

Steward Frank Norrie Roy V-45225



Steward Frank N. Roy. Photo:
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- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Calgary AB, 11 December 1924**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Tecumseh*, 8 August 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Railway Freight Clerk, Canadian National Railways**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Shawinigan* was torpedoed and sank on 24 November 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 13; Memorial to HMCS *Shawinigan* in Shawinigan, QC; and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 433 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa**

Before joining the Navy, Frank Roy had lived all his life in Calgary, where he was born on 11 December 1924. His parents, Frank Norrie Roy, of Scottish decent, and Catherine Roy (nee Malcolm) were married in Calgary on 30 June 1915. His family's religion was noted to be Presbyterian. Some four years later they gave birth to Leonard Alexander, the citizen sailor's only sibling. Their father died on 18 November 1938.

Frank Roy completed Grade 8 and then he went to work as a Freight Messenger for Canadian National Railways, although he only worked for one month before he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR). At the time, he was residing at 417-13 Avenue East, Calgary. His mother had moved to 1623 Haro Street in Vancouver, BC.

Frank Roy, at age 17, originally enrolled in the 4th Armoured Division Army Service Corps (Reserve) and he trained at Camp Sarcee, a First World War army training camp in Calgary, as a Private from 6 March to 7 August 1942. His uncles, Privates Leonard Malcolm and John Stephen served in the Canadian Infantry and were killed in France in the First World War. Another uncle, Andrew Fairlie Malcom, [VR 2312], served as a cook with the Royal Canadian Navy during the First World War and was discharged in 1918. Frank had always wanted to join the Navy, his mother said, and he enlisted as soon as they would accept him.

On 8 August 1942, Frank Roy transferred from the Armoured Corps to the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve at HMCS *Tecumseh*, Calgary's RCNVR Division. Medical records described the young recruit as 5' 4 ¾" with brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. He weighed 123

pounds. Within a few days, Able Seaman Roy was shipped to the training facility at HMCS *York*, in Toronto, and a month later to the training facility on the west coast at HMCS *Naden*, in Esquimalt, BC. There he completed his Steward course on 30 October 1942.

On completion of his technical course, Probationary Steward Roy was back on a train to the East Coast. After a brief stop in HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS for a week in November 1942, he was sent to HMCS *Cornwallis*. This “stone frigate” was formed as part of the 1942 reorganization of naval facilities when *Stadacona* took over all base operations and training was transferred to the new *Cornwallis*. Probationary Stewards completed their on-the-job training in the *Cornwallis* messes. In all the training reports, it was noted that Frank Roy was of “very good” character.

Frank Roy was drafted to his first and only ship the Flower-class corvette HMCS *Shawinigan* on 5 February 1943. The ship was in refit until March 1943.

Coming out of refit, the ship returned to convoy escort duties primarily in Canadian waters between Halifax and Cape Race, Newfoundland. U-boat attacks on merchant shipping in this area raged in 1942, and escorts were tasked with staying very close to convoys until they were handed-off to the mid-Atlantic escorts. From March 1943 until April 1944, when *Shawinigan* underwent a second refit, Steward Frank Roy and the crew of *Shawinigan* escorted 30 merchant shipping convoys. After the refit in April 1944, *Shawinigan* completed work-ups off Bermuda before returning to escort duties on the east coast of Canada. *Shawinigan* escorted five more convoys before she was lost:



“*Shawinigan* and the US Coast Guard cutter *Sassafras* were ordered to escort the ferry *Burgeo* from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. Since the tragic loss of the ferry *Caribou* in Oct 1942, ferries on this route were always escorted. The three ships made an uneventful crossing to Port aux Basques on November 24, at which time *Shawinigan* detached to continue anti-submarine patrols in the area. *Shawinigan* was scheduled to rendezvous with the *Burgeo* the following morning for the return to Cape Breton. But the corvette never made it.

Nearby, *U-1228*, which had been ordered into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, was tarrying, trying to repair a faulty schnorkel. Without the tactical advantage that the device provided, its commander, Frederich-Wilhelm Marienfeld, feared his chances should he pass through the Cabot Strait. On the moonlit night of November 24, he tested his repairs, found them ineffective and decided to return to Germany. As he issued orders that would pilot his U-Boat back into the Atlantic, the *Shawinigan* was sighted. *U-1228*, which had not yet recorded an attack on enemy shipping, let loose a Gnat torpedo.

Exactly four minutes later, HMCS *Shawinigan* disappeared in a plume of water and a shower of sparks. All 91 members of her crew were killed.

HMCS *Shawinigan* was one of three Canadian warships that have been lost with all hands. *Shawinigan's* final resting place is in the Cabot Strait, between Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island. Her precise location is not known, but by best estimates based on the U-boat's reports the *Shawinigan* should lay at 47 degrees-34 minutes north-Latitude, 59 degrees-11 minutes West-Longitude." (Naval Museum of Manitoba)

Steward Frank Roy served 659 days in *Shawinigan*, and he was 19 years old when he died. On hearing of her son's death, Frank Roy's mother, Catherine Roy, wrote a letter to the Estates Branch of National Defence dated 31 August 1945, "... I have one consolation. Frank was very happy in the Navy, and in his last letter, he looked on the *Shawinigan* as home. ..."

A bit of joy may have eased the sadness with the news from HMC Dockyard Esquimalt about Frank Roy's brother, "Leonard A. Roy presently serving as a Leading Seaman (R) informed [me] that it is his intention of getting married during the coming summer. He is at present in HMCS *Naden*."

For his service, Steward Frank Norrie Roy was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Catherine Roy, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Steward Frank Norrie Roy is remembered on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 13; the Memorial to HMCS *Shawinigan* in Shawinigan, QC; and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 433 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

Prepared By:

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