

Able Seaman Clifford John Eadie V-35874



- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Foam Lake, SK, 16 October 1924**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Unicorn*, 22 April 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Student**
- **Death: Killed when HMCS *Esquimalt* was torpedoed and sank on 16 April 1945**
- **Buried: Saskatoon (Woodlawn) Cemetery, Block J. Lot 29. Grave 12239**
- **Commemorated: Memorial at HMCS *Unicorn*, Saskatoon; and Eadie Lake (Lat 55° 38'N Long 108° 52'W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory**

Able Seaman Clifford John Eadie.
Photo: Canadian Virtual War Memorial

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Clifford John Eadie, known as Cliff, was born on 16 October 1924 near Foam Lake, Saskatchewan. He was the third of four children of Lily (nee Parmley) and Joseph Eadie. His older brother Wilfred was born in 1921 and his sisters Violet and Muriel were born in 1923 and 1927 respectively. Joseph Eadie was born on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, in 1893. He and his brother Daniel came west in 1906 and homesteaded in the Foam Lake district, which is about 140 miles (222 km) southeast of Saskatoon. Lily was born in Minnesota in 1901, immigrated to Canada in 1914, and married Joseph in Foam Lake in 1917.

Hardship struck the family in 1929 when Joseph became seriously ill and was admitted to hospital for long-term care. As a result, Lily was forced to leave the farm and move to Saskatoon with her four young children, who were all under eight years old. The timing could not have been worse. The Great Depression and the severe drought that devastated the Saskatchewan economy were beginning. In 1928, net farming income in Saskatchewan was \$363 million; by 1933, it dropped to \$11 million; and by 1937, two-thirds of the farm population of Saskatchewan was destitute. Relief costs, now referred to as social assistance, borne by the Saskatchewan government escalated to \$62 million, which was higher than the government's total revenues. The economies of towns and cities so closely linked to the agriculture sector likewise suffered. Unemployment

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grew to 30% even as about 250,000 people left the Prairies for greener pastures in British Columbia and Ontario.

Upon arriving in Saskatoon, Lily and the children settled into a modest neighbourhood on the west side of the city and lived in a series of five rental properties within a few blocks of each other over a 12-year period. Cliff was enrolled in grade one at King Edward Public School when he was eight years old. He completed grade eight at 16, then enrolled in the Saskatoon Technical Collegiate Institute until he enlisted. Documents in Cliff’s naval personnel file indicate that the family had financial difficulties no doubt exacerbated by the Depression and were on “relief” into the 1940s, but the family banded together to make ends meet. Whenever she could find work, Lily would clean houses; Cliff delivered groceries after school; by 1939, Wilfred was working full time, as was Violet; and by 1943, Muriel, who was now 16, found work as a waitress.

Cliff was sworn in at the Saskatoon Division (HMCS *Unicorn*) Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) as an Ordinary Seaman (Temporary) on 22 April 1942. He was 17 years old, single, 5 feet 5 inches tall, and weighed 126 pounds with brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. Upon enlisting, Cliff applied for a dependent’s allowance of \$0.25 per day in favour of his mother, Lily; however, it is not clear from his file that the application was successful. In any event, he made an allotment of \$19.00 per month – about 17% of his pay – to Lily.

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) became somewhat of a family enterprise. Violet married Able Seaman John Partington in 1941. Her brother-in-law, Leading Seaman Richard Partington, eventually served in HMCS *Esquimalt* with Cliff, and Muriel married Able Seaman Robert Holtom.

Once sworn in, Cliff waited until 1 May 1942 to commence basic training at *Unicorn*. From *Unicorn*, he was drafted to HMCS *Naden*, the large naval training base in Esquimalt, British Columbia, where he completed Seamanship and Gunnery training on 31 August 1942. Following graduation, he was drafted to HMCS *Chatham*, a land base in Prince Rupert, British Columbia that served as a routing centre for convoys and patrols along the northern British Columbia coast, as well as supporting naval vessels carrying out tasks in the area.

