

## Leading Stoker Charles Stanley Gravett V-13537



Grave marker for Leading Stoker Charles Stanley Gravett.

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- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Calgary AB, 6 April 1919**
- **Enlisted: Calgary Division RCNVR, 5 November 1940**
- **Civilian Occupation: Apprentice Boilermaker, Dominion Bridge**
- **Death: Took his own life on 2 November 1943 while home on leave from HMCS *Malpeque***
- **Buried: Calgary (Burnsland) Cemetery, Lot 1. Block 9. Sec. G**
- **Commemorated: Calgary Field of Crosses; the memorial plaque at HMCS *Tecumseh*; and the Naval Museum of Alberta memorial plaque**

Charles Stanley Gravett was born at Calgary's Grace Hospital on 6 April 1919. He was often referred to as Stan by his family. His father was William Gravett, and his mother was Margaret (Scott) Gravett. William came from Midland, ON – a small town on Georgian Bay. He moved to Alberta and for a time farmed in the Blackie area. Margaret was born in Missouri, USA. Her family immigrated to Canada in 1904, settling in the Blackie area where they farmed for many years. William and Margaret Scott were married in 1914. William and Margaret moved their family to Calgary in the 1920s, where William worked for Dominion Bridge, a steel fabricating company.

Stan was the oldest of five siblings. He had one brother, James, who became a Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) Leading Stoker and served in HMCS *Huron*; and three sisters, Edith, Edna, and Dorothy.

Stan went to school in Calgary. He first attended Stanley Jones School in the Bridgeland area, and then Ramsay School in the Ramsay/Inglewood area. The family lived at 2105 9th St SE for several years. Stan went to McDougall School in downtown Calgary for his junior high grades. He also attended Heath Baptist Sunday School.

He left school in 1935 at 16 years of age. In 1936, he started working at Dominion Bridge as an apprentice boilermaker. This was where his father worked; his brother James also worked there as a welder. Dominion Bridge was within a block of the family home.

On 5 November 1940, Stan enlisted in the RCNVR at the Calgary Division (later HMCS *Tecumseh*). By now he was a fourth-year apprentice at Dominion Bridge, and the company promised him a job when the war was over. His enlistment papers described him as being 5 feet 7 inches tall, with brown hair and eyes and a “ruddy” complexion. He listed his religion as Baptist.

Ordinary Seaman Gravett was called to Active Duty in December 1940 with the rank of Stoker 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. In January 1941, Stoker Gravett was sent to HMCS *Naden*, the major Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) training base in Esquimalt, BC. Here he did his New Entry training – drill, seamanship, and gunnery – for about six weeks and he then worked in the depot shop where he consolidated his new skills.

In August 1941, Stoker Gravett travelled to Vancouver to join HMCS *Minas*, a Bangor-class steam-powered minesweeper that was still under construction. HMCS *Minas* was commissioned in October 1941 and immediately sailed to Halifax, NS via the Panama Canal. At first, the ship operated out of Sydney, NS and in January 1942 *Minas* transferred to the Newfoundland Escort Force (NEF) working from St John's.

The Bangor minesweepers working on Canada's east coast did patrol and convoy escort work. For this role, they carried 40 depth charges in addition to their regular armament.

Convoys would sail from Halifax under local escort until reaching the point where the NEF escort groups would take over. The local escorts would leave to refuel at St. John's before returning to Halifax. The NEF escorts would escort the convoy to Iceland, where they would turn it over to UK-based escorts. The NEF escorts would refuel in Iceland and return to St. John's with a westbound convoy.

In September 1942, Stoker Gravett was sent to both HMCS *Stadacona* (the major RCN base in Halifax) and HMCS *Cornwallis* (the RCN training base at the time was also in Halifax) for a series of technical courses. These courses led to him being rated (promoted) from Stoker 2<sup>nd</sup> Class to Stoker 1<sup>st</sup> Class in November 1942, and he was promoted again to Leading Stoker in December 1942.

Leading Stoker Gravett qualified as an Auxiliary Machinery Watchkeeper in October 1942 and in January 1943 he completed all qualifications to eventually be promoted to Stoker Petty Officer. He completed all technical coursework in February 1943 and in March 1943 Leading Stoker Gravett was assigned to HMCS *Malpeque*, another Bangor-class steam-powered minesweeper. *Malpeque* was also built in Vancouver, had sailed to Halifax with HMCS *Minas* and was assigned to convoy escort duties. The NEF had by then been renamed to the Mid-Ocean Escort Force.



HMCS Minas, Bangor Class  
Photo Credit: GC Ships History website

In September 1943, HMCS *Malpeque* escorted a Royal Navy submarine from St John's,



HMCS *Malpeque*, Bangor Class. Photo Credit: For Posterity's Sake website

Newfoundland to Sydney, NS. On arriving in Sydney, Leading Stoker Gravett was granted 29 days of leave from 4 October to 1 November 1943. He travelled to Calgary to spend his leave at home.

During his time in the RCNVR, Leading Stoker Gravett was assessed as being of Very Good character and Satisfactory efficiency on every annual rating. During his naval service, he was paid \$1.60 a day. He created an allotment of \$10 a month for his mother. He also collected an additional \$.06 a day for not drawing any grog.

On 2 November 1943, after 1,092 days of service including 642 days of service in Bangor Minesweepers, Leading Stoker Charles Stanley Gravett was in his parent's house in Calgary when he chose to end his life. Leading Stoker Charles Stanley Gravett was 24 years old when he died.

HMCS *Tecumseh* personnel provided Full Naval Honours at Leading Stoker Gravett's funeral. He is buried in Lot 1, Block 9, Section G in Calgary's Burnsland Cemetery in the Field of Honour. The inscription on his grave reads "Rest in Peace".

For his service, Leading Stoker Charles Stanley Gravett was awarded: the 1939-1945 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Margaret, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Leading Stoker Gravett is commemorated on the HMCS *Tecumseh* memorial plaque; on the Naval Museum of Alberta plaque; in the Calgary Field of Crosses; and in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 165 at the Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

#### Prepared By:

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**Sources:**

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- Library and Archives Canada Service via Ancestry.com – record of military service for Charles Stanley Gravett
- Ancestry.com for family information
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- For Posterity's Sake website
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial website
- Naval History Net website
- GC Ships Histories website
- Peel's Henderson Directories
- Wikipedia for NEF and Bangor information