

## LOVE, John Frederick (#V/19486)

John Frederick Love had a career, was in his sixth year of marriage, and had a daughter at home when he chose to serve his country. He gave his life for the Allied cause while ensuring that vital naval supply lines remained open to what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said was "... the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war..."

He was born in Brandon, Manitoba on September 28, 1913, the son of Robin and Violet Love of Regina, Saskatchewan. John had two brothers: Allan (later resided in Burlington, Ontario) and Laurie (would serve overseas); and three sisters: Dorothy (who served with the Women's Air Force), and married sisters, Mrs. R. Colville (would reside in Vancouver) and Mrs. T. Dempster (would reside in Melville, Saskatchewan). The Love family later moved to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where John served in the 1st Yorkton Regiment, Militia, as a bugler from 1925 to 1927. He completed one year of high school, leaving at age fifteen.

John Love moved to Sarnia around 1933. On May 16, 1936, the twenty-two-year-old married Mabel Patricia (nee Rutter), the eldest daughter of John and Bernice Rutter of Port Huron, Michigan. John and Mabel Love lived at 156 Cotterbury Street, Sarnia. The couple had one daughter together, Deanna Marie Love, born December 13, 1936 at Sarnia General Hospital.

John was an employee at the Electric Auto-Lite plant in Sarnia as machine operator prior to enlisting. Twenty-seven-year-old John Love enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve on August 7, 1941 in Windsor, Ontario. He stood five feet ten inches tall, had blue eyes and brown hair, and stated that he planned to return to Sarnia after the war to continue work as a machinist. When he enlisted, John's father Robin was a resident of Detroit and his mother Violet was residing in Regina, Saskatchewan.

John trained at Windsor Division Headquarters as a Stoker II until October 1941, and was then transferred to Halifax base *Stadacona*. In early 1942, he was transferred again, and on January 9, 1942, he was posted overseas to the Royal Naval Base (RNB) in Chatham, England. There he became a member of the crew of the *HMS Grove*, with the rank of Stoker II.



Stoker John Frederick Love

The Royal Navy *HMS Grove* (L77) was a Type II Hunt-class destroyer, launched in May 1941 and commissioned by the Royal Navy in February 1942. The ship's name comes from the name of a fox-hunt in Nottinghamshire, England. In its five months of service, the ship was first deployed in the Arctic, then the Atlantic Ocean, and then off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean. The vessel played a vital role in escorting convoys of ships carrying men and essential machinery, arms, fuel and basic resources. On March 27, 1942 in the North Atlantic, the *HMS Grove*, along with *HMS Aldenham*, *HMS Volunteer* and *HMS Leamington*, sank the German U-boat *U-587* by depth charges.

The **Battle of the Mediterranean** was the naval campaign that began in June 1940, fought in the Mediterranean Sea, between the Italian Royal Navy (supported by Axis forces) and the British Royal Navy (supported by Allied forces). Each side had the same objectives: to attack the supply lines of the other side; to keep

open the supply lines of their own armies in North Africa; and to destroy the ability of the opposing navy to wage war at sea. In May 1942, the *Grove* was in the Mediterranean Sea at Alexandria, off the north central coast of Egypt. In early June 1942, the ship was part of a flotilla escorting supply convoys from Alexandria to the Tobruk garrison--a seaport town in northeastern Libya in North Africa.

On June 12, 1942, the *HMS Grove* departed Tobruk bound for Alexandria. The ship ran aground briefly at Tobruk, damaging a port propeller and shaft, reducing her speed to 8.5 knots. At 5:37 am, the ship was struck by two torpedoes from German U-boat *U-77* and sunk north of Sollum, Egypt. The bow and stern structures were blown off, and the ship sank in 14 minutes. Two officers and 108 men were lost, including Stoker John Love. Seventy-eight survivors from the *HMS Grove* were rescued by the destroyer *HMS Tetcott*. [Note: at the same time, *Operation Vigorous* was underway in the area--an Allied operation to deliver supply convoy MW-11 from Haifa and Port Said to Malta. That convoy would encounter heavy enemy opposition and would return to Alexandria. *HMS Grove* was not part of that operation].

Prior to the sinking of the *HMS Grove*, John's wife Mabel and their five-year-old daughter Deanna in Sarnia had not heard from him for six months. Approximately one week after the ship's sinking, Mabel received a telegram informing her that John Love was reported killed in action overseas. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* had the following report on June 25:

*Sarnia Sailor Thought Dead*

*The Royal Canadian Navy in its eighty-ninth casualty list of the war, today reported that Stoker John Frederick Love whose wife, Mrs. Mabel Patricia Love, lives at 156 Cotterbury Street, Sarnia, Ont., is missing and presumed killed on active service. Stoker Love was a member of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve.*

In late June 1942, Mabel received the following letter from the Secretary, Naval Board:

*Dear Madam:*

*It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 16th June from the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services informing you that your husband, John Frederick Love, Stoker II, R.C.N.V.R., O.N. V.19486, is missing, presumed killed on Active Service.*

*No details are known at Headquarters, but should any further information be received you will be advised immediately. I wish to express the sincere sympathy of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your husband has helped to maintain.*

John Love's death was later officially recorded as, *At Sea, missing, and presumed killed on active service. He was serving in a Royal Navy ship overseas.* John Love lost his life only one year after enlisting. In March 1945, Mabel, then living on Earl Grey Road in Toronto, received a War Service Gratuity of \$140.75 for the loss of her husband John. Mabel Love later remarried, becoming Mrs. Mabel Christiansen, residing on Logan Avenue, Toronto. Twenty-eight-year-old John Love has no known grave. His name is inscribed on the Halifax Memorial, Nova Scotia, Canada, Panel 9.

From: *The Sarnia War Remembrance Project*, by Tom Slater