

Ordinary Seaman Archibald Arthur Livingston McNab V-13691



Ordinary Seaman Art McNab. Photo: Family picture on Ancestry.com

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Calgary AB, 3 March 1920**
- **Enlisted: Calgary Division RCNVR, 16 January 1941**
- **Civilian Occupation: Landscaper, West End Nurseries**
- **Death: Died of a ruptured appendix while serving in HMCS *Stadacona* on 5 October 1941**
- **Buried: Calgary (Burnsland) Cemetery, Lot 8. Block 1. Sec. M**
- **Commemorated: Field of Crosses Memorial Calgary, Western Canada High School Honour Roll, Memorial Plaques at HMCS *Tecumseh* and the Naval Museum of Alberta.**

Archibald Arthur Livingston McNab was born on 3 March 1920 in Calgary. He went by his middle name for most purposes with a nickname of Art. For a time, the family lived in the nearby districts of Springbank and Jumping Pound just west of the city. These areas are prime ranch and farmland. Census records show that his father was a farmer in the area. His father was Peter McNab, and his mother was Sarah McNab (nee Livingston). His parents were married in Glasgow and immigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1908. Art was the youngest of six children, some of whom were born in Scotland and others in Canada. His much older brother Alexander lived in the Alberta town of Longview. His brother John, who was close in age, also served in the Navy and was based in Esquimalt, BC. Sisters Catherine and Jane lived at home with their parents. A much older sister, Bessie Dempster, was married and living elsewhere in Calgary. There was an earlier family tragedy when a sister died at age 6.

Art McNab attended Killarney School in Calgary before attending two years of high school in Western Canada High. The family address in Calgary was 2013 - 20 Ave SW. He left school to do various jobs, including as a landscaper with West Calgary Nursery.

Art joined the Royal Canadian Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) at the Calgary Division, later known as HMCS *Tecumseh*, as an Ordinary Seaman in January 1941 for the "Duration of Hostilities."



He underwent New Entry Training and was taken on active service on 10 April 1941. According to his enrolment documents, he had farming experience, possibly from living in nearby ranching areas. He aspired to become an electrician one day. The documents described Art as tall at 5'11 1/2", with black hair, brown eyes, and a fresh complexion. He was affiliated with the United Church.

On 17 June 1941, Ordinary Seaman McNab was posted to HMCS *Naden*, the training base in

Esquimalt, BC, where he trained as a Submarine Detector. To qualify as a Submarine Detector, sailors needed knowledge of seamanship, a grasp of underwater tactics and sea conditions, and an acute sense of hearing. The ships of this period had rudimentary sonar devices called ASDIC, but the operator needed exceptional skills to detect U-boats. Ordinary Seaman McNab qualified as an Acting Submarine Detector on 19 September 1941. He was rated to be of Very Good Character and Satisfactory Efficiency.

On 26 September, Art was posted to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, Nova Scotia. *Stadacona* was the Navy's primary port for naval operations in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Less than ten days later, on 5 October 1941, Art died of acute appendicitis in Calgary's Military Hospital, the Colonel Belcher. It's not explained in Art McNab's Service File how he happened to be in Calgary when he died, but since travel between the west and east coast was often completed by train. It is not unreasonable to believe the Ordinary Seaman McNab fell ill on the train near Calgary and was transported to hospital.

For his service, Ordinary Seaman McNab was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and the War Medal for service in Canada. His mother, Sarah, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Ordinary Seaman McNab is buried in the Honour Section of Burnsland Cemetery in Calgary, Alberta, Lot 8, Block 1, Section M. This headstone is engraved:

"Lonely in our home without him, help us Lord to bear the cross."

Ordinary Seaman McNab is remembered in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, page 38, at the Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa, Field of Crosses Memorial Calgary,

Western Canada High School Honour Roll, Memorial Plaques at HMCS *Tecumseh* and the Naval Museum of Alberta.

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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 profile for AAL McNab
- Second World War Book of Remembrance, p.38, at the Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament, Ottawa
- Library and Archives Canada - Service file for Ordinary Seaman Archibald Arthur McNab
- Calgary Herald 06 Oct 1941 p.12 - notice of death
- Calgary Herald 07 Oct 1941p.10 - obituary
- <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial>