



**SUPPLY  
LINE**

## George William Boyer

Royal Canadian Navy

George was 20 when he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy. He survived a German submarine attack, although his close friend did not.

George William Boyer, wearing a battle dress jacket and a rating's cap.  
George Metcalf Archival Collection  
Canadian War Museum 20080073-006



### Volunteering for Service

George was born in 1922 in Outram, Saskatchewan. George, who was Métis, was the youngest son in a large farming family.

In June 1942, he went to Regina, Saskatchewan to enlist in the Royal Canadian Navy.

During his naval career, George was posted to several ships and shore installations, including HMCS *Queen, Naden, Givenchy* and *Courtney*, and HMS *Burrard, Nabob, Peregrine* and *Stadacona*. In 1943, he was promoted to the rank of Able Seaman.

## Surviving a German Submarine Attack

Like many people serving in the war, George spent his leisure time reading and writing letters. He was restricted in what he could write by the rules of wartime secrecy. Letters containing sensitive information could – and often were – **censored**.

To his mother, he wrote his impressions of navy life and the war. His letters contain his frustrations when on shore for too long, about being seasick, and about missing things like radio. He also thanked family members for sending him care packages.

George shared his personal impressions of the British and American sailors with whom he served. In many respects, George was a typical young serviceman, doing what he saw as his duty but also wishing the war would end “so life could be normal again.”

In August 1944, George was serving aboard HMS *Nabob*, a Royal Navy ship crewed largely by Canadians. Later that month, *Nabob* took part in an **Allied** operation to sink a German battleship. The German ship was stationed on the Norwegian coast and was a major threat in the North Atlantic.

During the attack, *Nabob* was hit by a torpedo from a German submarine. The explosion tore a large gash in the ship. The torpedo killed 21 crew and injured 40 more.

While the damage to *Nabob* was significant, the ship did not sink, and most of the remaining crew were transferred to other ships. Still somewhat seaworthy, the ship limped back to port at Scapa Flow, in northern Scotland. George, unhurt in the attack, volunteered to help get the damaged ship back to port.

## Remembrance and Recognition

While he came through the battle physically unscathed, George had suffered a great loss. His close friend Dave Melrose was killed in the attack.

“I suppose some of us are luckier than others,” he wrote to his mother. “That’s the way it is, one minute talking to him the next minute he’s gone. I cannot tell you anymore on account of censorship but I guess you can understand.” George survived the war, married, and had a family. He died in his home province of Saskatchewan in 1979, at age 56.

## Vocabulary

**Allied:**

The countries, including Canada, that joined together in opposing the Axis powers during the Second World War. The largest Allied nations were the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

**Censorship:**

The control and regulation of information by the government. In Second World War Canada, this included the media as well as things such as letters written by military personnel.

