



Robert Bush

Merchant Navy

Evangeline Harrold Bush

Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service

Robert and Evangeline both served during the Second World War. Although from different parts of the world, the war would bring them together. They met in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and married after the war.



Robert Bush at the helm of the Canadian merchant ship *Lady Rodney*.
George Metcalf Archival Collection
Canadian War Museum 20080094-486



Evangeline Harrold Bush in her WRCNS uniform.
George Metcalf Archival Collection
Canadian War Museum 20080094-102 (cropped)

Early Years

Robert Bush was born in England in 1919. He grew up near the port city of Bristol, where his lifelong fascination with ships and the sea began. In 1936, at age 17, he joined Britain's Merchant Navy.

Evangeline Harrold was also born in 1919, but in Deseronto, Ontario. She decided to enlist with the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.

A Wartime Courtship

After war broke out in 1939, Robert soon learned that the Merchant Navy was a dangerous place to serve in wartime. Within days of war being declared, his ship, *Vancouver City*, was hit by a German torpedo.

The following year he was assigned to the ship *Regent Lion* and it too was attacked. In 1941, he was aboard the ship *Jamaica Planter* when it hit a mine in the English Channel.

Only months later, his ship – *Inversuir* – was attacked by German submarines and sunk. He spent 29 hours in a lifeboat before being picked up by another ship and taken to Quebec City.

Once in Canada, he transferred to Canada's Merchant Navy, hoping, perhaps, that his luck would change. It worked, and he served with the Canadians for the remainder of the war.

Meanwhile, Evangeline Harrold was serving as well. In 1942, at the age of 23, she enlisted with the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service. Posted to Halifax, Nova Scotia, she became a plotter, tracking **Allied** units and German submarines, a task crucial to keeping merchant ships safe from German attack.

Plotters needed to meet certain educational standards and had to be poised and cool under pressure. By war's end, women like Evangeline Harrold had taken over a large portion of these responsibilities.

Halifax was a busy Allied port. People from many parts of the world met and mingled as they went about their duties.

Dances and other social events were important morale-boosters. At one such event, Evangeline Harrold and Robert Bush met for the first time. They stayed in touch as the war continued.

Life in Canada after the War

Robert Bush and Evangeline Harrold married in 1946. They moved to Toronto, Ontario, where Robert worked on ships in the Great Lakes before taking a job with Canadian National Railways. Together, they raised two daughters.

Evangeline Harrold Bush passed away in 1999; Robert followed her in 2003. Material relating to their wartime experiences is now in the collection of the Canadian War Museum.

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.