

Radio Artificer 5th Class Albert Edward King V-52497



Radio Artificer 5th Class Albert E. King. Photo:
Canadian Virtual War Museum

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Saskatoon SK, 21 August 1923**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Unicorn*, 7 January 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Switchman
Apprentice, Sask Government
Telephones**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Valleyfield*
was torpedoed and sank on 7 May 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel
12; King Lake (Lat 55° 33'N Long 106° 13'
W) in Northern Saskatchewan**

Albert Edward King was the first child born to Alice and Edward King on 21 August 1923 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Brother Walter was born in 1925. Edward was born in 1892 in England and emigrated to Canada in 1911. His mother, two brothers and one sister also emigrated over the two-year period 1911-1912. They all settled in Saskatoon where Edward quickly found work as a machinist with the Canadian National Railway. In 1919 Edward returned to Liverpool to marry Alice and bring her to Canada. Edward, Alice and their sons lived in a number of rental properties until 1927 when they purchased a home in the new neighbourhood of Caswell Hill. Because Edward had a steady, relatively well-paying job with the railway, the family lived comfortably throughout the Great Depression. Albert attended Caswell Hill Public School (grades 1-8) and Bedford Road Collegiate Institute completing grades 9 to 11 and partially completing grade 12. His Attestation Form indicates that he also took a machinist course - most likely at the Saskatoon Technical Collegiate - before leaving school entirely in 1941 at the age of 18. He then immediately found work as a switchman apprentice with Saskatchewan Government Telephones, the position he held when he enlisted.

On 7 January 1943 Albert was sworn in at the Saskatoon Division (HMCS *Unicorn*) of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve as an Ordinary Seaman (Temporary). Because of his education and training as a switchman apprentice he was designated as a candidate for Radio Artificer training. Brother Walter later enrolled and followed the same path. There were a number of artificer classifications in addition to Radio Artificer - including Engine Room Artificers and Electrical Artificer. Artificers were highly skilled technicians who received extensive training usually within the Navy. They enjoyed the pay and privileges of leading seaman and chiefs and petty officers although they were not actually either. Their pay and status compensated them for

what they knew not where they were in the chain of command. Radio Artificer Class 5 was the lowest and equated to a Leading Seaman; Classes 3 and 4 equated to Petty Officers; while Classes 1 and 2 equated to Chief Petty Officers. Only the most senior artificers exercised authority over junior artificers and ratings - a Chief Engine Room Artificer of a ship for example.

Upon enrollment Albert was single, 5 feet 5 ½ inches tall and weighed 143 pounds. He had brown hair, brown eyes and a medium complexion.

Within a week of enlisting, Albert was on his way to HMCS *York* in Toronto where he completed the RCN Mechanical Training course on 21 March 1943. From *York* he was drafted to HMCS *Nonsuch* in Edmonton where he completed radio artificer training successfully and was designated as a Radio Artificer Class 5 on 16 July 1943. From *Nonsuch* he was drafted to HMCS *Bytown* in Ottawa until 20 October and then HMCS *St. Hyacinthe* in Quebec until 13 December. The Signal School at *St. Hyacinthe* provided all phases of communications training.



Finally, on 14 December 1943 Albert joined his first and only ship, HMCS *Valleyfield* in Quebec City. *Valleyfield* 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 by Morton Engineering and Dry Dock Co. and commissioned just a week before Albert joined her. She soon sailed for Halifax and arrived there on 20 December 1943. Her ship's company then underwent work ups in St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia and off Bermuda until February 1944 when she joined the Newfoundland Command Escort Group C-1, as a trans-Atlantic convoy escort. Her second convoy was eventful. She was detached to escort a tug and tow to the Azores and then escort another tug and tow from the Azores to Scotland. After her second and uneventful return trip to Canada, HMCS *Valleyfield* left Londonderry, Northern Ireland on 27 April

1944 with convoy ONM - 234.

In the early hours of 7 May, as was standard practice, the Mid-Ocean Escort Force of which *Valleyfield* was a member handed the convoy over to the Local Escort Force, parted company with the convoy south of Newfoundland at the Western Ocean Meeting Point and set course for St. John's.

At 0432, *U-548* fired two Gnat torpedoes at the five ships of Escort Group C1. *Valleyfield* was hit by one torpedo on the port side of the boiler room, broke in two and sank within four minutes about 50 miles south of Cape Race. She 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 Group conducted an unsuccessful search for *U-548*, HMCS *Giffard*, dispatched to search for survivors, approached the area cautiously thus unavoidably delaying rescue. Including Radio Artificer King, 120 members of *Valleyfield's* ship's company perished in the sinking plus five more who later died of exposure onboard *Giffard*. Only 38 were rescued and survived.

Albert like most of the others killed has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 12. Additionally, King Lake (Lat 55° 33'N Long 106° 13' W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory

For his service, Radio Artificer Albert King was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Alice King, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

On his Occupational History Form upon enrollment, Albert indicated that after the war he intended to study telephony and television – both futuristic technologies in the 1940s. Sadly, he didn't see the astounding progress made in either.

Prepared By:

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Sources:

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