

Leading Stoker Walter Frankin V-35142



Leading Stoker Walter Frankin.
Photo: Calgary Herald December 24,
1946

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- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Calgary AB, 30 September 1923**
- **Enlisted: Calgary Division RCNVR, 5 September 1941**
- **Civilian Occupation: Mechanic, Remington Rand Typewriter Company**
- **Death: Died of Tuberculosis attributable to naval service while attached to HMCS *Tecumseh* on 19 December 1946**
- **Buried: Calgary (Burnsland) Cemetery, Lot 122. Block 2. Sec. G;**
- **Commemorated: HMCS *Tecumseh* Memorial Plaque, Naval Museum of Alberta Memorial Plaque, Calgary Field of Crosses, Western Canada High School Roll of Honour.**

Walter Joseph Frankin was the eldest of five children born to William and Annie (nee Melymuka) Frankin. His siblings were Olga, Nicholas Charles, Stanley and Helen. Both his parents were born in Ukraine before immigrating to Canada. The family was Roman Catholic. Walter was born in Calgary, Alberta, but the family lived in the nearby village of Albert Park (now a suburb of Calgary). It was a working-class neighbourhood close to the stockyards and rail yards.

Walter grew up in the Calgary area, attending Albert Park School and Western Canada High School, where he was a good student. He left school after Grade 11 with two years of Motor Mechanics class experience. The Remington Rand Typewriter Company soon employed him as a typewriter mechanic. He enrolled in the Royal Canadian Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) for the duration of hostilities. Enrolment was at the Calgary Division (which two months later was renamed HMCS *Tecumseh*). The RCMP conducted a security check because his family was of Ukrainian heritage. Ukraine had previously allied with Germany, so their citizens were suspect. A letter from the RCMP to the recruiters was marked "Secret." The letter cleared Walter Frankin to join. The only negative noted was that perhaps his father had communist sympathies. In September 1941, he was enrolled as a Stoker First Class, likely given advanced credit for his

High School Motor Mechanic courses. Enlistment documents describe Stoker 1st Class Frankin as having brown hair, green eyes and a fresh complexion.

In October 1941, after basic training in HMCS *Tecumseh*, Frankin was sent to HMCS *Naden*, the Navy's west coast training base in Esquimalt, BC. He did six weeks of training at *Naden* and was then attached to the nearby Royal Roads campus. It's unclear if he was undergoing training there or was part of the support staff.

From March 1942 to Oct 1942, Walter served aboard a Bangor Class Minesweeper, HMCS *Courtney*. HMCS *Courtney* was a brand-new ship equipped with diesel engines; Walter's mechanical training would have been put to good use in the engine room. The ship was assigned patrol duties off the West Coast of BC. Initially, she was employed off BC's southern coast, and in June, she was shifted to the more northern patrol area controlled by HMCS *Chatham* in Prince Rupert, BC. In October 1942, Walter was rated Acting Leading Stoker, and he left *Courtney* and returned to HMCS *Naden* for an additional 6-month training and employment period ashore in Esquimalt, BC. His training report from this period noted that Walter was "Recommended for Stoker Petty Officer. Good power of Command."

In late April 1943, Leading Stoker Frankin travelled to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS, to await his next ship assignment. On 12 May 1943, he joined HMCS *Ungava*, another Bangor-Class minesweeper based at HMCS *Fort Ramsay*, a shore base at Sandy Beach in Gaspe, QC. This was a secure harbour on the St. Lawrence River with nearby shore batteries. It was a refuge for merchant and Allied ships against enemy submarines working nearby. The submarine threat in the St. Lawrence was minimized in the press so as not to cause undue anxiety, but it was a very hostile environment for ships.

Walter spent over a year serving in *Ungava's* engine room. This ship operated with steam engines, and Walter had to learn about this propulsion system while under the pressure of enemy U-boats and escorting convoys in the St Lawrence River. He left *Ungava* with a Boiler Room Watchkeeping certificate.

