



**SUPPLY  
LINE**

## Joseph Bertrand Alphonse Benoit

Royal Canadian Navy

Alphonse was 27 when he joined the navy in 1941. His ship was sunk in 1944 by a German submarine, during the Battle of the St. Lawrence, and everyone aboard – including Alphonse – was killed.



Studio portrait of Joseph Bertrand Alphonse Benoit, in uniform.

George Metcalf Archival Collection  
Canadian War Museum 19940082-011

### Volunteering for Service

Alphonse was born on 5 June 1914, in Drummondville, Quebec. He was the youngest of five children. His father had died less than two months before he was born.

Alphonse enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) in 1941, at 27. He was assigned to work as a cook, possibly because that had been his profession for 10 years before he enlisted.

## Sinking of HMCS *Shawinigan*

Alphonse began his active service in 1942, and served on shore installations and on ships in the Atlantic. In June 1943, he was posted aboard HMCS *Shawinigan*. The *Shawinigan* was engaged in **convoy** duty in the North Atlantic. In 1944, the ship was involved in one of the final major engagements of the Battle of the St. Lawrence.

On 24 November 1944, the *Shawinigan* left Sydney, Nova Scotia, to escort the ferry SS *Burgeo* through the Cabot Strait. After successfully completing the crossing, the *Shawinigan* went out on anti-submarine patrol off the coast of Newfoundland, as it was due to escort the ferry back to Sydney the following morning.

While on patrol, the *Shawinigan* was spotted by a German U-boat. The enemy submarine, U-1228, fired a torpedo that hit the *Shawinigan*, sinking the ship within minutes.

*Shawinigan* was the last ship to be lost during the Battle of the St. Lawrence. There were no survivors: all 91 crew members, including Alphonse, were killed.

## Remembrance and Recognition

Alphonse is commemorated on the Halifax Naval Memorial. His mother, Ernestine Benoit, received the Memorial Cross as well as

Alphonse's medals after the war. They are now part of the Canadian War Museum collection.

## Vocabulary

### Convoy

A group of ships or motor vehicles that travel together to support and protect each other. Convoys often have armed escorts to help provide protection.