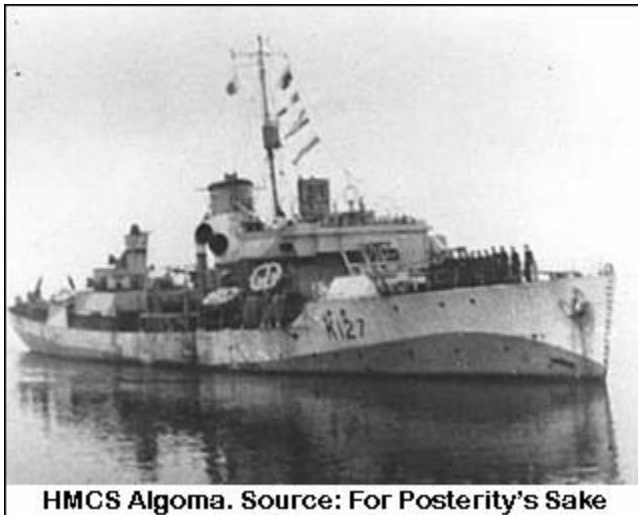
At its peak, about 1,500 sailors were based there or sailed from it. In Prince Rupert, Cliff served as a member of the crew of HMCS *Sandy*, a small Fleet Auxiliary tanker used to refuel ships. While in *Chatham*, Cliff was promoted to Able Seaman. On 27 April 1943, Cliff returned to *Naden* for administrative purposes and was subsequently drafted to HMCS *Stadacona*, the large naval base in Halifax, Nova Scotia, arriving there in early May 1943.

At *Stadacona*, Cliff transferred from the Seaman Branch to the Communications Branch and was placed on a Radar 3rd Class course, which provided instruction in the operation of radars. At the

Per Diem Pay Able Seaman Radar 3rd Class		
Pay	\$ 1.85	
Living Allowance	1.45	
Radar 3rd Class	0.10	
Hard Laying Money	0.25	*
Grog Mony	0.06	**
Kit Upkeep	0.12	***
	\$ 3.83	
* Compensation for onboard living conditions		
** Ratings 19 and older who declined the daily rum ration received Grog Money		
*** Kit Upkeep Allowance for Leading Seamen and below		

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beginning of the war, technological innovations entered the realm of naval warfare. It appeared that any new piece of equipment that was contained in a metal box with knobs and dials on the outside and vacuum tubes and wires on the inside was placed in the domain of the Communications Branch. Radar ratings were classified as R.D.F. (Radio Direction Finder, later Radar), 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Class, with the 1st Class level being the most skilled. Radar Operators worked a high-frequency electronic beam that produced echoes shown on the instrument's screen. These were caused by the beam striking an object on the surface of the sea or in the air and being reflected from it. The nature, distance, and bearing of the object were interpreted from the echo. Radar Operators were also trained in navigation and plotting, both of which were employed in determining the course and speed of surface and aircraft contacts. At the peak of the RCN's strength, the Communications Branch had about 9,300 ratings. Of these, 2,338 were Signalmen; roughly 3,200 were Telegraphists; about 1,000 were Coders; 2,200 were Radar Operators; and 399 were Radio Artificers. Cliff qualified as a Radio Direction Finder (RDF)/Radar Operator 3rd Class on 15 June 1943 and received a pay raise of \$.10 per day.



HMCS Algoma. Source: For Posterity's Sake

On 20 June 1943, Cliff was drafted to HMCS *Algoma* (K127), a Flower-class corvette. Named for the town of Algoma Falls, ON. She was built by Port Arthur Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. in Port Arthur, ON (now Thunder Bay) and commissioned at Montreal, QC, on 11 July 1941. Cliff's draft coincided with *Algoma's* assignment to the Quebec Force. As a unit of the Quebec Force, *Algoma* escorted Quebec-Labrador convoys until mid-November 1943, when she was lent to Escort Group C-4, which operated in the North Atlantic. With C-4, *Algoma* escorted convoy HX 266 to Liverpool, England, and convoy ON 215 from Liverpool to New York City. On completion of ON 215, *Algoma* began a

major refit, and Cliff was drafted to HMCS *Esquimalt* on 15 February 1944.

HMCS *Esquimalt* (J272), a Bangor-class minesweeper, was built by Marine Industries Ltd. at Sorel, Quebec. Commissioned on 26 October 1942, she was named for the City of Esquimalt, British Columbia. Bangor-class minesweepers, as the name implies, were designed to operate in coastal waters to sweep mines. However, since enemy mines were laid only once in Canadian waters in 1943, the Bangors were used primarily to escort coastal convoys. Like all Bangors, *Esquimalt* had extremely poor habitability. They were designed to accommodate a crew of 40, but her ship's company grew to 71 to cover an increasing spectrum of equipment and the men to operate and maintain it. The Bangors had a shallow draft to enable them to operate in shallow coastal waters that made them very unstable in the swells of the open ocean, and their short length caused them to bury their bows when steaming into the sea. Further, *Esquimalt's* engines were particularly unreliable.

