

# Ken Marchant

## Stoker 1st Class

### RCNVR V66847

I was born June 5, 1927, and raised in Kenora, Ontario. I was 12 years old, selling newspapers when the war started in 1939. I had about 50 papers with War declared on the front page and before I got a block away I had sold out.

At the age of 15, I quit school and left home for Winnipeg, Manitoba. There I worked at a shell factory making 25 lb shells for the army. At this time I joined the Reserve Signal Corps.

In the spring of 1943, I came back to Kenora and worked at the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway), apprenticing for a fireman, pursuing a career as a railroad engineer. After a medical exam, I found out I was colourblind - so there went my dreams, as I was not allowed to be working on an engine.

One night I was in town with some older guys and they were talking about going up to Winnipeg to join the Navy. As I was only 16, I had to get a birth certificate showing I was 18. My sister Doris worked at the town, office so she was able to get one written in ink and she changed the year of my birth so that I could join in July 1943, as a stoker. I had a brother, Albert, in the Army, and another brother, Gordon, in the Navy. One time in Londonderry, Ireland I met my brother Gordon when he was in port on his ship *HMCS Orkney*.

I took my basic training at *HMCS Chippewa* in Winnipeg, up to Oct 24, 1943. I then was shipped out to Esquimalt, B.C. to *HMCS Naden* for the Stokers' course. This is where I became a Stoker 1st Class. In the old days, this class was for men stoking coal into steam boilers, but my training was on oil fired boilers for steam. I then joined *HMCS Antigonish*.



#### **HMCS ANTIGONISH**

- Type: Frigate
- Motto: Be Worthy
- Class: RIVER Class 43-44 Programme
- Displacement: 1445
- Length: 301.5
- Width: 36.6
- Draught: 9
- Speed: 19
- Compliment: 8 Officers and 133 Crew
- Arms: 2-4" (1 x II), 4-20mm, Hedgehog and 1 3" 12 pounder
- Pendant: K661
- Builder: Yarrows Ltd., Esquimalt, B.C.
- Keel Laid: 02-Oct-43
- Date Launched: 02-Oct-44
- Date Commissioned: 04-Jul-44
- Paid off: 02-May-46
- Remarks: Recommissioned as a Prestonian Class on 12-Oct-1957. Pendant Number 301. Finally Paid Off 30-Nov-66.



*HMCS Antigonish* during the period when Ken worked as a stoker



*HMCS Antigonish* in 1962, after being rebuilt as a training ship

**ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY**



Name **MARCHANT, Kenneth Lloyd** Official No. **V-66847**

Rank or Rating **Stoker 2nd Class** R.C.N. ( R.C.N.V.R. )

Age **18** Height **5'11"** Weight **160**

Hair **Brown** Eyes **Blue** Hair on face **Medium**

Marks, scars, etc. **Scar on left forearm.**

Right Index Blood Group  
**A-2**

Place **ESQUIMALT, British Columbia.** Date **15th December, 1943.**

Card Serial No. (To be entered at N.S.H.Q.) (Issuer)

*Kenneth Lloyd Marchant* (Signature of holder)

On our first outing we sailed down through the Panama Canal and up to Halifax. Out in the Pacific we hit a bad storm and I got seasick, but from that point on I never got seasick again. In the Pacific you get long rolling heavy swells, while in the Atlantic they are much choppier. I found it hard to get used to the Pacific swells.

We stayed a short time in Halifax, until we sailed to Bermuda to train with depth charges. We practiced dropping small charges on US subs. We also practiced smoke screens, where you use cold oil in the burner of the boilers.

After training, it was back to Halifax, where we joined 4 other ships as a striking force called E-G 16. We patrolled between Halifax, New York, and Newfoundland looking for Subs. Looking for subs was scary sometimes as you never knew where the subs were. One time we had torpedoes fired at us, but they missed. We also spread out heading up the St. Lawrence. Many times we were escorting convoys half way across to England. We once came upon a ship that had been sunk, and found the crew on Carley Floats, frozen to death. They had lots of food and water, but could not last in the frigid temperatures.



Ken's bakelite 'dog tag'  
found years later

Finally we escorted convoys all the way and ended up in the English Channel escorting ships across to France. On a lot of these escorts we had contacts with subs and dropped a lot of depth charges but we never had any definite sinkings. It was hard to tell if you blew up a sub as there would be not much debris that floated. Many times a sub would send up debris to make you think you sunk them.



