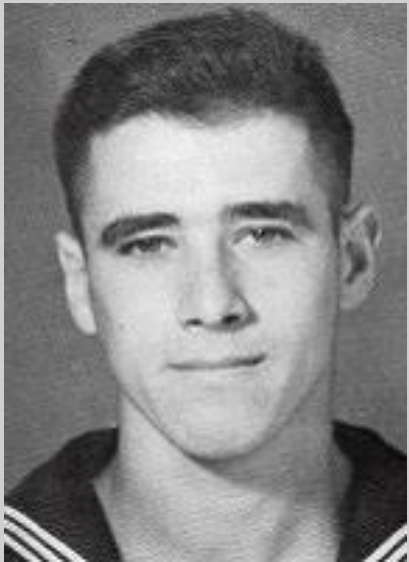


## Able Seaman Anthony Dominic Bianco V-34263



Able Seaman Anthony Bianco. Photo credit: [www.forposteritysake.ca](http://www.forposteritysake.ca)

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Peterboro ON, 2 October 1924**
- **Enlisted: Kingston Division RCNVR, 21 April 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Student - Trades School, Canadian General Electric Company**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Athabaskan* was torpedoed and sank on 29 April 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; Memorial Passageway-HMCS *Cataraqui*; Peterborough War Memorial; Memorial Plaque at Pointe Saint Mathieu, Finnistere, France; and Bianco Lake in Northwestern Ontario is named in honour.**

Anthony Dominic Bianco was born at Peterborough, Ontario 2 October 1924. He had three sisters, three older brothers and one younger brother. Anthony's parents were Nicola and Olimpia Bianco. The family were members of the Roman Catholic church. His mother died when Anthony was 3 years old. After completing Grade 9, Anthony left school and went to work for the Canadian General Electric Company in Peterborough. From 5 July 1941 to 28 March 1942, he was a student at the Canadian General Electric trade school. Anthony had two brothers who fought overseas; Joseph survived the war, but his brother Nicola was killed in action in September 1944.

On 21 April 1942, at the age of 17, Dominic Bianco enlisted at the Kingston Division RCNVR (later known as HMCS *Cataraqui*) as an Ordinary Seaman. Enlistment documents show that he was 5' 7 1/2" tall, with brown hair and eyes and had a birth mark on his stomach. He was immediately placed on active service and remained in Kingston until 19 August 1942 when he was drafted to HMCS *Cornwallis* for training in the Seamanship branch. The seaman course was 10 weeks long and included instruction in gunnery, seamanship, and torpedo-work; followed by one week on a training ship. For his practical training, Ordinary Seaman Bianco served onboard HMCS *Kamloops*, a Flower-class Corvette, from 18 to 24 October 1942.

Having successfully passed his course, Bianco was drafted to HMCS *Restigouche*, a River Class Destroyer. He served in *Restigouche* for nearly one year (345 days), during which time the ship was employed as a unit of the Newfoundland Escort Force and saw continuous service on the North Atlantic, including some of the very worst convoy battles. During Bianco's first voyage in *Restigouche* at the end of October 1942, German U-boats sank 15 merchant ships. At sea, the duties of an Ordinary Seaman included serving as lookout, helmsman, bridge and signals

messenger, and gun loader. They also worked anchors and cables, fought fires, and served as members of boarding parties. A seaman's life was rigorous, and we can imagine that Ordinary Seaman Bianco was exceptionally busy when his ship was escorting merchant ships and attacking U-boats.

The Navy has many traditions. One tradition involved the youngest member of the ship's company, who on Christmas Day trades uniform with the Captain. Ordinary Seaman Bianco was the youngest member of *Restigouche's* ship's company on Christmas Day 1942; thus, he became the Captain for the Day. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Desmond Piers, became an Ordinary Seaman for the day. On 21 April 1943, Bianco was rated an Able Seaman, and he continued to serve in *Restigouche* until October 1943, having sailed in 13 North Atlantic and European convoys.



On 8 October 1943, Able Seaman Bianco was drafted to HMCS *Niobe*, the Royal Canadian Navy manning pool in Great Britain. He served for several weeks in HMS *Marlborough*, one of the Royal Navy's electrical training schools before being drafted to HMCS *Athabaskan* on 4 January 1944. *Athabaskan*, was a Tribal-class destroyer that was moved down to Plymouth in February 1944 to join 10<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla. She saw extensive operational service in the English Channel as part of this Strike Force.

On 25-26 April 1944, *Athabaskan* assisted in the destruction of the German torpedo boat *T-29*. Then on 29 April 1944 at about 0300, she was patrolling with her sister Tribal-class destroyer HMCS *Haida*. Responding to orders to intercept German warships near Ile de Bas, the Canadian ships engaged *T-24* and *T-27*. *Haida* drove off *T-24* in flames and then drove *T-27* ashore before returning to her sister ship's last position only to find that she had sunk. One hundred and twenty-eight men including Able Seaman Bianco were lost. Anthony Bianco was 19 years old. Of those who survived, 44 were rescued by *Haida*, and six by *Haida's* motor work boat. At dawn, after the departure of *Haida*, 83 men were later taken prisoner by three German minesweepers.

Able Seaman Anthony Bianco and most of the others killed have no known grave; however, in 2002 the wreckage of HMCS *Athabaskan* was located in 50 fathoms of water. She and those who may be entombed in her are under the protection of the French Heritage Code.

Able Seaman Bianco's father was notified by telegraph 1 May 1944 of his son's death. The telegram was confirmed by a letter dated 1 May 1944 from the Secretary, Naval Board. This would not be the last such telegram Mr. Bianco received. Another son, Nicola Vincezzo Bianco, who served under the name James White, was killed in action on 12 September 1944 while serving with the Royal Canadian Artillery.

The following campaign medals were awarded to Able Seaman Bianco posthumously and were presented to his father Mr. Nicola Bianco: The 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star, Africa Star, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp and War Medal. The Memorial Cross, often referred to as the Silver Cross, was not awarded in this case because Able Seaman Bianco did not leave a widow, and his mother died when he was 3 years old. This award, granted since 1919, was issued as a memento of personal loss and sacrifice. Until 2007, it was only issued to widows and mothers of the war dead. Today, Service personnel can designate up to three recipients of the Memorial Cross and up to five recipients of the Memorial Ribbon

Anthony Bianco is remembered on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; Memorial Passageway-HMCS *Cataraqui*; Peterborough War Memorial; and HMCS *Athabaskan* Memorial Plaque at Pointe Saint Mathieu, Finistère, France. Bianco Lake in Northwestern Ontario (52°53'34.6"N 89°59'25.2"W) is named in his honour.

**Prepared By:**

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