When Cliff joined *Esquimalt*, she was part of the Halifax Local Defence Force, conducting largely uneventful routine patrols and escort work in the Halifax area when not in the hands of the

dockyard. On 30 January 1945, Cliff's brother-in-law, Leading Seaman Richard Partington, joined the ship.

U-190 sailed from her base in occupied Norway on 21 February 1945, bound for the coast of Nova Scotia under the command of Kapitänleutnant Hans-Edwin Reith. He proceeded submerged using a schnorkel to evade detection. Reith intended to operate in the approaches to Halifax Harbour, where other U-boats had met with success. Poor sonar conditions off Halifax made the detection of submerged or bottomed U-boats difficult at the best of times. U-190 arrived off Nova Scotia in early April, sighted two merchant ships on the 12th and made unsuccessful attacks on both vessels. Then, on the night of the 15/16 April, Reith audaciously took U-190 to within 15 nautical miles of Halifax Harbour in search of more targets.

That same evening, HMCS *Esquimalt* sailed unaccompanied from Halifax to conduct a routine anti-submarine patrol in the harbour approaches overnight and then was to rendezvous with HMCS *Sarnia* off Chebucto Head the following morning. Naval intelligence reports indicated that a U-boat was lurking in the area. What would follow was a series of events which would demonstrate inaction, indecision, inattention, cunning, and luck – both good and bad.

Towards dawn, Kapitänleutnant Reith heard the pinging of *Esquimalt*'s sonar and listened intently as *Esquimalt* circled above.

When no attack followed, Reith took U-190 to periscope depth for a quick look and observed *Esquimalt* at a range of about 1,500 metres. *Esquimalt* suddenly turned towards U-190 and closed rapidly, prompting Reith to fire an acoustic homing torpedo. While *Esquimalt* carried a homing torpedo decoy, known as CAT gear, it had not been engaged. The torpedo hit *Esquimalt* at 0630, ripping a gaping hole in the starboard quarter and knocking out electrical power. This prevented *Esquimalt* from transmitting a distress signal. The resultant heavy list pushed the ship's boat



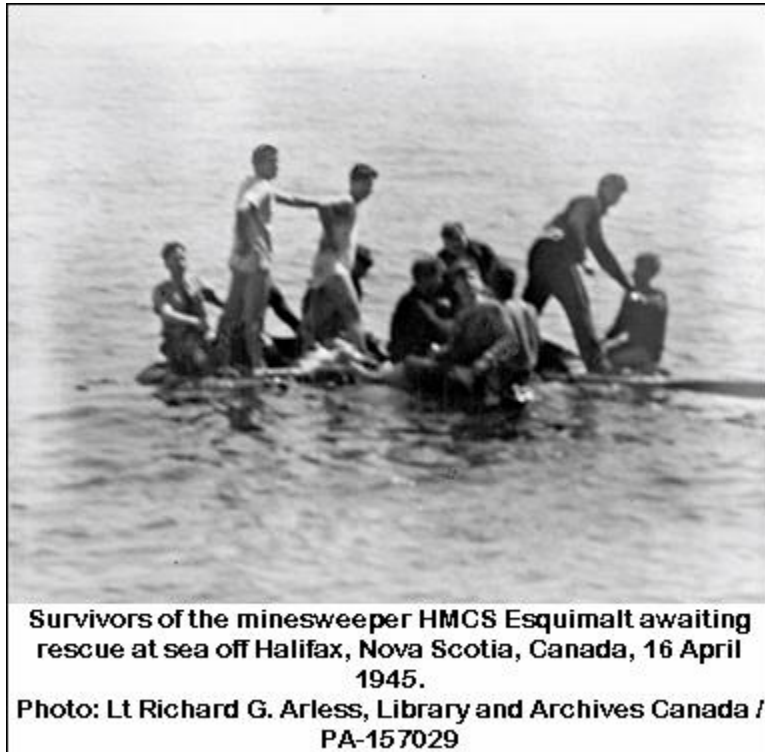
HMCS *Esquimalt*, circa 1944.
Photo: National Defense

