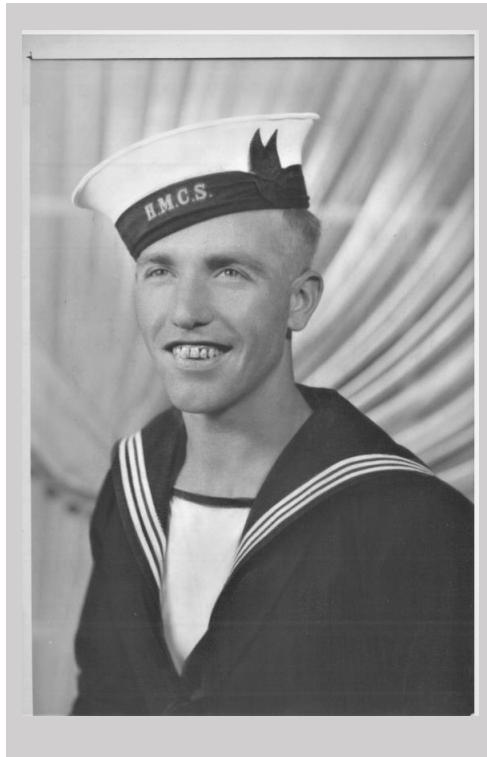


Able Seaman Norris Benjamin Bailey V-31265



Able Seaman Bud Bailey. Photo: Canadian Virtual War Memorial

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Claresholm AB, 18 June 1918**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Tecumseh*, 20 March 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Taxi Driver, Roland Massey**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *St. Croix* was torpedoed and sank on 20 September 1943**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 9; Claresholm War Memorial; HMCS *Tecumseh* & Naval Museum of Alberta Memorial Plaque; Field of Crosses Calgary and Bailey Peninsula in Lake Utik Manitoba is named in his honour**

Norris Benjamin (“Bud”) Bailey was born in Magrath, AB on 18 June 1918. He was the only child of Benjamin Bailey and Maria Janie Bailey (nee Davies). His father Benjamin was born in South Troy, Minnesota in 1897. Ben’s family immigrated to Canada in 1907 and they started a homestead farm near Magrath. Bud’s mother was Maria Janie Davies; she had been born in Idaho Falls, Idaho. She was known by her middle name, Janie. Janie’s family also immigrated to Canada in 1907 and they started a farm in the Starline District east of Claresholm, AB. Janie and Ben were married in Lethbridge in 1917 and lived on the Bailey farm near Magrath. When Bud was only 5 months old his father Ben became a victim of the “Yellow Fever” epidemic. An agricultural building in Claresholm was set up as an Emergency Hospital. Ben was taken to this facility for treatment, but he died there on 10 December 1918. Janie Bailey took 5-month-old Ben and moved back to her parent’s farm.

Janie and Bud lived on the Davies’ farm until 1921. Janie met Harry Taitinger while living on the Davies farm. Harry was the son of a well-known farmer in the Starline area named Nicholas Taitinger. The Taitinger family had emigrated from France and first lived in Oregon U.S.A., Harry was born in Athena Oregon in 1899. In 1904 the Taitinger family immigrated to Canada and established a farm east of Claresholm on the Starline Road. Harry and Janie were married in Claresholm in 1921 and lived on the Taitinger farm. In 1922 Harry and Janie had a son named Don, they had four more children; Robert, Mary Lou, Lois and Ken.

Bud attended Starline Public School. When Bud first attended this school, it was a one room building just off the Starline Road. By the time his brother attended it had been upgraded to a two-room school which taught Grades 1 through 8. The school was located 1.5 kilometers from the farm and the only way to get to school was by walking, they may have ridden horses on occasion. In 1932, Harry and Janie Taitinger moved to their own farm, approximately 5 kilometers from the original farm. In 1937 the family again relocated, this time into Claresholm. Starline Road is now known as Secondary Highway 520 and the school operated until 1959.

Bud and his younger brother Don had become very close; this was to be expected when you grow up on a farm located 16 kilometers from the nearest town with no transportation available. When they moved to Claresholm Bud and Don worked at any job they could find. At some point they were both working on the construction of the Pearce Alberta Aerodome. This was a Royal Air Force Training base located just northeast of Fort McLeod AB.

In 1941, Bud enlisted in the NPAM (Non-Permanent Active Militia), South Alberta Regiment training center #130. Bud was also employed as a taxi driver for four months before enlisting. Most of his customers were service men training at the RCAF training base southwest of Claresholm. Bud was discharged from the Militia when he enlisted in the Navy.

On 20 March 1942 Bud and his brother Don Taitinger travelled to Calgary and enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) at HMCS *Tecumseh*. Bud Bailey and Don Taitinger were on Divisional Strength at *Tecumseh* until 13 May



Bud Bailey in Non-Permanent Active Militia Uniform
 Photo: Canadian Virtual War Memorial: Norris Bailey



Bud Bailey in the center, his brother Don on the viewer's left. The younger people are their siblings.
 Photo courtesy of Ryan Taitinger (Don's son)

1942 and during this time they received some basic training. They were also allowed to travel back to Claresholm to get their affairs in order and say goodbye to family members. The picture on this page was probably taken at that time. Both men were sent to HMCS *Naden* in May of 1942. *Naden* was the Navy training base at Esquimalt on the west coast. Don Taitinger was trained in Gunnery and became a Seaman Torpedoman. He was dispatched to the east coast on 26 September 1942 and saw active duty on convoy escorts in The Battle of The Atlantic. A large part of his active duty was on the frigate HMCS *Wentworth*. Don was discharged after the end of the war in November 1945.

