

Able Seaman Lawrence James Jodoin, V-57427



Able Seaman Lawrence J. Jodoin. Photo:
Edmonton Journal

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- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Edmonton, AB, 16 September 1925**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Nonsuch*, 22 March 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Warehouse Clerk, Marshall Wells Wholesale Business**
- **Death: Killed while serving in HMCMTB 461 on 9 July 1944**
- **Mention in Despatches**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; Jodoin Creek, AB; the Naval Museum of Alberta plaque, and the HMCS *Nonsuch* plaque.**

Lawrence Jodoin was born in Edmonton on 16 September 1925. Joseph Arthur Jodoin (1896-1968) and Mary (Szpot) Jodoin were his parents. He had two sisters, Eunice (1924-1935) and Marion (1929 -) and one brother Robert (1926 -).

Arthur, the father of Lawrence, was born in Ottawa and worked as a teamster before enlisting in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1914. He served as a Private in the Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) and was wounded and reported missing in June 1916. Later, it was learned that he was a prisoner of war in Stuttgart. He was released at the end of the war and arrived in England on November 29, 1918. He returned to Canada in 1919 and then moved from Ottawa to Edmonton. In 1922 he married Mary Szpot. Mary was born in Glidehurst, Alberta, a predominantly Ukrainian community near Edmonton.

Lawrence attended Garneau and King Edward public schools and Strathcona High School. He completed Grade 9 and began Grade 10 but left school before he could complete that grade. While attending school, he enjoyed playing hockey and baseball on school teams. Lawrence also played Bugle in the Canadian Corps Association Band.

The Jodoin family faced a difficult time in 1935 when they experienced a tragedy. Eunice, who was only 11 years old, passed away in July. In August, Lawrence was hospitalized, but it's unclear if these two events were connected. Lawrence began his working career in about 1940. This was before the significant oil discoveries in nearby Leduc. Edmonton was the Provincial capital and

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home to the province's only university. It was a major railway centre and hub for local agriculture, including the meat packing industry. It was the jumping-off point for bush pilot flights into the North. Declaration of War meant a significant uptick in economic activity in Edmonton. This included construction and support to the nearby Commonwealth Air Training Plan Centre, construction of the Alaska Highway and the Canol pipeline.

Lawrence was only 17 and had just started working as a warehouseman at Marshall Wells Wholesale when he enlisted in the RCNVR at HMCS *Nonsuch* on 22 March 1943. Marshall Wells was a hardware store that opened in Edmonton in 1907. The store did not promise to hold Lawrence's job until he returned from the war. Lawrence enlisted as an Ordinary Seaman for hostilities only. His enlistment papers describe him as 5 foot 11 with dark brown hair, grey-green eyes, and a fresh complexion. His religion was Roman Catholic.

After completing Basic Training at *Nonsuch*, Lawrence was sent to HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt, BC, for his seamanship and gunnery training. There he qualified with a non-substantive rating of Anti-Aircraft Gunner III. Non-substantive ratings were used in some branches to indicate the level of specialized skills and not necessarily a sailor's rank. This specialization was worth an extra 10 cents per day.

He was sent briefly to HMCS *Stadacona*, Halifax's primary training and operational base. Then in November 1943, he went overseas to HMCS *Niobe* in Greenock, Scotland. This was the manning depot for RCN sailors in the UK. Here sailors would work or train until they could be posted to a ship or shore establishment.

In February 1944, Lawrence was assigned to HMS *St Christopher* in Port William, Scotland. This

MTB 461 Crew Photo



MTB 461, May 1944. (PA 176740)

Front row (left to right): Sig. Andy Clealand, RCNVR, of Toronto; O/S George MacDonald, RCNVR, of Verdun, Que.; A/B Sea. Torpedoman Gerald Thompson, RCNVR, of Toronto; Tel Beverley Bahledo, RCNVR, of Montreal; O/S Don Elliott, RCNVR, of Moose Jaw, Sask.

Second row: C.P.O. M.M. Robert McGee, RCNVR, of New Glasgow, N.S.; Stoker (M) George Abram, RCNVR, of Toronto; O/S Edwin McAuley, RCNVR, of Toronto; O/S A.A.3. Burt Sears, RCNR, of Shelburne, N.S.; O/S Sea. Torpedoman Garnet Workman, RCNVR, of Kemptville, Ontario.