company could release it from the davits. They did, however, succeed in getting four Carley floats clear of the ship and plunged into the icy water after them. Carley floats were 9 feet x 14 feet oblong doughnut-shaped rafts, which theoretically held eight men but could support many more clinging to ropes fastened to the sides. Within about four minutes, *Esquimalt* sank at 44° 28'N 63° 10'W about 20 nautical miles southeast of Point Pleasant Park in Halifax. The survivors huddled together, 14 or 15 men to a raft. An aircraft flew overhead 10 minutes later and sighted the Carley floats, but the aircrew thought the rafts were fishing boats and made no report.

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Esquimalt had been contacted by the Port War Signal Station at 0627, a few minutes before the torpedoing. The station could not raise her by radio at 0741 or again at 0901, but no action was taken. Two minesweepers, on their daily sweep, closed to within two miles of the Carley floats at 0930, but moved on without seeing the survivors or hearing their desperate calls for help.

When *Esquimalt* did not appear at the rendezvous off Chebucto Head at 0800, *Sarnia* radioed her absence to shore authorities at 0950, then began a search on the assumption that *Esquimalt* had been sunk. At 1002, *Sarnia* made a sonar contact with a submerged contact about 9.5



nautical miles west of the position where *Esquimalt* sank. According to doctrine, the pursuit of the enemy took priority over the search for survivors and *Sarnia* carried out two depth charge attacks on the contact without effect. At 1125, she gave up the hunt and resumed the search for *Esquimalt*.

Aboard the rafts, the numbers dwindled as the hours passed. One Carley float had initially held 13 men, but over the morning, seven died from exposure. The six survivors paddled the Carly float towards the Halifax East Light Vessel, waving a white shirt. They closed the distance to a half mile before the lightship and *Sarnia* finally noticed them. The six were picked up by the light ship's boat.

By now, the authorities ashore had come to the conclusion that *Esquimalt* was indeed missing. Another aircraft, sent out to search, sighted the remaining Carly floats and informed *Sarnia*, who reached them at 1230, six hours after *Esquimalt* had been torpedoed. In all, *Sarnia* rescued 21 men and recovered the bodies of 16 others, including that of Cliff Eadie. In total, 27 men survived, and 44 died. The remaining 28 whose bodies were not recovered were considered MPK (Missing Presumed Killed). Leading Seaman Richard Partington was among them. Able Seaman Clifford John Eadie was 20 years old when he died.

Additional ships were subsequently dispatched to search for *U-190*, but after five days, the search was called off. *U-190* had moved close to shore and remained submerged or on the bottom at a depth of about 25 metres for seven days after the attack. Reith correctly assumed that the Canadians would not suspect that he would remain in the area in such shallow water. Nor did they consider that he could take advantage of the degraded sonar effectiveness caused by the rocky bottom and the pronounced water temperature layering.

U-190 headed for home on 29 April but never reached her base in Norway. Like all U-boats then at sea, she received instructions from Kriegsmarine Headquarters to surrender on 11 May 1945 by surfacing and broadcasting their position in plain language. Two Canadian warships intercepted U-190 and escorted her to Bay Bulls, Newfoundland. The RCN commissioned U-190 a few days after her surrender, and she served for two years before being sunk in a live fire exercise on 21 October 1947 near the position where she had sunk *Esquimalt*.

HMCS *Esquimalt* was the last Canadian warship to be lost in the War.

The remains of all those who were recovered were returned to their families for burial. Cliff was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Saskatoon.

For his service, Able Seaman Radar 3rd Class Clifford John Eadie was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Lily Eadie, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Able Seaman Radar 3rd Class Clifford John Eadie is commemorated on the HMCS *Unicorn* Memorial; in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 511, at the Centre Block, Houses of Parliament, Ottawa; and Eadie Lake (Lat 55° 38'N Long 108° 52'W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.



Prepared By*:

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



*All stories are edited by the project crew and sometimes altered to conform to the Citizen Sailors Virtual Cenotaph format, length and content parameters.

Sources:

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- Library and Archives Canada Service Record for Able Seaman John Clifford Eadie
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Able Seaman Clifford John Eadie
- Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Able Seaman Clifford John Eadie
- Library and Archives Canada 1916, 1921, 1926, and 1931 Census

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