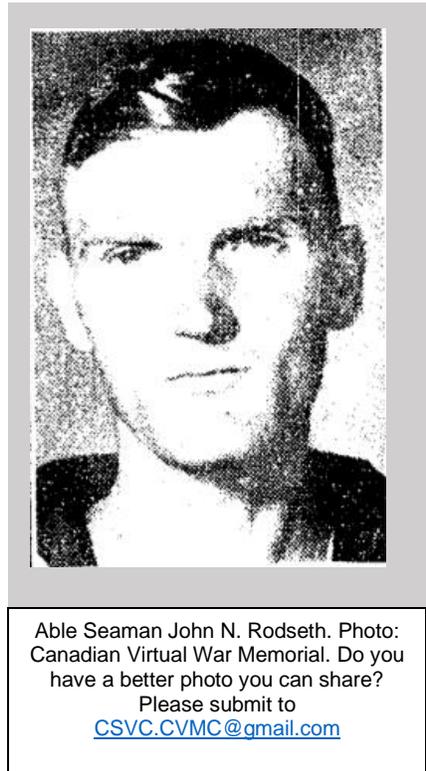


Able Seaman John Normann Rodseth V-58703



- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Alesund Norway, 14 October 1909**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Unicorn*, 10 April 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Farmer, own farm**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Regina* was torpedoed on 8 August 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; Rodseth Lake (Lat 56°20' N Long 105° 20' W) in Northern Saskatchewan**

John Normann Rodseth was the first of five children born to Ellen and Edward Rodseth on 14 October 1909 in Ålesund, Møre og Romsdal, located on the west coast of Norway. His brothers Lars, Per, and Ole were born in 1911, 1921, and 1923, respectively. His sister Elise was born in 1915. In June 1924, John left school at the age of 13 after completing 8 years. In September 1924, John found work in a local shipyard as a labourer, a job he kept until February 1927. In June 1925, his mother died at the age of 38 years. That same year he turned 18 years of age and emigrated to Canada on his own, settling in Dinsmore, Saskatchewan, about 65 miles southwest of Saskatoon. He became a Canadian citizen in 1935. It is not clear why he chose that area although it was likely pre-arranged because John entered into a partnership with one Peter Lauris Hanson of Norwegian ancestry and together, they purchased 160 acres of farmland in March 1928. Hanson had emigrated to Canada in 1904 from Norway. He and his family of five lived on the farm immediately adjacent to the parcel John and Hanson purchased. Burial records show that Hanson was born in 1879, died in 1943, and was buried in a cemetery in Dinsmore. With hindsight it is evident that it was not an opportune time to begin farming. Within a few years the Great Depression and drought devastated the Prairie agricultural economy. Nevertheless, John persevered and was able to buy Hanson's share of the farm in 1940.

On 10 April 1943 John enrolled at the Saskatoon Division (HMCS *Unicorn*) of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve as a Temporary Ordinary Seaman. It is not evident why he did so. He was a successful farmer with 14 years experience – an occupation which the Dominion Government considered to be essential. The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) had had eight years to mitigate some of the damage to farmland caused by the drought and poor farming practices; and over three years of war spending had stimulated the economy. Further,

he was 33 years old – about 13 or 14 years older than the average recruit. Perhaps it was a sense of patriotism he felt toward his homeland Norway, which had been under Nazi occupation since April 1940. Regardless of his motivation, upon enrollment, he acquired an agent to manage his affairs and wrote a will leaving his entire estate to his brother Lars even though Lars still lived under occupation in Norway.

At the time of his enrollment, he was single, 5 feet 8 ¼ inches tall and weighed 145 pounds. He had blonde hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion.

Ordinary Seaman Rodseth remained in HMCS *Unicorn* until 25 July 1943 and was engaged in basic training. He then proceeded to HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt, British Columbia for New Entry training and gunnery training. John left Esquimalt by train on 5 November 1943 for Nova Scotia – first to Cape Breton and HMCS *Protector II* and then to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax. The time spent in both shore establishments involved working from a manning pool. On 7 December 1943 John was drafted to the Flower-class corvette HMCS *Regina*, which had returned to Canadian waters in March from the Mediterranean where she had sunk an Italian submarine a month earlier. On her return to Halifax, she was assigned to local escort duties, refit, and work-ups. John would serve in her for the next 241 days.

Regina joined the Newfoundland Command's Escort Group C-1 in February 1944. After an eventful Atlantic crossing during which she was detached to escort an ocean-going tug and her damaged tow to the Azores and then herself tow a damaged Canadian warship from the Azores to Scotland for repairs, *Regina* finally arrived in Londonderry toward the end of March 1944. There she was assigned to Western Approaches Command for duties associated with Operation *Neptune*, the naval portion of the invasion of Normandy. John was promoted to Able Seaman on 12 May 1944.



Regina's D-day task, together with the Flower-class corvettes HMCS *Summerside* and HMCS *Woodstock*, was to escort 27 Liberty ships through the Bristol Channel, along the south coast of England, and through a swept channel to Normandy arriving there in the early morning hours of 7 June 1944. Upon completion of this task, *Regina* returned to the United Kingdom to be dispatched repeatedly to escort other ships and convoys until 8 August 1944.

Late on the warm summer evening of 8 August 1944, *Regina* was the sole escort of a ten-ship convoy proceeding southwest from Milford Haven along the north Cornwall coast off Trevoise Head bound for Normandy. At about 2130, a Liberty ship, the *Ezra Weston*, experienced an explosion which was mistakenly thought to have been the result of the ship striking a mine. *Regina* closed her and stopped to render assistance. After remaining stopped for about forty-five minutes, a second explosion erupted in *Regina* sinking in less than 30 seconds. The second explosion, as was the first, was caused by torpedoes fired by the German U-boat, *U-667*. Able Seaman John Rodseth and twenty-nine members of HMCS *Regina's* ship's company perished. Able Seaman Rodseth was 35 years old.

There are documents in his personnel file discussing the issue of informing John's next-of-kin in Norway. To quote one: "*Report if notification can be made through official Norwegian channels to*

ensure safe route via underground...No repetition No direct communication with Norway should be attempted"

John's farm did not remain in the family; it was sold in 1947 by John's agent.

For his service, Able Seaman John Rodseth was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the France Germany Star and Clasp, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp, and the War Medal.

Able Seaman Rodseth has no known grave and is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 11. Additionally, Rodseth Lake (Lat 56°20' N Long 105° 20' W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.

Prepared By:

John Dalzell, Captain(N) (Retired), Commanding Officer HMCS *Unicorn* 1983-88 & Citizen Sailor Virtual Cenotaph Research Team



Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for Able Seaman John Rodseth
- Library and Archives Canada Service Record for Able Seaman John Rodseth
- Library and Archives Canada Immigration and Citizen Records
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Able Seaman John Rodseth
- Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Able Seaman John Rodseth
- Saskatchewan Land Titles searches graciously performed by CL Kloppenburg
- Notes of a conversation between Engine Room Artificer Donald McIntosh, HMCS *Regina* and Captain(N)(Retired) J. Dalzell (Retired), April 2015
- For Posterity's Sake. HMCS Regina K234, Retrieved 9 November 1921 from http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_REGINA_K234.htm