Ken Marchant at 16 in the Royal Canadian Navy. Quite a few boys got into the services "too young". If you got caught they would send you home or put you in training away from any action.

We then started convoying Hospital ships from Scotland to Sicily. On our second trip down from Scotland, Germany surrendered, and a lot of subs gave themselves up in Gibraltar. This is where I saw the prison camp films, which made us feel the war was justified. War is not the answer in most cases.

I worked mostly in the engine rooms oiling the reciprocating engine. I also delivered food from the Petty Officers' mess. I washed dishes, worked as an upper deck stoker caring for the anchor and winch worked in the boiler room and learned to use the flooding valves. These 8 inch valves would be opened if the magazine was hit to flood the magazine. All the men might drown if this was done, as it was a scramble to get out of there. My first action station was working in the magazine.

During our free time we would play cards. Gambling was not allowed on ship but allot of us would wager some bets. I would also lie in the sun on deck if we had some sun. I saw many places including the west coast down to Panama, Bermuda, Nova Scotia, passed Greenland, Iceland and of course Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Gibraltar, and Sicily.

Our overseas base was Londonderry, so we eventually arrived back there, and we were the last group of Canadian ships to leave for home.

I then signed up for the Pacific, but before that had a nice leave at home, and was there when the Japanese surrendered, so I was shipped all the way back to Esquimalt again. While there I signed up to go to Ireland to pick up a Canadian aircraft carrier, but after arriving in Halifax this was cancelled. I then asked to be drafted to the *HMCS St Stephens* as they were fixing it for a weather ship and moving it out to B.C. After a few weeks this was also cancelled. I was tired of all these cancellations, and asked to be discharged.



Ken Marchant's WWII service medals

I was shipped back to Winnipeg and received my discharge in January 1946. I am proud of my service and I am proud of Canada. It has been a good home for our family.

After the war I found work where I could, around Kenora. I worked on construction with the Department of Highways, pumped gas, and worked for many years at the Paper Mill. I met my wife, Olive, in Keewatin and got married in 1947. In 1952 we left for Malton, Ontario for work. I recently visited Kenora and enjoyed seeing my boyhood town and meeting some of my family there.



(5) On being enrolled as a member of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, I undertake and bind myself:—

(a) To serve from the date thereof for the duration of hostilities, being subject to the provisions of the Naval Service Act, and of the Regulations made in pursuance thereof for the government of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, and to the customs and usages of His Majesty's Canadian Naval Service.

(b) To report for active service when called and to serve ashore or afloat as may be directed, according to where my services are required.

(c) To keep in good repair and condition the articles of uniform and any articles of outfit which may be issued to me and to return them to the nearest naval establishment prior to my discharge or when required so to do by any authorized person, or to pay compensation for any loss or damage thereto other than fair wear and tear; and also, until called into active service, not to wear such uniform or outfit (which is and remains the property of the Crown) except when on naval duty.

(d) To undergo vaccination or re-vaccination, or inoculation, as considered necessary by the appropriate authorities.

(e) I have not been induced to enter as Sto. 2/c by the prospect of being transferred at some future date to any other branch or rating.

Dated this 14th day of July, 1943

Signature of applicant

*X Kenneth Lloyd Marchant*

(C) CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER

I hereby certify that all the foregoing statements were made by the volunteer above named and that he has made and signed the above declaration in my presence on this 14th day of July, 1943

My authority for attestation is NS 30-34-1, 16 June, 1942

*H. Robertson*

Signature and rank of Attesting Officer.

(D)

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE <sup>Sub.</sup> LIEUTENANT R. C. N. V. R.

I, Kenneth Lloyd MARCHANT do sincerely promise and swear (or solemnly declare) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Britannic Majesty, His heirs and successors according to law.

Signature of Applicant

*X Kenneth Lloyd Marchant*

Witness

*H. Robertson*

Date 14th July, 1943

Rank

*Sub.* LIEUTENANT R. C. N. V. R.

The Oath of Allegiance must be administered by a Commissioned Officer of the Naval Service.

NOTE.—Attestation Form in duplicate, Certificate of Medical Examination (B-207) in duplicate, Occupational History Form in triplicate and certificates of previous service are to be forwarded to Naval Service Headquarters **immediately** after attestation.

Certificates of previous service will be returned after examination.