

Signalman Charles Gordon Carl V-54340



Signalman Charles G. Carl. Photo:
Canadian Virtual War Memorial

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Edam SK, 14 November 1924**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Unicorn*, 9 February 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Clerk, Cecil Carl**
- **Death: Killed when HMCS *Chebogue* was torpedoed on 4 October 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 12; Carl Creek (Lat 54° 32 N Long 108°38'W) in Northern Saskatchewan**

Charles Gordon Carl, known as Gordon to family and friends, was the sixth of eight children born to Dena and Cecil Carl in Edam, Saskatchewan on 14 November 1924. He had three sisters; Mildred born in 1914, Mary (1926), and Betty (1928), and four brothers; Verdun (1916), Earl (1918), Donald (1920), and Berkely (1922). Gordon's father Cecil was born in 1888 in O'Neill, Nebraska and emigrated to Saskatchewan in 1906 to homestead 160 acres of land north of Asquith, Saskatchewan which is about 20 miles west of Saskatoon. Gordon's mother, Dena Rutt was born in 1896 and was also from Nebraska. Cecil and Dena were married in Saskatoon in 1913. A number of years later, they left the homestead and moved about 175 miles north where they set up a ranch. They remained on the ranch until 1925 when, perhaps acting more on a hunch than prescience, they moved to Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan and established a successful retail business.

The town of Meadow Lake lies on the western shore of its namesake and is 75 miles east of Cold Lake, Alberta and 160 miles northwest of Saskatoon. The area transitions from the Great Plains to the Boreal Forest and has been the site of human habitation for centuries. Cree and Metis people made it home and still do. The Meadow Lake Indian Band (now referred to as the Flying Dust First Nation) borders the town. European settlers began arriving there after the First World War. A huge forest fire decimated hunting, trapping and fishing in 1919 but ironically did nurture agriculture. "Dust Bowl" refugees began arriving in the 1930s because the area was not affected by the Great Drought. When Gordon's father, Cecil Carl, set up his store in 1925 Meadow Lake was a village of perhaps 200 people of European and Metis descent. By 1931 with the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway it had a population of about 500, by 1936 about 800 and by 1940, 1456. Life in the town required a recipe of equal parts of self-reliance, initiative, and community co-operation seasoned with pinches of joy and sorrow – a recipe which prepared Gordon for life as a member of a ship's company at war.

At the age of 17 Gordon completed Grade 11 at the local high school and joined his father in the business. A year later he began the recruiting process and was sworn into the Royal Canadian

Navy Volunteer Reserve on 9 February 1943 at HMCS *Unicorn* in Saskatoon. (Brothers Verdun and Berkley joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Verdun became a Pilot Officer and served in Britain and Berkley became a Leading Aircraftsman and served in British Columbia.) Gordon was enrolled as an Ordinary Seaman Communications (Temporary). He was single, 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighed 141 pounds and had light brown hair, green eyes, and a fair complexion.

Gordon remained in *Unicorn* until 25 April 1943 taking basic training and attending to various administrative matters. Then he was drafted to HMCS *York* in Toronto until 17 May. Considering the travel time to get there, the time can be considered a holding pattern until space opened in the New Entry course at HMCS *Cornwallis* in Deep Cove, Nova Scotia where he trained until 6 July. Actual trades training began in HMCS *St. Hyacinthe* on 7 July. On 19 July he was reclassified as an Ordinary Signalman and completed the course on 29 November 1943. He was then drafted to the Flower-class corvette HMCS *Sherbrooke* operating in Canadian waters. While this period was uneventful it was the first time Gordon had served in a ship at sea. On 26 January 1944 Gordon left *Sherbrooke* and boarded a train for the transcontinental journey to Esquimalt, British Columbia where he joined HMCS *Chebogue*.

Chebogue was a River-class frigate built at Yarrow's Shipbuilders in Esquimalt, British Columbia and named in honour of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Since the name Yarmouth had been assigned to another Commonwealth ship, *Chebogue* took her name for the river near Yarmouth. Launched in August 1943 she was being fitted out and readied for commissioning on 22 February 1944 when Carl arrived. Carl and his shipmates were kept busy working alongside Yarrow employees installing equipment and storing the ship. After acceptance trials and initial work ups, they sailed on March 15 for Halifax via the Panama Canal. Arriving in Halifax in April they soon proceeded to the Bermuda area for extensive work ups in May. In June she joined the Newfoundland Command Escort Group C-1 based in St. John's and commenced convoy escort duties.



Torpedo Damage to HMCS *Chebogue* Source:
<https://valourcanada.ca/>

On 4 October 1944, on the return leg of her second convoy, *Chebogue* was torpedoed by a GNAT acoustic torpedo fired by U-1227 about 800 miles west of Land's End, Cornwall. The ensuing explosion killed seven members of the ship's company including Gordon, blew off about 35 feet of her stern and mangled much more; yet *Chebogue* did not sink. She was taken in tow and, after eight days, arrived in Swansea Bay, Wales only to be driven aground in a gale. Gallantry was displayed by the crew of the Royal National Life Boat Institute (RNLI) crew who took *Chebogue's* remaining ship's company ashore in very difficult circumstances

In his *Report of the Death of an Officer, Man or Boy* dated 18 October 1944 Lieutenant Commander M.F.Oliver RCNVR, the Commanding Officer of HMCS *Chebogue* wrote:

"Carl was closed up at action stations on the Quarterdeck when the ship was hit aft by the enemy torpedo. He was thrown by the force of the explosion over the mast on to the Forecastle. Death was instantaneous...Burial at sea at 49 30 N 24 20 W".

For his service, Signalman Charles Gordon Carl was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Mrs. Dena Carl, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

He was buried at sea at Lat 49° 30' N Long 24° 20' W and is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 12. Additionally, Carl Creek (Lat 54° 32' N Long 108°38'W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.

Prepared By:

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Sources:

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