Frankin's next seagoing billet was aboard HMCS *Orkney*. He joined the ship in August 1944. She was a River Class frigate, named for the town of Orkney, SK and was built in Esquimalt, BC. Walter was now Stoker Petty Officer Frankin. He was also awarded his first Good Conduct Badge for three years of good service. He was employed in the Boiler Room and Engine Room and would have supervised more junior stokers.

Orkney was based in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Londonderry appears to have been a good posting for him, for it was here that he married an Irish woman named Norah. Stoker PO Frankin served in *Orkney* for three months while the ship did escort duty across the Atlantic - from August to October 1944.

Walter's final seagoing billet was the newly commissioned River Class Frigate, HMCS *Carlplace*. The ship was named for Carlton Place, ON, but the name was abbreviated. The ship was built in Levis, QC and sailed for Halifax in mid-December 1944 with Stoker PO Frankin as a member of her commissioning crew. *Carlplace* was severely damaged by ice during this voyage and required several weeks of repairs before she could cross the Atlantic. The ship finally arrived in the UK in

April 1945. *Carlplace* escorted only two convoys to Gibraltar before being recalled to Canada in May 1945.



HMCS Carlplace Ship's Company Photo. Circa 1945. Walter Frankin is likely in this photo. Source: For Posterity Sake Website courtesy of the Saskatoon Museum of Military Artifacts.

While aboard *Carlplace*, Stoker PO Frankin faced two sets of misconduct charges and was stripped of his Petty Officer rank and Good Conduct Badge. The first time was while the ship was undergoing repair in North America; he forgot to sign the Petty Officer's log book and was 15 hours late returning to the ship. A few months later, in May 1945, he was charged with being absent from the boiler room for 25 minutes. No explanation for that is available. The ship was due to return to Canada in May for refit in preparation for a Pacific deployment.

With 38 months of sea service, a new wife in the UK, all the unexpected changes to *Carlplace's* schedule, and VE day behind him, Leading Stoker Frankin was likely happy to be landed ashore on 26 May 1945 and re-assigned to HMCS *Niobe*. However, within weeks, Walter fell ill and was admitted to the Royal Navy Auxiliary Hospital in Londonderry on 10 June 1945.

Within two days, Frankin was very, very ill, diagnosed with Tuberculosis. It was a particularly virulent strain, as the Medical Officer stated in a letter airmailed to his family in Canada. At the

time, he was too sick to make the transit back to Canada. He remained in Londonderry Hospital until December 1945, when he returned to Canada for ongoing treatment and care.

On 20 December 1945, Walter's younger brother, Air Mechanic II (E) Charles Nicholas Frankin, who was serving at a Royal Navy Air Station in Inverness, Scotland, was killed in a car accident.

Upon arrival in Calgary, Walter was immediately admitted to the TB sanitarium. His health further deteriorated. Despite this, he managed to pass his Grade 12 high school course to earn his senior matriculation. He hoped to get well and train as a mechanical draftsman but worried that, for financial reasons, he might have to return to Remington Rand and repair typewriters. His War Bride wife, Norah, lived in Londonderry while he was in hospital there. She followed him to Canada and lived in Albert Park (Calgary), possibly with Frankin's parents. On December 19, 1946, after 18 months of hospitalization, Leading Stoker Walter Frankin died of tuberculosis.

For his service, Leading Stoker Walter Frankin was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. No mention in the record is made of the Memorial Cross going to his wife and Mother, but that likely happened—so much grief for one family.

Leading Stoker Walter Frankin is remembered in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, page 584, at the Centre Block, Houses of Parliament, Ottawa; HMCS *Tecumseh* Memorial Plaque; the Naval Museum of Alberta Memorial Plaque; the Calgary Field of Crosses; and the Western Canada High School Honour Roll.

Prepared By*:

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*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:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database profile for Walter Frankin
- Second World War Book of Remembrance, p.584.
- Library and Archives Canada-Service file for Leading Stoker Walter Frankin
- Calgary Herald, December 20, 1946 p. 15
- Calgary Herald, December 24, 1945 p. 17
- Wikipedia for ship histories: HMC Ships *Courtney*, *Ungava*, *Orkney* and *Carlplace*