

Leading Stoker Percy William Patterson V-32359



Do you have a photo of L/Stoker Percy Patterson you can share? Please submit to CSVC.CVMC@gmail.com

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Portlock ON, 25 October 1921**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Carleton*, 20 January 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Guide Setter Helper, Algoma Steel Corporation**
- **Death: Accidental drowning while returning to HMCS *Dunver* by small boat from ashore on 11 March 1945**
- **Commemorated: Bermuda Royal Naval Cemetery, Grave 438; Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Triumph of Right over the God of War sculpture on Queen Street East, Sault Ste Marie**

Born in Portlock Ontario on October 25th, 1921, Percy William Patterson was the youngest of three brothers belonging to William and Emily Patterson. Married in 1916, William and Emily eventually moved their family to the town of Sault Ste. Marie where Percy grew up at 405 Johnson Street. Irish on his dad's side and British on his mom's, Percy was 5 foot 6 with brown hair and blue eyes. He and his family attended the United Church. After finishing his public-school education, Percy went on to complete two years of technical school where he trained as a guide setter. With dreams of eventually becoming a mechanist, Percy took up work as a Guide Setter's helper at the Algoma Steel Corporation; one of the leading steel manufacturers in North America. On May 10th, 1941, Percy's older brother George, having served with the Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury Regiment, enlisted full time with the Canadian Army.

On January 20th, 1942, Percy followed his brother's footsteps and began his own military journey in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR). At 20 years old, Percy was enlisted as a Stoker 1st class through HMCS *Carleton*, the RCNVR Division in Ottawa. Stokers are employed in the engine room of ships. They are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the engines and auxiliary equipment such as generators. Six days after enrolling, he was sent off to basic training at HMCS *York* in Toronto. Upon completion 2 months later, he went to the east coast where he completed Stoker training at HMCS *Stadacona* and HMCS *Cornwallis*. It was during this time that unfortunately Percy's brother George passed away on the 13th of October 1942 from a battle with leukemia in Surrey England.

Percy's first posting to a sea-going ship was in May 1942 to HMCS *Moose Jaw*, a Flower-class corvette which was undergoing repairs in Saint John, New Brunswick. The following September,

Percy was sent to HMCS *Red Deer* where, over the course of a year, he completed his Auxiliary Machinery Watchkeeping course.

During this period, HMCS *Red Deer* was based at HMCS *Fort Ramsay* Gaspé, Quebec and Sydney, Nova Scotia. The ship was assigned to the Western Local Escort Force where she was tasked with protecting trade convoys along the coast from German U-Boat attacks. German U-boats were very active during the Fall of 1942. It is easy to imagine that Stoker 1st Class Patterson and his shipmates were very busy and at sea for long stretches of time.



Ice build up on a Royal Canadian Navy Ship operating in the North Atlantic during the Second World War.
Photo: The Roger Litwiller Collection, courtesy of Ross Milligan, RCNVR

During leave in 1943, Percy returned home and married Shirley Patterson in Sault Ste. Marie Michigan on August 13th. The newlyweds then bought his parents' house at 405 John St, before Percy returned east to continue his service. Following a brief stint at HMCS *Protector*, Leading Stoker Patterson was ashore at *Stadacona* and *Avalon* for 5 months until April 1944 before being deployed to HMCS *Halifax*, a Flower-class corvette for 6 months. During this period *Halifax* was assigned with the Mid-Ocean Escort Force tasked with escorting trans-Atlantic convoys to England.

Percy however saw his most extensive action aboard the HMCS *Dunver*, where he served from October 1944 until his death. *Dunver* was the first river class frigate launched by the Royal Canadian Navy and the ship spent most of the war escorting North Atlantic Convoys. In July 1944 she was the senior ship while protecting HXS.300; the largest deployed convoy of the war. A few months later, on September 9th, the *Dunver* was credited with sinking German Submarine U-484 with the help of HMCS *Hespeler*, just outside of the Hebrides, Scotland.



Bermuda Harbour during Second World War.
Photo: Roger Litwiller collection, courtesy of PO Allan Bruder, RCNVR

Unfortunately, after adventurous times aboard the HMCS *Dunver*, tragedy struck when the ship was alongside at Penno's Wharf in St. George, Bermuda. On 11 March 1945 (a little under two months before Germany would surrender), Leading Stoker Patterson met a watery end after falling off an MFC 601 fishing boat. The fishing boat was returning sailors to *Dunver* following an evening of festivities ashore; the boat was carrying more sailors than its capacity could handle. Unfortunately for Percy when the boat reached the mouth of the channel, this overcrowding resulted in him falling through a gap in the rails on the starboard side. While action was taken immediately to find their

fellow sailor, the darkness made it too challenging for the liberty men to recover Percy in time. The craft then returned to the wharf and a thorough search was conducted by boats equipped with spotlights. Percy's body was ultimately not found until 10:00am the following morning. Leading Stoker Patterson was 23 years old.

For his dedicated service to his country, he was awarded the 1939- 45 star, the Atlantic star, the C.V.S.M & Clasp, and the War medal. Leading Stoker Patterson is laid to rest at the Royal Navy Cemetery, Ireland Island, Bermuda, Plot #8, grave #438. The inscription on his grave reads:

"Too Good for Earth, God called him home"

Prepared By:

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Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database- Percy William Patterson
- Library and Archives Canada- Service file for Leading Stoker Percy William Patterson and Private George Thomas Patterson (accessed through Ancestry.ca)
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/ships-histories/moose-jaw.html>
- http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_HALIFAX_K237.html
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/ships-histories/dunver.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/services/history/ships-histories/red-deer.html>
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