit: Canadian Virtual War Memorial - Leading Writer, George Douglas, Houison

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Hamilton ON, 3 May 1919**
- **Enlisted: Montreal Division RCNVR, 26 September 1940**
- **Civilian Occupation: Cost Clerk, Canadian Fairbanks & Morse Company**
- **Death: Died when HMCS Athabaskan sank on 29 April 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 12**

George Douglas Houison was born on May 3rd, 1919, in Hamilton, Ontario; the son of George and Jean Houison. George was raised a Presbyterian along with his sister in Montreal, Quebec. He completed seven years of public school and at the age of 17 left school after completing three years of high school. Prior to enlisting George was employed at Canadian Fairbanks Morse Co. Ltd. as a Cost Clerk. He hoped to be a salesman after the war.

George's father served with the RAF during WWI, earning the rank of Air Mechanic First Class before demobilization. The younger George chose the Naval Service instead. On 26 September 1940, George enrolled in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) at the Montreal Division RCNVR. George was 5'11", 155 lbs, he had dark brown hair and hazel eyes; he was 21 years old and single. Almost immediately upon enlisting he was assigned to HMCS *Stadacona* for training. In January 1942, he sailed to UK for assignment with HMCS *Niobe*, the administrative unit for all Canadian Naval personnel located overseas. George was promoted to Leading Writer in June 1942, and he remained at *Niobe* for 16 months. Throughout his service George consistently received character ratings of Very Good and efficiency ratings of satisfactory. On 29 Sep 1943, he was granted his 1st Good Conduct Badge and on 1 Oct 1943, George joined his first (and only) ship, HMCS *Athabaskan*.

During George's service with *Athabaskan*, he experienced convoy operations to northern Russia, interception patrols in Norwegian waters and trips as far south as Egypt. Back on UK soil, George met and married Joan Beatrice Hunt. They were married on 15 April 1944 in Derby, UK.

On 26 April 1944, HMCS *Athabaskan* assisted in the destruction of German torpedo boat T29 in the English Channel off Ushant, France. This was the first enemy destroyer sunk by a Royal

Canadian Navy ship and *Athabaskan* celebrated by flying her battle ensign as she returned to port that evening. Three days later, on 29 April 1944, HMCS *Athabaskan* was sunk by a torpedo from T24 north of the Ile de Bas, France. HMCS *Athabaskan*'s captain and 128 men were lost, 83 were taken prisoner, and 44 were rescued by HMCS *Haida*. Leading Writer George Houison was missing at sea and presumed dead.

George died less than two weeks after his wedding day, and he never met his son. Their only child, Rodney George Houison was born on 12 January 1945; following his birth both mother and child immigrated to Canada and took up residence in Montreal with George's parents.

For his service, Leading Writer George Douglas Houison, RCNVR was awarded: 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp and War Medal. The Canadian Memorial Cross was awarded to his mother, Jean and his wife, Joan.

Prepared By:

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Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission - Leading Writer, George Douglas, Houison
- Library and Archives Canada Service file for Leading Writer, George Douglas, Houison
- For Posterity's Sake Web Site (www.forposterityssake.ca) – HMCS Athabaskan
- Naval History web site (<https://www.naval-history.net>) – history of HMCS Athabaskan
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