

Able Seaman Albert James Payne V-13454



Able Seaman Payne. Photo: Canadian Virtual War Memorial

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Calgary AB, 1 October 1917**
- **Enlisted: Calgary Division RCNVR, 25 July 1940**
- **Civilian Occupation: Clerk, Jenkins' Groceteria Ltd**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Raccoon* was torpedoed and sank on 7 September 1942**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 8; Crescent Heights High School Second World War Honour Roll Calgary; HMCS *Tecumseh* Second World War Memorial Plaque; Field of Crosses Calgary**

Albert James Payne was born in Calgary on 1 October 1917. He was the third child to Stephen and Louisa Payne, who were married in London, England in 1904. He had two sisters, Winnifred and Rose (Rosina), and a brother, Stephen Fredrick. The family were members of the Church of England.

Growing up in Calgary, Albert attended Sunnyside Public School, Hillhurst Junior High School, and graduated from Crescent Heights High School at age 17. During his three years in high school, Albert finished his apprenticeship as a grocery clerk and found employment at Jenkins' Groceterias. While employed for six years, Albert not only paid his room and board at home but also helped to support his sister Rose. His father was presumed to have died at age 60.

A member of the Grocers Union, Albert had ambitions to become either an electrician or a Window Dresser. These plans changed with the beginning of the Second World War and he enlisted at the Calgary Division (later named HMCS *Tecumseh*) of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on 25 July 1940. His older brother was in the Royal Canadian Air Force. At that time, Albert was living with his family in Suite 1, 604 4th Avenue West in Calgary.

On enlistment, the medical records describe Albert as 22 years old, 5' 6" tall, weighing 124 pounds, and in good health. He had a fresh complexion, brown hair and brown eyes. There was a small scar on his right wrist.

Albert remained at the Calgary base as an Ordinary Seaman until he was shipped to HMCS *Naden*, a training facility, in Esquimalt, BC. His basic training continued with his superior officers

noting his very good character. Training ended on 11 March 1941, when he was posted to the active patrol vessel HMCS *Sans Peur*. This ship was a converted private yacht, originally belonging to the Duke of Sutherland, which patrolled the waters of the West Coast of Canada.

Ordinary Seaman Payne returned to HMCS *Naden* on 4 April 1941, during which time he was married on 10 April 1941 to Eileen Ann Clifford. A week later he was transferred to HMCS *Stadacona*, the training base in Halifax, NS where he awaited his next assignment.

On 29 May 1941, Ordinary Seaman Payne was posted to HMCS *Raccoon* where he would serve



HMCS Raccoon
Photo: Canada War Museum, file:E-20070195-008b
front.jpg

for the next 467 days. The ship was also a converted yacht, the *Halonia*. It was built in 1931 for Charles A. Thorne of Chicago. *Raccoon* was 148 feet long with a speed of 11 knots and was armed with a 12-pounder gun and depth charges. HMCS *Raccoon* was assigned to various bases and commands to patrol and escort convoys in the river and Gulf of St. Lawrence. She began working out of HMCS *Protector*, the naval base located next to Sydney Harbour on Cape Breton Island on 1 June 1941. The base was used to provision, protect, and repair the various merchant shipping convoys to

Quebec, Halifax and beyond. Much of *Raccoon's* time was served under the Naval Officer in Charge Gaspé.

Generally in good health, there was a note in Ordinary Seaman Payne's service file that he received treatment from a doctor on 3 August 1941 while the ship was sheltering at Amherst, Magdalen Islands, Quebec. It was later during this posting, on 3 September 1941, that Albert James Payne was promoted to Able Seaman. Albert and Eileen's daughter, Georgina Anne, was born on 15 December 1941.

After a brief time based out of HMCS *Venture*, from 30 January to 30 April 1942, *Raccoon's* base of operations was shifted to HMCS *Fort Ramsay* in the town of Gaspé, Quebec. In 1941, an anti-submarine net was installed and gate vessels were assigned to the port. Patrols of the area were established and conducted by four armed yachts: HMCS *Reindeer*, HMCS *Raccoon*, HMCS *Lynx*, and HMCS *Vison*. The base was inaugurated on 1 May 1942 and its tasks included providing facilities for refitting the Fairmile-B motor launches, protecting sea lines of communications in adjacent coastal waters, detecting and destroying enemy submarine and surface craft in adjacent coastal waters, as well as providing a defended anchorage.

HMCS *Raccoon* began service at the base on 18 May 1942. Able Seaman Payne, who qualified in Submarine Detection, would have been an exceptionally busy sailor in this environment.

One of the many convoys that HMCS *Raccoon* was tasked to escort was coded QS-33 from Quebec City to Sydney, NS. With the Flower-class corvette HMCS *Arrowhead* in the lead, the eight merchant ships sailed in two columns and were protected by a Bangor-class minesweeper, HMCS *Truro*, two Fairmile motor launches, and by the armed yacht HMCS *Raccoon* at a half mile astern.

On the evening of 6 September 1942, the merchant ship *Aeas* was attacked and sunk by the German submarine, U-165, off Cap-Chat on the Gaspé peninsula. HMCS *Raccoon* had reported that torpedoes had crossed her own bows. The captain of the lead escort, HMCS *Arrowhead*, observed *Raccoon* zigzagging through the fog in search of the submarine. This was the last time that *Raccoon* was sighted. At 1:12 AM on 7 September 1942, two explosions were heard, which the other ships believed were depth charges from *Raccoon*. It was later established that the explosions were the sound of HMCS *Raccoon*'s boiler exploding after being hit by a torpedo from U-165. There were no survivors. Able Seaman Albert Payne was 25 years old.

For his service, Able Seaman Albert James Payne was awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Mrs. Louisa Payne, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Able Seaman Payne is remembered on Panel 8 of the Halifax Memorial at Point Pleasant Park; the Field of Crosses Calgary; Crescent Heights High School Second World War Honour Roll Calgary; HMCS *Tecumseh* Second World War Memorial Plaque; and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 105 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

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Sources:

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