Ordinary Seaman Norris ("Bud") Bailey was shown on his enlistment medical form to be 5' 7", 134 pounds, with light brown hair, and grey eyes. He stated his religion as Pentecostal. He enlisted for the length of the hostilities but was unsure of what he planned after his service. At HMCS *Naden*, Ordinary Seaman Bailey trained in

submarine detection methods. In January 1943, on completion of training, Bud was transferred to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS.

Bud was being trained to be an ASDIC operator. ASDIC would later be known as Sonar; it was a system that used sound waves to detect underwater objects. The system consisted of a transmitter and receiver, sound waves would bounce off an object and the range of that object could be determined by the time interval. ASDIC was very important as it was the only method of finding and tracking German submarines (U- Boats) once they were submerged.

Bud was rated to Able Seaman on 12 May 1943, his ASDIC training was completed on 5 June 1943 at which time he was drafted to his first and only ship, HMCS *St. Croix*.

HMCS *St. Croix* was a Town-class destroyer; it was originally the USS *McCook* in the United States Navy (USN). In 1939 the U.S. had not yet entered the Second World War and to assist the British Commonwealth they entered into a Lend-Lease agreement. As part of this agreement 50 post World War I USN destroyers were transferred to the Royal Navy in exchange for 50-year leases on Commonwealth military bases. USS *McCook* was recommissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy as HMCS *St. Croix* on 24 September 1940. Although Town-class destroyers were usually named after Canadian towns the RCN named several after rivers that bordered the USA and Canada thus the ship was named after the St. Croix River that borders Maine and New Brunswick.



The asdic team on duty in HMCS Cobourg (K333) during Second World War. Asdic is now known as sonar.

Photo: government of Canada on Canada.ca

Early in 1941, *St. Croix* began escort duties as part of the Newfoundland Escort Force (NEF), escorting merchant ships from St. John's Newfoundland to Reykjavik Iceland where the Royal Navy would take over. The next year, the NEF was renamed the Mid-Ocean Escort Force (MOEF) and they began escorting convoys all the way to Londonderry, Ireland. By the time Able Seaman Bailey joined the crew, HMCS *St. Croix* had participated in the sinking of two U-boats, had escorted 32 convoys, and in general, the Allies were beginning to get the upper hand in the Battle of The Atlantic. However, in September 1943 the German Navy began using more advanced weapons and equipment. One of these weapons was the acoustic torpedo, known to the Allies as a GNAT (German Naval Acoustic Torpedo). A GNAT had a speed of 24 knots (44km/hr) and had an acoustic homing device that would lock onto the sound of a ship's propeller and could alter course to "chase" a zig-zagging ship. Bud joined *St. Croix* when the ship was alongside for repairs in Halifax. The repairs were completed in July 1943 and HMCS *St. Croix* resumed service on MOEF convoy duty.

In early September 1943, *St. Croix* was in Plymouth Harbour, England taking on fuel and supplies when she was dispatched to the Bay of Biscay to assist a RN ship HMS *Itchen* on a U-Boat sweep and to escort a convoy to Gibraltar. They had just reached the Bay of Biscay when they were redeployed to the northwest to assist with a large convoy. Two convoys ONS18 and ON202 had combined for better escort protection but were being pursued by a "Wolfpack" of at least 17 U-Boats. *St. Croix* and the other escorts that had been dispatched from the Bay of Biscay caught

up to the convoy in the mid-Atlantic on 19 September 1943. At 2150 hours on the 20th of September HMCS *St. Croix* was hit in the stern with a GNAT, followed closely by a second torpedo. *St. Croix* did not sink immediately but the order was given to abandon ship, less than an hour later a third torpedo struck and HMCS *St. Croix* sank in less than 5 minutes. The RN ships HMS *Polyanus* and HMS *Itchen* fell back to attempt a rescue operation, but HMS *Polyanus* was also sunk so the rescue efforts were aborted. The frigate HMS *Itchen* returned in the morning of 21 September and rescued 1 survivor of the *Polyanus* and 81 survivors of HMCS *St. Croix*. Two days later, on 23 September 1943, HMS *Itchen* was also hit with a GNAT torpedo and sunk. Only 2 sailors survived from *Itchen* and one from *St. Croix*. A total of 146 Canadian sailors were lost in this battle. Able Seaman Bailey served 109 days in *St. Croix*, and he was 25 years old when he died.

For his service Able Seaman Norris Benjamin (“Bud”) Bailey was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. The Canadian Memorial Cross was awarded to his mother on 30 December 1943.

Able Seaman Bud Bailey is commemorated: Second World War Book of Remembrance page 133, Halifax Memorial Panel 9, Claresholm War Memorial, HMCS *Tecumseh* Memorial Plaque, Field of Crosses, Calgary and Naval Museum of Alberta Plaque (Calgary).

In 1996, Bailey Peninsula in Lake Utik, northern Manitoba was named in Bud’s honour.

On 5 November 2017 Bud Bailey was honoured at the Claresholm Legion’s Annual Veteran’s Dinner, of the estimated 50 men from the Claresholm area who served in the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War, Bud was the only casualty.

Prepared By:

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