On the Bridge: The Commanding Officer, Lieut. C.A. Burk, D.S.C., RCNVR, of Toronto; third officer, S/Lieut. Ian Robertson, RCNVR, of Winnipeg; first Lieutenant, Lieut. Keith Scobie, RCNVR, of Ottawa; coxswain, L/S Albert Stubbins, of Hamifton and Port Colborne, Ontario; unknown sailor; A/B A.A.3. Lawrence Jodain, M.I.D., RCNVR, of Edmonton; O/S Francis McLeod, RCNR, of St. John, N.B (with hand on hip).

was an RN Coastal Command training centre. He trained and worked here for three months. At the end of his time at HMS *St Christopher*, he was promoted to Acting Able Seaman, although many of his subsequent records still referred to him as an Ordinary Seaman.

On 6 May 1944, Able Seaman Jodoin was assigned to a Motor Torpedo Boat – MTB 461. MTB 461 was part of the 29 MTB Flotilla, an all-Canadian group of nine MTBs. The crews were all Canadian and almost exclusively RCNVR. The vessels were Scott-Payne G-types built by British Power Boats. They were 71 feet long, had a range of 140 miles and a top speed of 40 knots. They carried 2500 gallons of 100% octane gasoline.

The power for these boats came from three 1250 hp V-12 Packard engines, with another two Ford V-8s connected with clutches to the outboard shafts for quiet operations. Later versions had 1500 hp engines from either Packard or Rolls-Royce. The MTBs were armed with torpedoes, a 40mm cannon (sometimes called a 2-pounder), 20mm twin cannons and machine guns. AB *Jodoin* was a gunner.

The flotilla moved to HMS *Fervent* – a Coastal Forces operational base near Ramsgate, England, across the channel from Calais and Dunkirk in France.

The first operational mission for the 29th Flotilla was on 16 May 1944. It was to escort a group of British Army engineers who had to gather up some samples of German mines from the beach defences on the coast of France. For the rest of May 1944, the flotilla worked in the English Channel, doing their best to deny these waters to German forces. They lured German destroyers into the range of Tribal destroyers, duelled with E-boats and R-boats, and attacked enemy escort ships. E-boats were German fast attack craft. They were a formidable adversary - larger, faster, better armed, and had much more range than MTBs. R-boats were a smaller version used for coastal convoy escort and minesweeping.



On 28 May 1944, it was time to move the flotilla to Portsmouth in preparation for its role in D-Day operations. They would work with the British 55th MTB Flotilla and 17 Destroyer Flotilla to protect the British D-Day assault area by attacking enemy vessels and keeping the enemy inside its naval base at La Havre, France. On the night of 6 June 1944, they were assigned

to patrol an area outside of La Havre to prevent any German vessels from breaking through the Allied defences and attacking the vulnerable anchorage off the D-Day beaches. After 4:30 am, the flotilla engaged six German R-boats. The Canadians opened fire at the line of R-boats, engaging each. One R-boat exploded, and the rest retreated to their base in La Havre.

On 2 July 1944, one of the 29th Flotilla's boats - MTB 460 - hit a mine and disintegrated. Ten Canadian sailors were killed in the blast.

In the early morning of 9 July 1944, the flotilla was operating near La Havre when a British MTB was hit and set ablaze. The flotilla attacked several enemy R-boats surrounding the British boat but had to withdraw under heavy enemy fire. They attacked again and were able to rescue the British sailors.

At some point during this action, Able Seaman Jodoin was hit in the stomach by a 40mm shell, killing him instantly. His shipmates buried him at sea. Lawrence James Jodoin was 18 years old.

For his exemplary service during the weeks following D-Day, Able Seaman Jodoin was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches (MiD). The citation read:

"For gallantry, skill, determination and undaunted devotion to duty during the landing of Allied Forces on the coast of Normandy on July 1944."

For his service, Able Seaman Jodoin was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp, the 1939-1945 Star, the France and Germany Star, and the War Medal. His mother was presented with the Canadian Memorial Cross.

Able Seaman Lawrence Jodoin is commemorated on Panel 11 of the Halifax Memorial; in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, p.345, at the Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa; on the Naval Museum of Alberta plaque, and on the HMCS *Nonsuch* plaque. Additionally, Jodoin Creek, a tributary of the Peace River in Wood Buffalo National Park, AB, was named in Lawrence Jodoin's honour.

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:

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