SUPPLY LINE

William King Lowd Lore
Royal Canadian Navy

In 1943, after facing years of discrimination, William became the first Chinese Canadian in the Royal Canadian Navy, when he was 33.

Portrait of William Lore
Courtesy of the Chinese Canadian
Military History Museum

Life Before the War

William was born in Victoria, British Columbia, in February 1909. As a young man of Chinese descent, he faced discrimination. He studied engineering at McGill University in Montréal, Quebec until the economic hardships of the Great Depression forced him to abandon his studies in 1929.

He returned to his home province, working as a reporter in Vancouver. In 1939, he broke racial barriers when he became a **wireless operator** — and the first Chinese Canadian in the federal civil service.

Determined to Enlist

When the war began, William tried to join the Royal Canadian Navy, but was rejected. He tried twice more, and was rejected each time.

The basis was discriminatory. At the time, the navy was not accepting non-White personnel.

In January 1943, the head of the Royal Canadian Navy demanded that William be accepted, making him the first Chinese Canadian in Canada's navy. Following officer's training, he worked in naval intelligence, first in Ottawa, Ontario, then in London, England.

William's next assignment took him far from London. He was sent to serve in the Southeast Asia Command.

Posted to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), he took part in planning an **Allied** attack on Japanese-held Rangoon (Yangon), in Burma (Myanmar). He then did intelligence work for American and British forces.

In August 1945, he was with the British when they arrived in Hong Kong for the first time since it had fallen to the Japanese in 1941. As a Canadian, he was the first officer selected to lead men ashore.

Liberating Prisoners of War in Hong Kong

After helping to secure Hong Kong, William Lore led a detachment of troops to the infamous Sham Shui Po **prisoner of war** camp. He and his troops liberated the camp's prisoners, including Canadians who had been held in appalling conditions since their capture in 1941.

In September, William witnessed the official surrender of the Japanese in Hong Kong. He reached the rank of Lieutenant-Commander in the Royal Canadian Navy before his retirement in 1948.

Post-War Life

William's postwar life took him to Oxford University in England, where he obtained a law degree.

He returned to Hong Kong, where he worked as a lawyer. He died in 2012, at the age of 103.

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.

Prisoner of war
Members of the military taken prisoner by the enemy. During the Second World War, they were often held in special camps.

Wireless Operator
A radio operator. During the Second World War, the British term "wireless" was often used by the Canadian military when referring to radio.